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**Omani EFL writing instructors' attitudes and reported and actual practices
towards written corrective feedback in first year foundation programmes**

Submitted by

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Education

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ABSTRACT

There is a large body of theoretical research and empirical studies that investigated written corrective feedback. However, this area has been limited to only three empirical studies in higher education institutions in the Omani context (e.g. Al- Bakri, 2015; Al Ajmi, 2015 ; AlBadwawi, 2011) and one at Omani public schools (Al-Harrasi, 2019). The current study is a mixed method study which explores English as a Foreign Language foundation year writing instructors' practice and attitudes on written corrective feedback at tertiary institutions in the Omani context. The study also examines writing instructors' actual written response to learners' essays. Further, it examines whether instructors' written response is determined by learners' level of language proficiency in English. In doing so, it aims to provide a deeper understanding of the current views and practices of WCF in the Omani context. For its framework for analysis, the study draws on statistical analysis of an online survey distributed among 174 EFL writing instructors at six higher education institutions in Oman. It also draws on content analysis and quantitative findings of a sample of 96 students' essays from four different English language proficiency level classes at one higher education institution. The study reveals that the instructors applied unfocused direct written corrective feedback in addition to other types of written corrective feedback. However, content analysis of teacher written response on the sample of 96 written assignments showed that instructors implemented unfocused but indirect written corrective feedback. Further, instructors' written response to students' essays was determined by learners' level of language proficiency in English; beginner students received more direct written corrective feedback while intermediate, upper intermediate and advanced students received metalinguistic written corrective feedback in the form of error codes and grammatical

explanation of rules and how to use them in writing. Moreover, instructors' written commentary on students' essays focused on grammar and mechanism rather than the content of the essays. In addition, the majority of teacher commentary whether end comments or text-based comments was in the form of evaluative expressions. The study came up with a number of recommendations for policy makers, writing instructors and future researchers. Moreover, I propose a model to maximise teacher written corrective feedback and achieve sustainable feedback.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated in honour of the most supportive person in the world, and the one who believed in me: my beloved father. It is also in honour of my mother and her blessings. I could have never been able to accomplish such a great achievement without your precious love, support and prayers. You are the shiny stars who have enlightened my long nights.

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List of Acronyms

CA	Continuous assessment
CF	Corrective feedback
CLTs	Classrooms tests
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELC	English Language Center
ELLs	English Language Learners
ELT	English Language Teaching
GPA	Grade Point Average
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
LEE	Level Exit Exam
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education
MoM	Ministry of Manpower
SMTs	Semester tests
SQU	Sultan Qaboos University
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
WCF	Written corrective feedback

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the background to the current study, the statement of the problem, the study's main research questions, the study's significance, its research questions, definitions of key terms and the potential contribution of the study to the broader body of knowledge in literature.

1.2 Background of the study

Learning how to write essays in English is an important skill for Omani language learners since English is the language of business, technology and communication. Hence, written corrective feedback (WCF) as a form of written response to students' assignments is an essential aspect of language learning and teaching in the Omani context. Writing is one of the most important skills that tertiary level students in Oman need to learn and practice effectively. Omani learners are aware that they should write meaningful essays which are grammatically accurate in English so that they can pass exams during the General Foundation Programme (GFP) and move on to their specialisations. Education at schools and higher education organisations in the Sultanate of Oman is what Carless, Joughin and Liu (2006) call as outcomes-based education meaning that it focuses on students' achievement of clearly defined outcomes.

The skill of writing in English can be a difficult task for some second language learners. One can imagine its difficulty for Omani learners where Arabic is the official and dominant language in the country. Ferris (2013) and Truscott (2013) explain that the difficulty of writing resides in its requirements for comprehensive knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, language mechanisms, and style of writing. Further, based on my own experience as an English as a Foreign Language

(EFL) writing instructor at a private university in Oman, I noticed that some Omani learners were rather passive and did not use any higher order thinking skills when translating their ideas from Arabic to English. However, the expectation from the writing instructors was that learners would be able to make some decisions when looking for the appropriate words that would go with the context of the writing assignment, and how to structure the sentences correctly based on the genre in question in addition to paying careful attention to spelling and mechanism. Hence, producing accurate and meaningful written assignments is a task that requires a number of skills whether higher level skills such as connecting ideas together in a smooth manner or simple skills such as using Google translate- which I have noticed that when used heavily, it has resulted in distorted and meaningless sentences. As a result, my colleagues and I spent ample time on correcting students' written assignments. According to Pring, 'teaching is the conscious effort to bridge the gap between the state of mind of the learner and the subject matter' (2004, p.34). However, in the case of writing courses, if there is not enough communication between the writing instructor and the learner, teachers' effort in error correction might be fruitless given the fact that some Omani learners might not go back to their instructors for further guidance on how to develop their writing and what to do next to improve their writing. Rather, learners might only look at the mark on the writing assignment, fold the paper and move on to the next class without paying attention to the instructors' written comments.

There is a consensus among some writing instructors in Oman that students struggle with written assignments for many reasons such as facing difficulty in constructing a sentence that can be grammatically correct, generating and organising ideas, in addition to translating these ideas directly from Google

translate and inserting them into a text without being cautious about the grammatical and semantic elements nor about cohesion and/or coherence. Moreover, their writing might suffer from serious errors in spelling, punctuation, and word choice. Further, some of the essays might lack enough supporting ideas. As a result, many Omani English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instructors might feel a sense of obligation to correct all the errors students make when writing essays so that those errors do not become fossilised- a term Truscott (1996) used to refer to the fact that students become stuck in writing at a low level with regard to their grammatical skill.

The ability of writing well in English is one of the crucial skills that Omani learners need to master because of the weight this skill is given to at Omani schools and universities with regard to assessment. Moreover, excelling in writing is crucial to those students who aim to find prestigious and competitive jobs after graduation in particular at the private sector where English is the medium of communication of official correspondence. Further, writing is connected to reading and as Sheorey (2009) states, people learn to write through reading. Hence, the more books learners read, the better and more sophisticated they can write. Moreover, through reading, learners can learn new grammatical structures, enlarge the amount of vocabulary they have and widen their scope of knowledge about the world in general. However, there might be a different scenario in the Omani context. Based on my own experience, I have noticed that while some Omani students might love reading books, others might not like reading at all and can get easily distracted by their cell phones while reading books or stories in the library sessions. Some learners might also use the same grammatical structures which they use in Arabic and apply them in English without noticing that each

language has a different grammatical structure. Ferris (2002a) explains that such errors may be caused by inappropriate transference of first language (L1) patterns and/ or by incomplete knowledge of the second language (L2) students are learning. Further, I noticed that some learners might dwell heavily on dictionaries and might end up using the wrong word equivalent of a noun, pronoun and might use a totally different word with a completely different meaning. Further, some students made some 'in head' comparisons of the scores they receive with the scores of other classmates and/or the way other writing instructors mark written assignments- a comparison that might be totally biased and inaccurate. In addition, I found that some learners might make ample amounts of spelling and punctuation errors because they might not spell check and/or pay more attention to punctuation before submitting their written assignments to their writing instructor. As a result, they might repeat the same errors when they write new assignments in the future. Dewey (1916) developed the term 'mis-education' which Pring (2004) used in his book entitled '*Philosophy of Education*'. Pring explains that education is concerned with the development of satisfactory human capabilities of knowing, understanding, judging and behaving intelligently. He adds that mis-education, by contrast, refers to whatever stunted the development of such capabilities. Pring adds that 'educational experiences do not leave people where they were' (p.25). I feel that there is a gap in the Omani educational context with regard to written corrective feedback at tertiary institutions as it is obvious that some Omani learners keep repeating the same errors over and over again no matter how many hours writing instructors spend in marking written assignments. As a result, I wanted to explore this problem further and find out practical solutions for writing instructors as well as reach a deeper understanding of the problem of written corrective feedback and

add more insight to the wider body of existing knowledge which I can assure now that it has taken me to different levels of knowledge and insight. I wanted to explore pathways that can guarantee an interaction between the learner and instructor before, during and after the writing session.

Though I am a graduate of the school of education in Oman, I do not recall any courses that I had undertaken with regard to feeding back on students' written assignments. Hence, I feel that the area of written corrective feedback (WCF) might be missing in undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in my country. Similarly, I did not receive any in-service training on written corrective feedback while teaching at a private university in Oman. Further, teaching the writing course for three consecutive years myself, my colleagues and I had long conversations about the difficulty of responding to students' essays given the fact that learners' essays were rather full of grammatical errors, not to mention other redundant administrative duties we had to do in addition to writing tests and exams. Nevertheless, some learners were not satisfied with their marks and/or our comments believing that their writing was totally perfect. For instance, a large number of students used to say to us 'It is not fair', referring to their marks on a written assignment.

From my colleagues' perspectives and mine, we felt that some learners were more concerned about socialising with their friends at university rather than investing their time and effort in learning. Further, we felt that some learners had very high and unrealistic expectations from their writing instructors and that they expected us to be more generous with marks and disregard their writing problems. However, we were certain that boosting the learners' ego would not

solve their writing problems. We were aware that because some of the learners scored high in English at school, they had pre conceptions or rather misconceptions that they were entitled to receive high marks at university, too. However, they failed to notice that writing at tertiary level has different and more challenging requirements from those they were used to have at school. For some Omani learners, it might have taken them a while to realise that their writing instructor wanted the best for them by correcting all the errors on those essays. For others, they might have remained in denial believing that their writing instructor was not a good instructor. Student reaction and attitudes might be some of the reasons why some Omani EFL writing instructors might seek other jobs outside universities so that they do not have to do any sort of marking essays nor dealing with students' dissatisfaction. Other writing instructors might continue with the same boring job for many personal reasons which are beyond the scope of this research. However, my colleagues and I agreed that teaching at university level in particular responding to students' essays was not rewarding. I can anticipate that writing instructors will most likely continue to do what they currently do and complain about responding to students' essays unless teacher pedagogy, assessment and decisions made by policy makers get modified to suit a large number of elements (e.g. student background, student level of English, writing task requirements, genre type, writing instructors' workload).

1.3 Statement of the problem

The problem of error correction in writing classrooms led me to conduct research in this area in order to better understand Omani English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instructors' attitudes and actual practice of written corrective feedback (WCF). Although recent decades have seen a surge of L2 writing research, many current studies on WCF in L2 writing are still based on L1

sources; some of which have serious methodological flaws and are not directly applicable to L2 writing instruction (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Storch (2010) argues that in the desire to conduct more robust research on WCF, the pendulum has swung too far towards experimental studies. She proposes that future studies need to adopt more qualitative studies. Moreover, investigating teacher attitudes is important because such attitudes can influence teacher practice of written corrective feedback (WCF) when they respond to students' writing. Though error correction has been a staple of research in L2 writing for at least 20 years (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Ferris, 2006; Hyland, 2013b), there is little research conducted in the Omani context with only three studies (Alajmi, 2015; Al-Bakri, 2015; Al-Badwawi, 2012) that investigated written corrective feedback at tertiary level and one study (AlHarrasi, 2019) investigated direct versus indirect WCF at public schools. While Al Ajmi's (2015) study was an experimental study, my study is a mixed method research which depended on qualitative and quantitative data. Moreover, Al Bakri's (2015) study investigated written corrective feedback of Technical writing courses which are designed for learners after they complete their first year at the General Foundation Programme unlike my study which targeted school leavers who have just joined college. In fact, I felt that there was an obvious need to examine teacher written corrective feedback on a sample of students' written assignments this area in order to come to a better understanding of the problem. Al Badwawi (2012) recommended a similar investigation since not including student essays was one of the limitations of her study. Moreover, I wanted to find out whether or not Omani EFL writing instructors focused mainly on grammar or they examined other aspects of students' writing (e.g. content, organisation). Ferris and Roberts (2001); Hyland and Hyland (2001); Robb, Ross and Shortread (1986) and Zamel (1985) claim

that writing instructors are overly concerned about grammar. Further, I wanted to explore Omani EFL writing instructors' attitudes and feelings towards written corrective feedback as some studies suggest that giving grammatical feedback is in fact harmful (e.g. Truscott, 1996; 1999; 2007). By doing so, I believe my study would enrich the literature of written corrective feedback in particular with regard to Omani studies. Ferris claims that even after decades of research on written corrective feedback (WCF), publication, and debate on the matter, "we are virtually at Square One, as the existing research base is incomplete and inconsistent, and it would certainly be premature to formulate any conclusions about this topic" (2004, p. 49).

It is worthy to mention that written corrective feedback can be researched from multiple angles and perspectives: the writing instructors, learners and the body of assessment. I felt that there was a need to investigate writing instructors' attitudes and practice of written corrective feedback and give them a voice as Ferris (2002a) claims that the writing instructor as a key agent in studies has either been removed or ignored. By conducting my study, I hope that my research can add to the body of literature and enhance the understanding of writing instructors' attitudes and practice of written corrective feedback.

1.4 Research questions

In order to investigate writing instructors' practice and attitudes on written corrective feedback, my research was driven by three main research questions which were as follows:

1. What are Omani EFL foundation year writing instructors' attitudes of written corrective feedback?

2. What types of written corrective feedback do Omani EFL foundation year writing instructors' apply when they respond to learners' essay writing assignments?

3. Does Omani EFL foundation year writing instructors' written corrective feedback vary according to learners' level of writing proficiency in English?

In order to answer my research questions, I conducted a mixed method study which means I have made use of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and data analysis. I designed an online survey consisting of closed ended and open ended questions which aimed to examine Omani EFL writing instructors' attitudes. The survey was answered by 174 Omani EFL writing instructors from six Colleges of Technology in six different governates in Oman. Hence, I analysed the data from the survey qualitatively and quantitatively. Further, I examined Omani EFL writing instructors' practice of written corrective feedback by analysing a sample of 96 students' written assignments with teacher written response on. I analysed students' documents qualitatively and quantitatively following two frameworks; namely Ellis (2009a) and a modified version of Ferris (2006).

1.5 Significance of the study

As I have mentioned earlier, student writing and teacher evaluation of written assignments might be inter-connected in the Omani context. Hence comes the importance of written corrective feedback and investigating Omani EFL writing instructors' attitudes and practice on how they feel and the way they actually respond to students' written assignments. Personally, the more I read on teacher written response, the more interested in conducting my research I became. I felt at a certain point in time that I wanted to research a number of issues connected to the area of written corrective feedback. However, I had to confine myself to

one area only which is Omani EFL writing instructors' attitudes and practice in the Omani context. By conducting my study in the Omani context and reaching a number of findings and recommendations in addition to presenting my own theory and model of sustainable written corrective feedback, I could give more insight to researchers to focus on the teacher element and the teacher-learner interaction aspect of the problem . On a theoretical level, my study will contribute to the wider body of research and literature and bring another level of understanding of written corrective feedback (WCF) in English as a Foreign Language in general and in the Omani General Foundation Programme at higher education institutions in particular. Moreover, my study will give Omani EFL writing instructors insight as how effectively they can respond to students' essays by exposing learners to a variety of methods that can be applied when feeding back on students' written assignments rather than marking all the errors they find in students' essays. In addition, policy makers can look at written corrective feedback (WCF) as an integral part of the teaching preparation plan at undergraduate programmes at Omani universities. In addition, evaluation committees and bodies of assessment at higher education institutions can design better rubrics and marking schemes for evaluating students' written assignments by involving the writing instructors in the decision making process and make room for teacher creativity and freedom in terms of selecting methods of written response that might be more time efficient and tailored to serve the needs of the learners. AlSharani and Storch (2014) suggest that policies should be reviewed taking into consideration all stake holders' perspectives as well as findings from recent research. In addition, learners might benefit more from the writing course and their writing skills might improve accordingly through a number of pathways (e.g. needs assessment and

teacher-learner conferences) by trying to maximise the benefits of teacher written correction and commentary.

1.6 Definition of key terms

There are a number of key terms that I would like to define here based on the literature review. These terms are:

General Foundation Programme (GFP) is a one-year-programme targeted at preparing first year students for studying at higher education institutions in Oman where they learn English, mathematics and information technology before they can start their specialisations.

Errors: ‘morphological, syntactic, and lexical forms that deviate from rules of the target language, violating the expectations of literate adult native speakers.’ (Ferris, 2002a, p.3).

Feedback: According to Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, “teachers ‘transmit’ feedback messages to students about what is right and wrong in their academic work, about its strengths and weaknesses, and students use this information to make subsequent improvements” (2006, p.200).

A conventional definition has been provided by Hattie and Timperley where “feedback is conceptualised as information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding. A teacher or parent can provide corrective information, a peer can provide an alternative strategy, a book can provide information to clarify ideas, a parent can provide encouragement, and a learner can look up the answer to evaluate the correctness of a response. Feedback thus is a consequence of performance” (2007, p.81).

Corrective feedback (CF) “any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of the learner’s utterance” (Chaudron, 1997, p. 31).

Written corrective feedback (WCF) is “a written response to a linguistic error that has been made in the writing of a text by a learner. It seeks to either correct the inaccurate usage or provide information about where the error has occurred and/or about the cause of the error and how it may be corrected.” (Bitchener & Storch, 2016, p.1).

1.7 Structure of the thesis

This study has seven chapters. It starts with presenting the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the main research questions, the study’s significance and explains the potential contribution of my study to the broader body of knowledge in the literature. Second, it describes the context of the current study which is the Omani context and the nature of teacher comments on learners’ written assignments in English as a foreign language. Third, it sets the theoretical background to the current study through the literature review and related studies. Fourth, it explains the research methodology of the current study which includes a rationale for the design and methodology. Fifth, it presents the findings of the study and the data analysis and interpretation. Sixth, it discusses the findings of the current study in light of the theoretical framework and the body of literature from which it is derived. Seventh, it considers the contribution of these findings to the field of writing and it presents the recommendations which are made for teaching and assessing writing as a foreign language (EFL) in the Omani context. The current study concludes with suggestions for future studies based on its findings.

1.8 Summary of chapter one

This chapter started with describing the background of this study, statement of problem, research questions, the study's significance, definition of key terms, and the structure of the thesis. The chapter has paved the way for presenting the literature review and the related studies of my research in the following chapter.

Chapter Two: An Overview of the Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the English language programme at Colleges of Technology where the data for this study were collected. The aim of this chapter is to introduce the contextual background of the current study. The chapter starts with a review on English language teaching at public schools and higher education institutions with regard to writing and giving written corrective feedback to students' written assignments in Oman.

2.2 An Overview of Education in Oman

Before I start presenting about education in the Omani context, I would like to say that this chapter in particular is very close to my heart because it brings back all the memories from my childhood where my parents were used to tell me and my siblings about life in Oman in the past in the reigns of Sultan Saeed bin Timor, the father of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Saeed, the ruler of the Sultanate of Oman today. I can still remember those stories quite vividly. This chapter is also dear to my heart because it is evidence that His Majesty has taken Oman to a different level and introduced the country and his nation to the world through his vision and wisdom. We can never thank His Majesty enough.

Now let me start presenting the current chapter. I recall my parents used to tell me and my siblings about life in Oman before the 1970s including education. Before the 1970s, Omani children aged between 6-14 went to what was known as the "Kuttab" or religious schools; a place where they learnt how to read and recite the Holy Quran. They were also taught how to read modern standard Arabic and do very simple mathematics. There was only one teacher who taught all the skills. There was no requirement for a special building for this kind of education.

It took place in mosques, the teacher's house and under the shades of trees. The teacher was the one who selected the content of the lesson and it aimed mainly at teaching the children about the Holy Quran and what Prophet Mohammed taught his companions. Children went to those schools every morning for a couple of hours. Moreover, the only assessment and feedback they received from the teacher was how good they could remember and recite the Holy Quran.

It is common knowledge among Omanis that education in the Sultanate of Oman was limited to three schools and accommodated around 900 students only. It was not easy to join school prior the 1970s nor did many children have the privilege to go to school. However, when His Majesty Sultan Qaboos became the ruler of Oman on the 23rd of July 1970, it was the beginning of a new era in the Omani history. It was the start of the Omani renaissance. His Majesty promised his nation to make education available to everybody. Today there are more than 1100 public schools in Oman and 562,423 students all over the Sultanate based on the statistics of the official website of the Ministry of Education (MoE) on <https://home.moe.gov.om/>.

The first Ministry of Education ever in Oman was established in 1970. Because there were no proper buildings as schools, the ministry rented buildings and tents to teach young Omanis. Al Nabhani (2007) states that the textbooks were bought from other neighbouring countries and teachers were recruited from other countries and that the schools were used to accommodate two shifts; one in the morning and another in the afternoon. In addition, adult education was introduced for the first time and took place in the evening. This system of education was called the general education system and it took place for around 25 years.

Students had to go through three stages; elementary from the age of 6-12, preparatory from the age of 13-15 and secondary from the age of 16-18. In their second year of the last stage, students could choose to study either science or art. The only assessment that took place was through formal assessment of tests and exams. That period was followed by a reform in the country in alignment with 'Vision 2020' which aimed to cover the duration from 1995 to 2020 as a part of the social economic development. Hence Basic Education was introduced. Basic Education is more focused on developing students' personalities and personal life competencies. The focus was to equip learners with life-long skills (e.g. interpersonal skills, leadership skills, mathematics, information technology literacy, social skills, creative thinking and problem solving). The Basic Education consists of three cycles. The first cycle (ages 6-9) covers grades 1-4, the second cycle (ages 10-15) covers grades 5-10, and the third cycle is post basic (ages 16-17) and it covers grades 11-12. It is mainly aimed at developing students' sense of national identity by teaching them Arabic Language, Islamic Education, Social Studies and English Language. Post basic education aims at consolidating a sense of belonging to the Gulf, Arabic and Islamic, and international cultures while acquiring the necessary skills in an internationally used language such as English. Hence, students are assessed through tests, exams and projects. Once students graduate from post basic, they have two options. They can enrol in higher education institutions either in Oman or abroad for four years, or enrol in technical and vocational training for up to three years based on their scores in the final exams in Grade 12.

2.2.1 Teaching English at Omani public schools

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in Oman is responsible for providing education to all children enrolled at public schools. They have set a number of learning

outcomes for each skill in each grade. The learning outcomes for the writing course in each cycle are presented in the 'Student Assessment Handbook' (SAH) (p. 49-67) which can be found on the ministry's main website. The Handbook is based on the official General Guidelines Document for Assessment issued by the Directorate-General of Educational Evaluation (DGEE) at the Ministry of Education. English is taught from day one at schools, seven lessons per week from Grades (1-10). However, in Grades (11-12), students learn English six lessons per week. Each lesson lasts for approximately 40 minutes. There, the children learn all the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing) in one lesson since the Omani curriculum follows an integrated approach in teaching English. Moreover, students are taught grammar from Grade One.

2.2.2 English textbooks in Omani public schools: Grades 1-12

The Ministry of Education (MoE) in Oman provides all the teachers of English at public schools with the necessary teaching materials based on Newsletter for English teaching staff (2018/2019) (p. 5; 6; 29; 43). The course books of all the classes from (Grades 1-12) are in-house materials designed by the MoE in Oman and tailored specifically for the Omani students. Students are handed two books each term; a class book and a skills book. The books for Grades (1-10) are called *English For Me* and the books for Grades (11-12) are called *Engage with English*. The books are rather culture specific with pictures and images of real Omani children and adults, Omani names for girls and boys, famous Omani figures, and names of places in Oman. The class book is used on a daily basis in the classroom. In addition, students are exposed to other cultures around the world through reading passages and stories. Apart from the class book, students are provided with a skills book which might not be used daily in the classroom. The skills book is another source for the learner to dwell upon and practise more

activities since the tasks and activities there are similar to the tasks and activities in the class book.

The class books in Cycle One (Grades 1-4) are mainly about introducing students to the language by asking them to listen to songs and follow the teacher's instructions and memorise daily usage words in the surrounding environment. Learners are also introduced to numbers (10-100) and basic sums. The class books are rather picture books with colourful images and limited words and sentences in order to draw learners' interest to the language and familiarise them with the surrounding environment. The students usually perform activities such as listen and color, listen and count or listen and draw. There are other tasks such as match pictures with words, numbers or descriptions. The focus of the class book in Cycle Two (Grades 5-10) is more on speaking and reading long passages and stories. Students are taught how to produce short narrative and descriptive texts in Grade Five. In the following two grades, they are taught how to write interactive texts such as emails and postcards. In Grade Eight, they are introduced to evaluative texts through diaries. In Grade Nine, they are given some practical tips on how to start writing a text and keeping word-logs and a journal of the story or poem they read and the reasons why they liked or did not like them. Similar to Cycle Two, the focus of the class book in post basic (Grades 11-12) is on speaking and reading. It is at this stage that the students start writing essays in all genres in preparation for their final examinations at the end of each term. As a result, one cannot blame school graduates for joining the General Foundation Programme at the start of enrolling at higher education institutes if they were taught to write and produce essays independently in Grade Eleven

which means they practically spend more time on writing just two years before graduating from high school.

It is worthy to mention that Arabic is the official language of the country in Oman. It is the language of communication at the governmental sector, and the language of the media. Moreover, it is the medium of instruction at public schools except in the English class and there are no fees at all at public schools. English, on the other hand, is highly recognised in Oman because of its economic and developmental role in particular in education, the media, and science. Moreover, it is the language of today's global commerce and modern technology. Hence, English is taught from Grade One at public schools or day one in kindergarten. English is utilised at work places in both government and private organisations. However, it is used more in private associations, because they are linked more closely to international organisations.

2.2.3 Assessment methods in Grades 1-12 at Omani public schools

Similar to many contexts, assessment differs at schools from that at tertiary level in Oman. Hence, learners at the foundation year at higher education institutions might have some expectations of assessment methods based on their previous schooling experience. However, they get academic shock when they find out that the expectations and marking standards and schemes at tertiary level are rather different from schools. As a result, they might get frustrated or feel that their confidence has been shaken at their first few months at university or college as I recall from my own learning experience at Sultan Qaboos University.

I would like first to present the methods of assessment at Omani schools. Since English is taught in integration through the four skills (speaking, listening, reading

and writing) at Omani schools as I have mentioned earlier, students are assessed on all the skills through two pathways: formative and summative. First, there is formative or continuous assessment. Formative assessment can take the form of day-to-day observation, classroom questioning (e.g. pair/group work), written work (homework), presentations, short quizzes focusing on one learning outcome, classroom tests (CLTs) which are tests that all students take in class within 20 minutes only and are administered as part of a normal lesson, projects (e.g. a piece of writing, a spoken performance, a poster, a collection of words and/or pictures) which can be done either individually or in groups, and portfolios. Further, the formative assessment of students in all the grades can vary and change over the period of a term or an academic year depending on students' performance. Detailed information on specific marks and percentages of each writing task in each grade as well as term test question types and marks can be accessed via the ministry's website on www.moe.gov.om/Portal. Second, there is summative assessment. Teachers of Grades One and Two are not obliged to record any type of marks or grades. Hence, they write tests or activities which can be revised by the senior teacher (head of English department) or sometimes by the supervisor. The aim of the test or activity is to make students revise what they have studied so far and diagnose and assess students' current level of English proficiency. Teachers of Grades Three and Four are asked to write Classroom Tests (CLTs) and the marks are recorded and graded. From Grade Five onwards, the students are assessed through formative, and summative assessment in the form of Semester Tests (SMTs) which can be found in Student Assessment Handbook on (p. 87- 101). These tests are conducted at the end of each term and aim to assess students on their listening, reading, writing, grammar and vocabulary skills and knowledge. Speaking is

assessed through formative assessment as part of the daily classroom activities. Moreover, it is worthy to mention that each region or governate is responsible for writing the semester tests for grades 5-10 except for grades 11-12, where the tests are prepared at a national level and administered at the end of each term. Table 2.1 below shows the distribution of the marks of the writing tests both according to the formative and summative assessment for Grades 1-12.

Table 2.1 Formative and summative assessment of EFL writing Grades 1-12 at Omani public schools

Formative Assessment of EFL writing Grades 1-12					Summative assessment
	Continuous assessment (CA)	Classroom test (CLTs)	Semester test (SMTs)	TOTAL	
Grade 1	20%				
Grade 2	25%				
Grade 3	15%	10%		25%	
Grade 4	15%	10%		25%	
Grade 5	10%	5%	10%	25%	5%
Grade 6	10%	5%	10%	25%	5%
Grade 7	10%	5%	10%	25%	5%
Grade 8	10%	5%	10%	25%	5%
Grade 9	10%	5%	10%	25%	5%
Grade 10	10%		15%	25%	10%
Grade 11	10%		15%	25%	10%
Grade 11 Elective	20%		20%	40%	20%
Grade 12	10%		20%	30%	10%
Grade 12 Elective	15%		25%	40%	15%

As can be seen in Table 2.2 below, the minimum pass mark in English is 50% or letter-grade 'D' in Grade 1-12. An 'E' grade is therefore regarded as a 'fail'.

Table 2.2 Marks and letter grades of English from Grades 1-12 at Omani public schools

Mark Range	Letter-Grade	Descriptor
90% – 100%	A	Excellent
80% – 89%	B	Very good
65% – 79%	C	Good
50% – 64%	D	Satisfactory
49% or less	E	Needs further support

Parents of Grades 1-12 receive four reports regarding their child’s achievement in the learning outcomes for English twice a term: in the middle and end of each term. The mid term descriptive report which is in Arabic does not include any marks or grades but rather a brief comment usually consisting of ten to 15 words. The end report at the end of the term gives information about the student’s final percentage mark and letter-grade.

2.3 The assessment of Writing

Students at Omani schools from Grades One to 12 are assessed through many channels such as day-to-day observation, classroom questioning, written work and projects. Here, the emphasis is on the need for teachers to conduct constant, on-going assessment of individual students and the whole class, so that he/she can note progress, identify problems and find solutions. There is no formal assessment of students' writing in Grades One and Two. Hence, through day-to-day observation, the writing teachers can observe what the students write individually and in groups. However, students are asked to keep their written work in portfolios for summative assessment in all the grades.

2.3.1 Writing assessment criteria Grades One-Four

According to the Assessment Handbook, there are a number of learning outcomes that school students are expected to achieve in the writing class. In general, all the students in Grades **One-Four** are assessed against a rating scale from (1-10 marks) and from (1-5 marks) in Grades Five-12. Students at Grade One are expected to be able write letters, numbers and phrases. Students are assessed on how well formed and recognised are the letters and the numbers and how correctly they are spelt. Students at Grade Two are expected to be able write simple sentences. At this grade, they are assessed on accuracy of their use of word order, spelling and capital letters, full stops and question marks as well as the clarity of their handwriting. Students at Grades Three and Four are expected to be able produce a variety of short written texts. They are assessed against whether the meaning is clear, as well against their accurate use of grammar, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation. They are also assessed on their ability to show a good demonstration of organisation and layout of the text. Students' written work is marked in a comprehensive manner (i.e. teachers can

simply insert the correct words for the student). However, the assessment handbook emphasises that it may be more productive and beneficial to encourage student self-correction by either indicating where the error is with no additional information, indicating where the error is and what type of error it is (e.g. spelling, capital letter); or writing an overall comment in the students' written assignment which needs to be further improved. Moreover, all written assignments are expected to be very well-organised, clear and coherent, with a varied range of accurate grammar and vocabulary.

2.3.2 Writing assessment criteria Grades Five-Ten

Students at Grades Five and Six are expected to be able to write short texts in the form of descriptions (daily routines), dialogues, processes, sets of instructions, notes/ messages, stories, and informal letters/e-mails. Students are expected to write coherent short texts of a paragraph length. They are assessed on delivering a clear message, appropriate and correct usage of grammar/ vocabulary, appropriate organisation/ layout, accurate spelling and clear handwriting. Students at Grades Seven, Eight and Nine are expected to write and respond to interactive texts such as informal letters to friends and relatives, e-mails, postcards, notes/messages, invitations, letters of complaint, and application letters. They are assessed on delivering clear messages, and succeeding in achieving the intended purpose of the text. They are also expected to write informative texts such as reports, articles, summaries, completed forms, sets of instructions, descriptions, notes/lists, graphs/ tables, adverts, posters, and brochures/ leaflets. Students are assessed on their ability to present the relevant information in an interesting manner with a very good use of details and examples. Moreover, students are expected to write narrative texts such as accounts of real life events/experiences, fictional narratives, biographies,

historical texts, reports, and diary entries. They are assessed against producing narratives which are lively and engaging the reader, as well as showing effective use of appropriate details. Further, students are expected to write evaluative texts such as articles, advice/ feedback, complaints/ criticism, commentary, reviews, recommendations, and other kinds of texts whose main purpose is to express (and justify) an opinion. In addition, students are assessed on their ability to express their opinions in a lively and convincing way, and supporting all the points effectively with relevant evidence and detail. Students at Grade Ten are introduced to evaluative texts and the criteria is similar to the previously mentioned genres.

2.3.3 Writing assessment criteria Grades 11 & 12 (Core English & English Elective)

All Omani students take Core English class in Grades 11 and 12 at school. However, only those interested in pursuing a career that requires English language mastery will register at English Elective in Grades 11 and 12. Students at Grades 11 and 12 (Core English) are expected to write narrative, interactive, informative and evaluative texts and the criteria is similar to the way they were assessed in the previous grades. The focus of the writing class in Grades 11 and 12 (English Elective) is on producing interactive texts and the assessment criteria is similar to the one used at Grade Ten.

Based on Student assessment handbook, it is clear that the writing assessment at Omani schools tends to mainly focus on form and content- which goes on to tertiary level. However, in practice and based on my own observation in the Omani context and my own teaching and learning experience, more weight is given to the accuracy of learners' writing rather than anything else. It is worthy to

mention that writing in Oman whether at schools or at higher education institutions is a product-oriented approach rather than process-oriented because the writing instructor tests the writing rather than teaches writing since teachers might not be able to check a second draft of their student' written assignments due to time constraint and large classroom size. The typical writing classroom at schools and colleges is dominated by the teaching of grammar and the teaching of language, with less attention paid to the discourse features of writing. A primarily product-oriented approach is adopted, and writing is treated as a "one-off" activity—i.e., students write a composition and submit it immediately afterwards (Lee, I., 1997). Teachers generally respond to student writing using a product-oriented approach—i.e., treating each piece of writing as a final draft. Lee, I. (1998, 2004) discussed a similar situation being implemented in Hong Kong. As a result, learners might be more concerned about their grades and marks rather than the written comments that the writing tutors write on written assignments.

As I have explained earlier, English is taught in integration at Omani schools where the English class consists of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. On the other hand, the scenario might be different at Omani tertiary level. There is more weight given to the writing course and the marking scheme is rather different because writing is taught as an independent course rather than part of the English language as is the case at schools. I assume that there is quite a gap between passing marks at tertiary level and that at schools given the fact that the writing task requirements, length of the written assignment, and teacher expectations and evaluation of what is considered as 'good' writing are different in each learning environment. Theoretically speaking, I feel that policy makers at

the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Higher Education should meet and change the marking schemes and standards in order to bridge the gap between the two learning contexts (i.e. schools and universities).

As a result of the above mentioned reasons, students get shocked when they join college and feel that their writing instructor is being unfair. Al Seyabi (2017) discussed how high school writing instruction is different from that at college. The author explains that while school writing tends to be more standardised and quantified, college writing is expected to be more expressive and contextual which puts college faculty members in the very awkward position of having “to help their students to unlearn (the) rules and skills that might have served them well in high school” (p. 80) but might be totally ineffective for the current situation. In addition, I believe that the biggest and first challenge tertiary students face is the fact that they have to write grammatically accurate sentences which convey meaning, too and following correct punctuation. Moreover, they have to write topic sentences for all the paragraphs in an essay. Further, they are expected to have well connected sentences in each paragraph. Not being able to write as expected at college level is a daily struggle for tertiary level students in the Omani context- something I attempt to address in my research by examining writing instructors’ attitudes and practice of written corrective feedback.

2.4 The status of writing for Omani EFL learners

Writing is the representation of speech and it might not be easy for foreign language learners to transform speech into text. Omani learners are taught English from Grade one at school. However, many of them cannot articulate their ideas from spoken language to written language due to a number of reasons- which to me sound as if there is an iceberg and we only see the surface of that

iceberg while the real problem and factors that contributed to their struggle of writing might be all hidden beneath that iceberg. For instance, apart from all the reasons I mentioned earlier, some learners might not possess a good vocabulary repertoire of the most common and everyday English words. Moreover, some learners might not be motivated to learn English for whatever reasons. Further, some job descriptions do not require mastering English. In addition, writing requires practice at home rather than being a one shot exercise at the classroom. However, learners confine English to the classroom setting only. Further, the English language lesson at school consists of reading a text, doing some listening tasks, writing a short text, and presenting about a certain topic, all combined in one lesson. The order might be different but the components are the same. In addition, students at Omani public schools are not asked to produce any sort of written texts until they are actually in Grade Eight though their writing at this grade might have severe writing issues such as spelling errors, punctuation and grammatical problems based on informal discussions with some friends. Nevertheless, all teachers of English who teach at Grade One onwards are encouraged by their supervisors to teach students the so called '*writing route*'. The writing route as have been explained to me by some school teachers has six phases; plan (ideas and aim), draft (write your text), revise (show it to a friend), re-draft (make changes), re-read, check spelling, edit (consult your teacher), and publish (write the final text by hand or computer). However, students are given marks to demonstrate their writing skills in English in an attempt to motivate them learn and apply the writing route approach into their paragraphs. It could be that because learners are given marks for every skill they can master at school, they tend to write in a mechanical manner- if we can say that. In other words, students might not value writing *per se* but are rather motivated by marks. For all the above

mentioned reasons, learners might join tertiary level with the idea that they are really 'good' writers based on their marks and grades back at school. However, the reality might be totally different and they might feel disappointed in themselves when they start getting written corrective feedback from their writing instructors at tertiary level. On the other hand, learners at tertiary level are expected to compose descriptive, narrative, argumentative and cause and effect essays. The focus is on specific aspects of writing (e.g. organisation, cohesion, coherence) as well as on writing the thesis statement of the essay, topic sentences, concluding sentences, providing sufficient details for each body paragraph in addition to paying attention to the grammatical and mechanical aspects of writing an assignment. In addition, learners might have an hour a week at the computer lab where they practise typing so that they can learn how to type their essays on English keyboards. They might also get engaged in interactive writing activities during that hour to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar knowledge and skills. Consequently, it takes students a while to adapt to the new learning environment at tertiary level.

There are some difference between English and Arabic which might make writing in English rather difficult for Omani learners. . For instance, Omani learners might not be able to distinguish between the letters /c/ and /k/ because they can have two different sounds depending on the position of those letters in a word and whether or not they are followed by a vowel (e.g. cat, cycle, bounce). On the other hand, each letter in the Arabic alphabet has one sound only. Another challenge for Omani learners is not being able to distinguish between /b/ and /p/ and /v/ and /f/, since the letters /p/ and /v/ do not exist in Arabic at all. Further, while in some parts of Oman, people pronounce /g/ as / dʒ / when they speak

Omani Arabic, in other parts of Oman, people might pronounce it as /dʒeɪ/ and so it becomes no different from the pronunciation of the letter /j/. Hence, the dialects of Omani Arabic can create more spelling and pronunciation problems for Omani children learning English. Some Omani learners might also omit one letter from doubled consonant letters. While doubled consonant letters exist in Arabic, both consonants have the same sound unlike English where double consonants might have two different sounds. For instance, some Omani learners might write (suceful) instead of (successful). Moreover, there are no silent letters in Arabic at all, but rather all the letters are pronounced. Hence, some learners tend to delete silent letters when they write in English (e.g. sin for sign). They might also get easily confused when there are two consecutive vowels in the same word and they might end up swapping the position of those vowels (e.g. *recieve* for *receive*).

Apart from the differences between the English and Arabic alphabet system, there are differences in grammar in both languages, too. Writing instructors at tertiary level in Oman are in consensus that English grammar is one of the main obstacles that Omani learners face though learners are taught how to write grammatically correct sentences with correct punctuation from early stages of schooling. Grammar can be challenging to learners because of the differences in sentence construction in both languages. A sentence in Arabic starts with a verb, subject and object, whereas it starts with the subject followed by a verb and the rest of the sentence in English. Moreover, irregular past tense verbs in English are another dilemma for Omani learners though they have been taught about irregular verbs from Grade Five. Further, the present perfect is another obstacle for Omani learners because this tense does not exist in Arabic at all. With

grammatical errors, comes errors in mechanism (e.g. punctuation, upper case letters) which form another problem for Omani learners though they are introduced to mechanics from Grade One.

2.5 Higher Education in Oman

The Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) in Oman provides higher education to students who graduate from schools in Oman as can be seen in Table 2.3 below. There is only one public university which is Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). It was built in 1986 and is an independent organisation on its own. Though school graduates have the freedom to apply for any university or college they wish to enrol in, being admitted at SQU is highly competitive because the capacity of intake of the university is rather limited and it is one of the most popular and prestigious universities in Oman. Further, the language of instruction is exclusively English in all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Oman and they are all mixed gender student institutions except at Al-Zahra College for Girls in which Arabic is the medium of instruction for all the majors except English and the General Foundation Program (GFP). Moreover, all the students at the Military Technical College are boys though the faculty members are mixed gender. Further, many of these institutions provide diploma and bachelor degree courses and some of them provide master and doctoral programmes, too. In addition, there are 15 private English Language Centres which offer their services to Omanis and non Omanis who want to improve their English language (AlBadwawi, 2012). Alongside branches of international institutions, such as the British Council, the Centre for British Teachers Education Services, the English Language Services Centres (four centres in Muscat, Sohar, Sur, and Salalah), and Hawthorn English Language Centre, there are numerous other local centres all over the country providing English language courses. Moreover, all Higher

Education Institutions (HEIs) use imported English Language Teaching (ELT) materials from the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States of America (USA) and a few locally written materials (AlJadidi, 2009). Further, some of these institutions recruit a significant number of native English-speaking teachers along with significant numbers of non-native English-speaking teachers including Omani nationals.

Table 2.3 Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Oman

Governing Authority	Name of institution	No. of sites
University Council	Sultan Qaboos university	1
Ministry of Manpower	Colleges of Technology	7
Ministry of Higher Education	Applied colleges of Sciences	6
Ministry of Health	Health and Nursing Institutions	5
Oman Central Bank	The College of Banking and Financial Studies	1
Ministry of Higher Education	International Maritime College Oman	1
The Ministry of Commerce and Industry	Oman Tourism College	1
Ministry of Defense	Military Technical College	1
Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs	Institute of Islamic Studies	1
Ministry of Higher Education	private universities and colleges	24

It is worth mentioning that each higher education institution in Oman teaches English to first year students at tertiary level through the General Foundation Programmes (GFP) as I will discuss in the next section.

2.5.1 The General Foundation Programme (GFP)

All Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Oman make it compulsory for first year students to enroll at the General Foundation Programme (GFP) which can take up to one academic year aimed at improving school leavers' level of English.

Students might take up to 20 hours per week learning all the skills (listening, speaking, reading, writing). In addition, they study mathematics and information technology during that academic year. It has been viewed that more than 80% of Omani learners entering Higher Education Institutions in the Sultanate of Oman are first required to take a General Foundation Programme (GFP) due to the fact that teaching and learning at public schools is mainly carried out in Arabic (Al-Mamari, 2012). Al-Mamari adds that language programmes are designed for students having at least an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) score of 2.0. However, thousands of school graduates fail higher education English placement tests and more than 40% of those students are below the level expected by the General Foundation Programme standards which were formed and decided upon by the Oman Academic Accreditation Authority, OAAA (2008). However, it is well known that the IELTS exam tests students' skills on time management rather than knowledge of the language. Hence, it might be unfair to judge students' level of English language based on a test that assesses speed rather than knowledge. If learners were not trained to manage their time during exams throughout their schooling years, it does not seem to be fair to assess their level of English language based on IELTS scores. Al-Mamari adds that due to the rather low level of English language proficiency of school graduates, a committee of senior Omani academics, representatives of Higher Education Institutions and external experts met for the purpose of developing the standards at the Foundation Programme. These standards were designed based on the learning outcomes of four learning areas: English language, mathematics, Information Technology and general study skills. In 2008, Her Excellency the Ministress of Higher Education issued the Ministerial Decision No.72/2008 stating that these standards should be adopted

by all public and private Higher Education Institutions in Oman. Nevertheless, some Omani learners might seem to be heavily dependent on the writing instructor at tertiary level and do not edit their essays or check the spelling of words before submitting their essays for marking.

It is worthy to mention that many students experience transition to higher education at a time when they are changing from adolescence into adulthood. It is a time of changing identities and identity conflict might be a source of study difficulty (Heywood, 2000). It can be difficult for some Omani students to manage their finances because many of them might be studying away from home in particular during the foundation programme year. Loneliness might be another factor that can contribute to stress because some learners might take longer to make friends and get adjusted to the new environment because it might be the first time ever for them to be away from home and lose all the love, support and protection they received from their families. Moreover, bright students from high school might no longer stand out as high achievers at tertiary level- which might lead to depression and anxiety. Another factor might be the fact that some teachers might not be able to match their teaching styles to the wide range of mixed learning styles in each class. Equally, learners should be encouraged to function in learning styles different from their own- an open discussion with the whole class can help teachers achieve a mutual ground with students and expose them to the variety of learning styles out there. Teachers might also do an assessment at the start of the term to find out the different learning styles they have in each class. Further, instructors and learners might not be in alignment of certain words and what is considered as quality writing, teacher feedback, and the construct of an essay. Moreover, learners might have pre-conceived conceptions about how to succeed and what the whole experience of being at

college means to them. Introducing learners to academic achievement at the start of the term might bridge the gap between learner and teacher expectation. I remember from my own experience as an academic that some students considered college life a relief from home and an opportunity to socialise with other people and classmates. In addition, it could be that some learners had past experiences with other instructors which might have produced negative attitudes towards writing and teacher feedback. Moreover, learners are likely to be affected emotionally by feedback on work which is a representation of their own amateur knowledge, ideas, and understanding to a perceived expert judge which is the writing instructor. We should bear in mind that inexperienced L2 First-year undergraduate students tend to be inexperienced writers, because they have had limited exposure to academic writing and other writing conventions at school level (Lephalala & Pienaar, 2008) and they might not know that reading the instructors' written comments can actually help them improve their writing skills. Pring (2004) argues that if teaching fails to achieve its objectives and if learners do not learn anything, then the instructor has not really been teaching. This might sound a bit sad, but unless writing instructors actively do something to solve this issue, learners might not benefit from the long hours spent in marking essays and they will keep repeating the same errors over again. It is worthy to mention that there is a common concern among many Omani parents as their children find it rather difficult to learn English. Consequently, there are many private institutions that promote intensive English language programmes for school students to study English during the summer vacation. Further, sending their children abroad in particular to the United Kingdom during the summer, has become very fashionable among many Omani families. For the less privileged families,

however, the scenario is different and their children continue to struggle with learning English.

Based on this discussion, I wanted to investigate writing instructors' attitudes and practice of written corrective feedback in an attempt to improve the current writing pedagogy and assessment methods at tertiary level.

2.6 Context of my research: Colleges of Technology

Due to feasibility issues and the fact that all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) follow the same rules and regulations in teaching first year students academic writing, I collected the data for my research from Colleges of Technology, which is the second biggest institution that accepts school graduates in Oman and has been first established in 1984. Each year, each of the seven branches accommodates more than 12000 male and female students at the General Foundation Programme (GFP). Apart from Higher College of Technology in Muscat, there are six more branches of this college located in six different governates namely, Al Musanna, Nizwa, Ibra, Salalah, Shinas, and Ibri. They operate under the patronage of the Ministry of Manpower. Interestingly, students can move to the college of their choice based on some personal reasons (e.g. close to home) and their preferable majors after they complete their English language courses in their first year. Apart from the English Language Center (ELC), all colleges have the following academic departments: Engineering, Information Technology (IT), and Business Studies. The Engineering Department offers 12 specialisations under its three main sections which are Mechanical and Industrial Engineering (MIE), Civil and Architecture Engineering (CAE) and Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE). These specialisations are Architectural Engineering, Civil Engineering, Land Surveying, Quantity

Surveying, Biomedical Engineering, Computer Engineering, Electrical Power Engineering, Electronics and Communications Engineering, Air Conditioning, Chemical Engineering, Mechanical Engineering and Oil and Gas. Networking, Internet and E-security, Database, Software Engineering and Information System are offered by the Information Technology Department. Students interested in Science and Technology have the opportunity to specialise in Applied Chemistry, Applied Biology or Environmental Science in the Applied Sciences Department. The Business Studies Department offers specialisations in Accounting, Human Resource Management, Marketing and Retailing, and E-Business. Further, Higher College of Technology in Muscat has the privilege of providing four more departments which are Applied Sciences, Pharmacy, Photography and Fashion Design. In addition, each College of Technology has The Educational Technology Center (ETC) which is the central resource for Information Technology facilities, resources and library services. Moreover, there are administrative divisions in all the colleges. These are the Student Affairs, Academic Affairs, and Administrative and Financial Affairs.

The programmes at Colleges of Technology comprise of four levels in addition to the General Foundation Programme. A student can spend up to five terms in the Foundation Programme before going to the Certificate level in a chosen specialisation and then to the other three levels, namely Diploma, Higher Diploma, and Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech). Students who wish to move to the Certificate level, have to score 50% or above in their exit exam in the Foundation Programme. Those students who wish to move to the Diploma, need to score Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0. In order for the students to move to the Higher Diploma, they have to score Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.25 in

their Diploma and score band 4.0 in IELTS test. Those students who wish to pursue their Bachelor degree need to score Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.50 in addition to scoring band 4.5 in IELTS.

2.6.1 Student admission at Colleges of Technology

All high school graduates can apply for Colleges of Technology as long as they have their general diploma certificate. Once they get accepted at the college, they have to take a two and a half hours in-house placement test which consists of multiple choice questions on vocabulary and grammar. Based on their scores, they are placed in four levels accordingly (Beginners, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, Advance). The four-level English Language Programme in the Foundation Year is a non-credit course, and is a prerequisite to join the Post-Foundation Programmes. However, students who score exceptionally well on the Placement Test (86% and above), qualify to sit for level Four Exit Exam. Upon passing this Exit Exam, students go directly to the credit hour Programme, provided that they meet all the other admission criteria for the target specialisation, including the minimum 400 in Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or a band score of 4.0 in IELTS. If they fail to pass the Exit Exam, students are enrolled in level Four (Advance) at the GFP.

2.6.2 English Language Centers (ELCs)

There is an English Language Center (ELC) at each College of Technology and this center is responsible for providing English language classes for the students at the General Foundation Programme (GFP) and post foundation programme. The GFP is offered in three terms. Each term lasts for around 14 weeks, but the third term is an intensive summer term and lasts for around ten weeks. In level one (Beginners), students have 20 contact hours of learning English whereas in levels two to four, students have 18 contact hours of learning English. For

students to pass from one level to another, they need to score 50% of the total assessment score. In addition, students are allowed to fail a level only once. If they fail twice, then they will be dismissed from the English Language Center (ELC). However, they can appeal for readmission which might explain why some students take up to two years to finish the GFP. Moreover, once students pass at the GFP, they move to the Post Foundation Programme where they learn Technical Writing I, Technical Writing II, Technical Communication and Public Speaking. These courses represent an extension to the English Foundation Programme and aim at assisting students in their academic studies.

The English Language Center (ELC) aims at developing students' linguistic proficiency by promoting active learning and use of English through extensive practice in all the language skills needed in various academic situations and the labor market. It also aims at enabling students to attain an advanced level competency in critical thinking skills, communication skills and study skills. Moreover, the center provides the learners with the skills they need to successfully advance towards educational, technical, and personal goals that ultimately lead to their full participation in the national development of Oman. The center has a number of facilities that can be used by learners independently such as the Self-Access Center (SAC), E-Learning Center, and the Writing Center. The Self-Access Center, is a resource center which students can access freely according to their individual needs and interests. Hence it is a space for students to work independently in order to improve their English language proficiency. The E-Learning Center is a computer lab that hosts E-Learning in-house materials for all the skills (Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing) for all levels (Beginners, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate, Advance) which are installed in laptop

computers. These E-Learning materials are interactive in nature and provide immediate feedback. The aim of this center is to promote self-directed learning. The writing Center is a facility meant for students with difficulties in the writing skills. Students are referred to this center either by the writing instructor or being self-driven and motivated to improve their writing skills. The center offers one to one assistance, too.

2.6.3 Staff at English Language Centers (ELCs)

The administration structure of the English Language Centers (ELCs) in all the seven colleges consists of Head of Center (HOC) and two Head of Sections (HOSs). These are the head of the curriculum and teaching methods section and the head of the English language programme section. Further, there are coordinators for the four levels of English language proficiency in the center (Beginners, Intermediate, Upper Intermediate and Advance). These coordinators are teachers being nominated by the (HOC) or (HOSs) and they have a number of duties. For instance, they monitor the teaching and learning processes, ensure that the course-outcomes are met, organise meetings with the teachers, review the supplementary materials used in each level, monitor quizzes, written examinations, monitor students' complaints and appeals and review teachers' portfolios.

2.6.4 English Language Teachers

Apart from Omani nationals, the Colleges of Technology recruit faculty members from other countries such as The United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Pakistan, India, the Philippines in addition to other Arab countries such as Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Tunisia. Faculty members should be doctorate or master degree holders in the specialised area with a minimum of four years of experience at higher education institutions. However, a minimum of Bachelor

degree is required for teachers who teach at the English Language Centre (ELC). Moreover, teachers who have a bachelor degree in English Language Teaching (ELT) or any relevant subjects with an ELT qualification such as the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) or Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certificate can be accepted as well. Teachers are recruited through recruitment agencies or directly through the Ministry of Manpower. All newly appointed teachers go through a three month probation stage and observed by the Head of Center (HOC) or Head of Sections (HOS). On average, teachers are required to teach 20 hours per week in addition to three office hours to meet students who seek extra academic advice.

2.6.5 English Language Students

The majority of the students at Colleges of Technology are Omani school graduates both males and females. They seek programmes leading to diploma, advanced diploma and bachelor in the fields of Engineering, Information Technology and Business Studies. The Engineering Department offers 3 programmes: Mechanical, Electrical and Civil engineering up to Bachelor levels. The Information Technology department offers specialisations in Database, Internet and e-Security, Network and Software up to Bachelor levels. The Business studies offers 3 programmes. The specialisations currently offered are Accounting and Human Resource up to Bachelor levels; and Marketing up to advanced diploma level. A credit-based system is followed in the specialisations at the post-foundation level. Further, the students share a similar background in terms of their first language, culture, religion, and education. Further, there are few students who come from Arab countries such as Iraq, Bahrain, Egypt or Syria. Very few students come from non-Arab counties such as China. Though male

and female students study in the same class, they do not work together in mixed-gender groups due to cultural and religious constraints.

2.6.6 English Language Teaching Materials

Since the Colleges of Technology are under the patronage of the Ministry of Manpower, it monitors and selects the course materials for all the colleges. These materials which are purchased from other western or American publication houses, come in full packages including the course book, the workbook, compact discs, and teacher's guide. Teacher guides are mainly designed to inform the teachers how to teach a lesson with specific tasks and procedures. Moreover, the colleges use some in-house built materials.

2.6.7 English Language Assessment

Students' English language proficiency at the English Language Center (ELC) in the Foundation Programme at Colleges of Technology is assessed through formative and summative assessment. According to the course outline, Continuous Assessment (CA) is in the form of quizzes and comprises of (20%) of the total score in a course. Moreover, students have to take a Mid-Term Exam (MTE) which comprises of (30%) of the total score in a course. Further, students have to do a Level Exit Exam (LEE) which comprises of (50%) of the total score in a course. The mid term exam should be similar to the Level Exam Exit (LEE) in terms of its content, organisation, and length in an attempt to provide learners with sufficient preparation and practice for their LEE. Students can move to the next level if they pass the LEE even if they had failed the continuous assessment and mid term exam.

2.6.8 The Writing Course and teacher WCF

Students enrolling at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) start a new academic phase in their lives. The expectation of their writing might be somehow higher for them from when they were at school. Hence, producing a grammatically accurate and well organised piece of writing with good content in English is one of the main challenges that learners need to overcome in order to secure a prestigious job in the future. The job market is rather competitive with the increasing number of Omani graduates from Oman and abroad in particular in the private sector where the medium of official communication is English. Hence, employers look for graduates with good English writing and speaking skills to meet the demands of everyday duties at work place.

The writing instructors at Colleges of Technology follow a course description which guides them to teach certain skills and genres over the course of a term. Unfortunately, for ethical considerations, I am not able to attach any of these in my research. Moreover, the instructors are provided with the teaching materials and they follow certain guidelines so that all students across the board are taught the same skills and knowledge. The writing session is carried out in a certain manner as can be seen in Figure 2.1 below. The writing instructor usually stimulates students' background knowledge by raising some questions on the topic or discussing a picture or a set of pictures in order to start an oral discussion followed by asking learners to produce a written text. The students usually produce the text by writing it first in groups. In a latter writing session, they are asked to write a similar text individually and in class. The writing instructor marks students' written assignments though they are not obliged by the administration of the college to write any comments or correct all or most of the errors on those essays because daily writing practice is considered as part of the informal

classroom assessment of students' writing. The written assignments are returned back to the learners with some or limited error correction and/or written commentary. The writing instructor then discusses orally the most frequent errors students made in producing those essays and learners are encouraged to ask questions for further clarification on any areas they struggle with either in class or during the instructor's office hours. Most of the time, the writing instructors discuss grammatical, mechanical and spelling errors with the students as the main aim of the Language Center is to help learners improve their linguistic skills and knowledge in writing accurate texts in English. The cycle of writing and marking students' assignments informally goes on with a new topic or genre being introduced each time during the term- a crucial aspect that I will discuss deeply in my proposed theory. Half way through the term and at the end of week seven, all students go through a progress test which aims at assessing students' writing skills on a particular genre being taught earlier during the course. At the end of week 14, there is Level Exit Exam (LEE). The English writing instructors are provided with a rating scale or marking rubrics for assessing students' writing. It is worthy to mention that the rubric is only used for exam purposes and not for daily writing practice. In this rating scale, the grades are allocated to four categories: task response (answering the question at hand), organisation (introduction, body and conclusion), grammar and language use, and vocabulary use. This marking rubric is shared by the students so that they can get prepared for their formal assessment and is attached at the end of each exam paper in the form of a box.

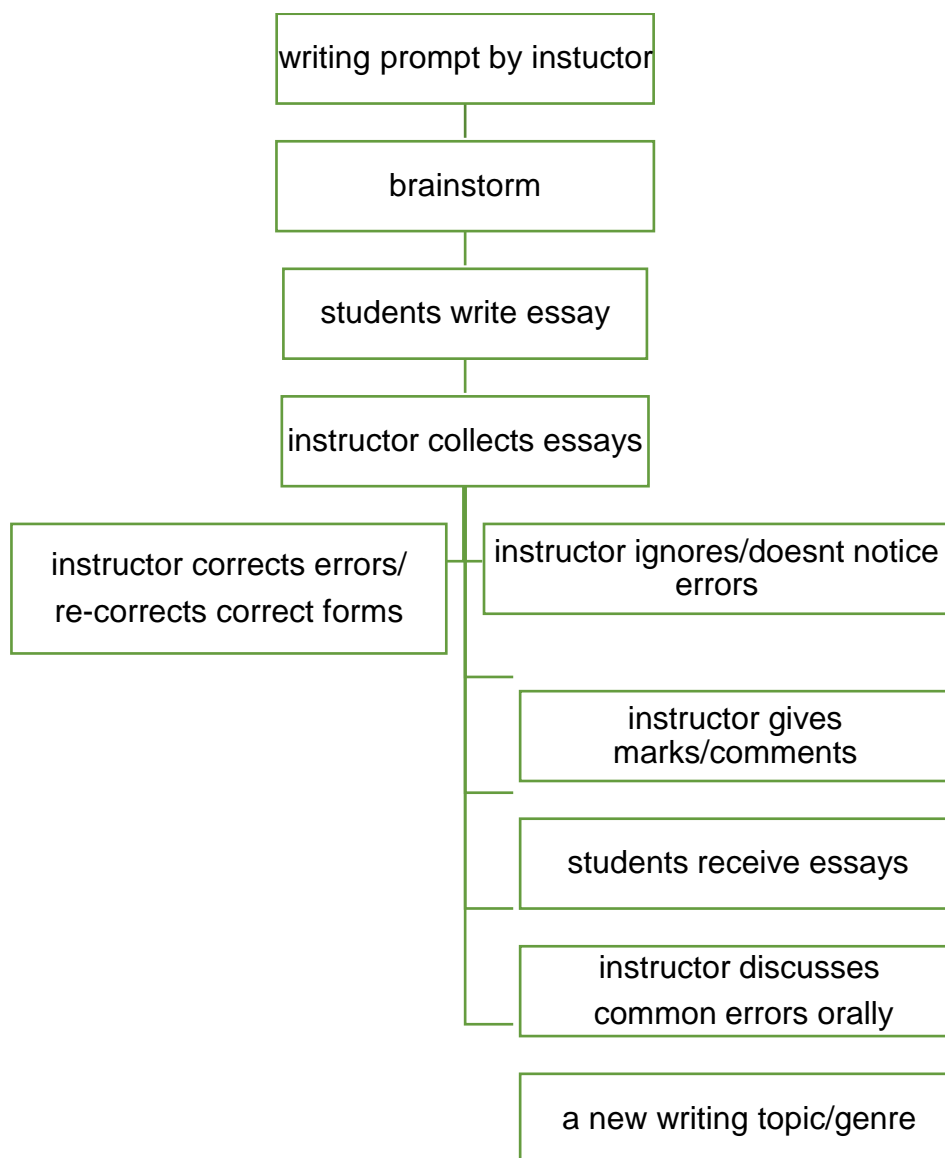


Figure 2.1 Teaching L2 writing and feeding back in the Omani context

I would like to draw the readers' attention that the learners play quite a passive role throughout the feedback process except when there is an oral discussion of the whole class on the most frequent errors where some of the learners might interact and answer some of the teachers' questions. Despite the huge amount of time invested in written response, many Omani writing instructors feel that their efforts do not pay off because learners keep repeating the same previously corrected errors. Students, on the other hand, are generally not satisfied with

teacher feedback, which is usually comprehensive as writing instructors tend to correct all the errors on an assignment. The learners feel that they are 'competent' writers and that the instructor deliberately tries to look for errors as many of my own students used to say to me. Hence, learners focus on the final mark and the evaluative expression rather than on the corrections or instructors' comments that have valuable information on how to improve their writing in future assignments. It has been found that in conventional feedback approaches practiced in many L2 contexts there is little intentional interaction between teacher and students during and after feedback (Lee, I., 2014). Further, Omani instructors deliver feedback to single drafts, and by doing that, their job is done. Further, there might be instances of teacher–student conferences but follow-up student self-reflection or teacher reflection are rarely part of the agenda. I think that without opportunities for redrafting, students might be unable to transfer the lessons learned from feedback in one writing piece to another. Moreover, students might lose sight of the significance of feedback. However, when students receive their written assignments being marked by the teacher awash in ink, they might be at a loss and do not know what to focus on or simply how to make sense of the feedback. Hence, I think that my research might provide insight to writing instructors in Oman as how to provide sustainable written corrective feedback (WCF) as I will discuss in chapter seven.

I believe that written corrective feedback is the equivalence to teaching grammar in the Omani context. Teaching grammar is believed to be essential at writing classes and there is a consensus among English language teachers that grammar accuracy can help learners speak and write accurately. However, Omani teachers might not be experts on English grammar which is totally different from Arabic grammar as I have discussed earlier. Moreover, English grammar

can be an obstacle in dealing with errors and teaching grammar accurately because of the inherent complexity of English grammar. Omani teachers might forget that students might not have knowledge of grammar- though they are taught grammar as a separate course at tertiary level. Even when the teacher corrects an error and teaches learners the grammatical rule behind the correction, learners might understand that rule and the examples given at that specific time and occasion. However, that understanding might not extend that particular context and they are likely to repeat the same error in different contexts which require the application of the same previously taught grammatical rule- partly because English grammar is so complex that it is difficult to generalise some rules. Teachers might sometimes be inconsistent in their error correction because they might correct one instance of an error and ignore other instances, or provided two different types of corrections for one single type of error- or more precisely what students perceive as one single type of error. Moreover, when some writing instructors correct some errors for some learners and ignore the same errors in other students' essays, they might be sending the wrong message which implies that some students are better than others. It might also imply that the teacher is overly critical to some learners and overly kind to other students. Hence, students might get the wrong ideas about their ability or about the teacher's perception of their ability. The question that might need to be addressed is why do we teach grammar explicitly and in isolation of the writing course rather than integrating grammar and writing in one course at tertiary institutions? Truscott explains by saying that 'because of the common intuition that correction should and even must work. Students say something the wrong way; they are taught how it should be said; they then say it the right way, (1999, p.450).' The reality shows- at least from my observations- that this scenario is far from being

true. Unless learners rehearse the correction and re-use it in future situations, that knowledge of grammar will stay in the short term memory and might not have any long term effect. Hyland and Hyland (2001) explain that teachers' beliefs play a role in their choice of error correction methods and that such beliefs are partly the result of personal constructs but that they originate in the social context in which instructors work. They proceed to say that instructors typically respond to student writing in one of three ways: Dualistic, Relativistic and Reflective. Dualistic responders focus mainly on surface features and are rather critical and judgmental, i.e. they focus on form. Relativistic responders pay attention to the ideas of the writing, ignoring significant linguistic and rhetorical problems, i.e. they focus on content. Reflective responders respond to both ideas and linguistic structure. Personally, I am in favour of reflective response but under one condition which is following a selective (i.e. correcting some of the errors) rather than a comprehensive approach (i.e. correcting all the errors) of error correction.

2.7 Summary of Chapter Two

In this chapter, I gave a detailed description of the context in which the current study was conducted. I have also highlighted the major issues related to written corrective feedback, including a background to education in Oman, and writing and assessment at Colleges of Technology. In the coming chapter, I provide a review of the literature in relation to written corrective feedback and the main empirical studies which informed my study.

Chapter Three: Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

This chapter in my research reviews the body of literature in relation to written corrective feedback (WCF). It has two parts: the literature review which lays the foundation, and the background research on WCF. First, it discusses the main theories that underpin written corrective feedback. Then, it presents written corrective feedback as being a form of assessment. After that, it discusses the efficacy of written corrective feedback followed by the types of written corrective feedback. The second part deals with the empirical studies that have been conducted on written corrective feedback. While the first part helped me understand and interpret the findings of my own research, the second part has contributed to the wider literature and context of written corrective feedback which in fact supported or otherwise the findings of my own study.

3.2 Part One: Theories underpinning WCF

Theory guides the search for and interpretation of data that is likely to explain the phenomenon in question. It can strengthen or disclaim any existing explanations of what has been widely observed. Further, we all know that theories which are informative, rigorous, and varied are necessary to advance progress in any field of scientific inquiry. I have come to the conclusion that there are eight theories that explain the role of error correction and feedback in second language contexts. These are: Behaviourism, Krashen's theory of language acquisition, Interactionism, Cognitive/Psycholinguistic, Socio-cultural theory, Skill Acquisition Theory, theories of error analysis, and the Activity Theory.

In the next section I will present the theories on which written corrective feedback has been based.

3.2.1. Behaviourism

The first studies and theories about feedback are almost 100 years old and arose out of the psychological perspective called behaviorism developed by Thorndike (1913). Thorndike views positive feedback as positive reinforcement, and negative feedback as punishment. Reinforcement and punishment can both affect learning. Hence, feedback was theorised to be effective. Within the behaviourist theory, habit formation was seen as key to learning any skill (Skinner, 1957). The learning environment was considered the most important factor in forming those habits. All types of behaviour were explained as a response to external factors in the environment rather than as a function of internal mental processes. Applications of behaviourism can be found in drills, repetitive practice, and providing incentives and verbal reinforcement. However, all of that does not prepare learners for problem solving in the future because learners are simply told what to do and they do not take any initiatives to change or improve things. This implies that positive feedback would result in the repetition of error-free second language output by a student- which I believe is next to possible because learners will always make errors. However, negative feedback would make the replication of such behaviour less probable. Further, behaviourism implies that teachers should not allow students get engaged in spontaneous speech, because they will make mistakes, which could then develop into bad habits if left untreated. Instead, teachers should provide correct models, ensure abundant repetition and drills without letting the learner to reflect on what they learn, do everything to avoid errors in the student output, and provide appropriate feedback.

In fact, oral discussion of errors with the learners, conferences, direct corrective feedback (i.e. giving the correct form), and comprehensive corrective feedback (i.e. correcting all the errors the learner makes) are the most compatible error correction techniques in Behaviourism. Kartchava (2013) states that as first language researchers were transforming the theory of language acquisition, second language acquisition (SLA) researchers found that Behaviourism, could not predict or explain the errors that second language learners make. Moreover, grammatical morpheme studies showed that second language learners learnt grammatical features in a consistent manner and made errors that looked like the errors made by children learning their first language. Hence, they concluded that second language learning does not depend on first language. Rather it is internally driven and learners subconsciously test hypotheses derived from second language input. Further, as a result of Corder's (1967) paper about the place of error in L2 learning, errors were no longer considered as problems. Rather, they were looked at as a necessary part of language development because errors prove where learners are in regard to the target norms, and they also reveal the process of L2 acquisition.

3.2.2. Krashen (Innatism)

Stephen Krashen's Monitor Theory (1982) was the first innatist theory developed specifically for Second Language Acquisition. Krashen believes that nativism is not exclusive to L1 but that it can extend to SLA given certain conditions. His model comprises five interrelated hypotheses: the Acquisition-Learning hypothesis; the Monitor hypothesis; the Natural Order hypothesis; the Input hypothesis; and the Affective Filter hypothesis.

In his Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, Krashen distinguishes between two independent systems of second language performance: the acquired system and the learned system. He argues that learners should be exposed to comprehensible input (e.g. reading and listening) so that they can readily process meaning and learn. He also believes that if the content is relevant and students show the ability to comprehend its meaning, grammar learning will happen naturally and there will be no need for corrective feedback. Further, Krashen's theory is based on L1 acquisition research which claimed that in order to build an L1 grammar, children only need to be exposed to the language that parents or caretakers direct them to for the purpose of meaning making. According to Krashen, L2 learners have two independent ways to develop L2 knowledge: subconsciously through acquisition and consciously through learning. Acquisition is subconscious during process and product. The process of acquisition is similar to the way children learn their L1 in that learners acquire language without being aware of it except that they are using language to communicate meaning. Hence, they focus on the task at hand. Acquisition (product) is also subconscious, because we are generally not consciously aware of the rules of the languages we have acquired. Instead, we have a 'feel' for correctness. Grammatical sentences 'sound' right, or 'feel' right, and errors feel wrong, even if we do not consciously know what rule was violated. On the other hand, learning is conscious during process and product. The process of learning requires intentional study of the L2 rules and patterns, which in turn results in explicit knowledge of "grammar" or "rules" of the language. Surprisingly, acquisition and learning cannot interact. knowledge gained through one system cannot be transferred or incorporated into another for the purpose of spontaneous use. Rather, each system functions independently and has a different task to perform: Acquisition produces

language, and learning monitors the resulting output. Krashen in his Monitor Model hypothesis argued against error correction and that while corrective feedback can be useful, comprehensible input was enough. Further, he believes that the role of the monitor is - or should be - minor, being used only to correct deviations from "normal" speech and to give speech a more 'polished' appearance. He believed that formal instruction can be used to monitor or make minor form-related changes to the output generated by the acquired system. Moreover, he believed that because the monitor might not be available during communicative tasks, error correction can be of minimal help to learners because even if it was provided, there is no guarantee that students will notice, understand, and adopt it. Thus, learners should be engaged in tasks that expose them to rich comprehensible input and meaningful interactions. Moreover, Krashen believes that positive input or corrective feedback alone is sufficient for L2 language development. Further, Krashen viewed acquisition as central in language learning. Hence, the learned system only had a peripheral role to play. Its primary function was to monitor the acquired knowledge during language production. This "Monitor" can only be activated under three conditions. First, learners need enough time to access the learned system. Second, they need to focus on form (not just the meaning) of what they say. Third, their learned system should be rich enough to allow for the retrieval of case-appropriate rules. Hence, the monitor can only be used in situations when it does not interfere with communication (e.g., writing or test-like tasks). On the other hand, interactionists such as Long (1996) Schmidt (1990), and Swain (1985) claim that positive input alone is not sufficient for L2 learning and that the learner needs to know when their output does not conform to L2 form or structure and be pushed to modify it when negative linguistic error has been made. Further, Krashen's natural order

hypothesis states that L2 learners acquire grammatical morphemes (e.g., *-ing*, *-s*, *-ed*) in a predictable order, regardless of their L1 and whether or not they received instruction. The “natural order” originates in the acquired system and receives no interference from the learned system. It has been argued that the “order” is regular across L2 learners, because all language acquisition is guided by the innate human language learning ability. Learners move from one point to another through a certain process. Moreover, Krashen’s input hypothesis explains how second language acquisition takes place. The Input hypothesis is only concerned with 'acquisition', not 'learning'. According to Krashen, L2 learners acquire the language by understanding messages or by receiving comprehensible input. This acquired language is slightly above the learner’s current grammatical knowledge. This type of input is represented as Krashen’s “*i + 1*”, where “*i*” refers to the learner’s current interlanguage level and “*i + 1*” identified a point just above the learner’s current level. Hence, instruction that focused on meaning was promoted, and learners were encouraged to produce language only when they felt ready to do so. This is so because premature and forced production was believed to inhibit the acquisition process by taking learners’ attention away from the primary task of communication. Further, Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis, states that learners should be at ease so that they can acquire a language and be receptive to the input they are exposed to. Hence, there are a number of factors that play an important role in the success of a language learner. These are motivation, attitude, self-confidence, and anxiety. Learners whose filters are low can learn better than those whose filters are high. Low filters allow comprehensible input to flow in freely and for acquisition to happen. High filters block and prevent learning where anxiety is high. Stressful environments which ask learners to pay attention to form and/or

are forced to produce language before they are ready to do so promote high affective filter situations and should be avoided. According to Krashen, learners can acquire a language successfully if they are exposed to rich comprehensible input and their affective filter is low.

3.2.3. Interactionism

In Long's (1996) revised Interaction Hypothesis, he proposed that there are two types of input: positive and negative. Positive input is the provision of what is grammatically correct and negative input is the provision of what is not correct. It represents comprehensible input though one can argue that not all grammatically correct input is comprehensible for all. While Krashen (1982) claimed that comprehensible input alone was responsible for language acquisition, Long (1996) claimed that negative input was also required to deal with issues of grammatical accuracy and learnability. Whereas positive input provides interactionally modified comprehensible input that is usable for acquisition, negative input provides interactionally modified corrective feedback about what is not grammatical and correct. Both types of input facilitate acquisition through cognitive processes via noticing and pushed output. Further, positive and negative input take place during negotiation of meaning when there is some breakdown in understanding between two speakers or the writer and the reader which is usually the teacher. Long's Interaction Hypothesis was originally designed to serve oral communication. However, it can be applicable to written communication, too. Further, Interactionists explain that there are a number of learner-internal (e.g. aptitude, motivation, current L2 knowledge, processing ability) and learner- external (e.g. complexity and distributional characteristics of input, discursal and interactional context, instructional treatment and task

characteristics) factors that can detect the extent to which learners can attend to and notice written corrective feedback (WCF).

3.2.4. Cognitive Theory

Cognitive approaches which have been developed by Piaget, view learning as an internal mental process which involves attending, noticing, forming perceptions, interpreting, storing and retrieving information, categorising and forming generalisations. Further, written corrective feedback can organise, structure and modify knowledge as a kind of scaffolding tool and prompts store students' knowledge in their long term memory. Moreover, cognitive theories claim that acquisition occurs when learners focus on meaning and make errors and receive feedback that is corrective. Reitbauer and Vaupetitsch (2013) believe that teachers can play an important role in developing learners' capacity by structuring the content of learning activities with a focus on the development of cognitive and metacognitive skills. Eslami (2014) claims that the ideal learning situation is one in which the load of the working memory is maximised as much as possible in order to maximise the alternation in long-term memory and that it is important to create a bond between schematic structures of long term memory and new data, so that learning will last and learners will not forget the material. In this sense, corrective feedback is beneficial because it draws learners' attention to areas of difficulty and releases their minds to process language content. Writing instructors might refer their writing course students to the grammar course to make connections between the input in both courses- a feature I will discuss later in my proposed theory in Chapter Seven.

3.2.5. Socio-cultural theory

The socio-cultural theory claims that learning happens through participation rather than acquisition and that learning is mediated through and evident in the

social interaction rather than in the mind of the learner. It claims that there is no one single set of characteristics of social interaction that constitutes affordances for all learners (Sheen & Ellis, 2011). Rather affordances arise through successful tailoring of the social interaction to the development level of the individual learner. Further, affordances happen when the interaction enables learners to construct Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978). ZPD refers to the level of development when a learner is ready to solve a problem with the assistance of what Vygotsky called More Knowledgeable Other (MKO)- which can be a teacher, parent, or even a computer programme. This assistance can be effective when it is offered at the right moment and in the right manner or mode. Thus, written corrective feedback (WCF) can help learners perform certain tasks that they cannot perform independently and that this sort of scaffolding can work effectively when it is given within the learner's present ZPD. Hence, Vygotskian theory solves the problem raised by Truscott (1996, 2007) about written corrective feedback disturbance of the natural development order of second language learning. Vygotsky argues that learners should be challenged at a level which is somehow higher than their actual ZPD in order to raise their motivation and self confidence levels. Further, Swain, Kinnear and Steinman (2010) argue that if writing instructors are convinced that talent and intelligence are fixed factors, then the feedback they give will not be effective at all. They add that the role of teacher feedback is to help learners make amendments and adjust their own theories and pre-existing concepts about the language items they are acquiring. Moreover, they state that the learner or teacher dialogue is a tool that can be used to discover why and how things go wrong and help students find out why and where they lost their way. Moreover, it allows writing instructors to take

individual learner preferences and needs into account when teaching and giving corrective feedback- I will elaborate on this idea later on in my proposed theory.

3.2.6. Skill Acquisition Theory

Another theory that had an impact on written corrective feedback is the Skill acquisition theory which believes that language learning like any other skill is characterised by the progression from an initial stage of declarative knowledge during which the learner is involved in conscious, controlled processing and practice to a final procedural stage where knowledge is automatically and subconsciously drawn upon. Anderson's Adaptive Control of Thought Mode (1976) shows that the progression from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge takes three stages: declarative, associative and autonomous, and that practice is key to progression. Bitchener and Storch (2016) explain these stages by providing the example of the third s. The declarative stage explains that an s should be added when speaking of a third singular. The associative stage shows how to add an s when the context requires it. The autonomous stage shows how the learner adds an s more automatically and subconsciously and more rapidly. The mechanical drilling of the structure by Behaviourism was criticised that it can unlikely lead to long term effect and that practice of the actual behaviour through communication was more needed. Moreover, McLaughlin information processing model (1983) further explains progression from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge. First, the learner resorts to controlled processing where there is a lot of attentional control and there are likely to be limitations with the amount of information the learner can process in their working memory. Repeated practice can become automatic which is then stored in the long term memory and can be retrieved whenever the situation requires. For instance, declarative and procedural knowledge can be accessed by the learner when they want to

compare previous knowledge with new knowledge (e.g. when they compare the written corrective feedback with their own written output). Hence, automatic processes can occur in parallel activating clusters of complex cognitive skills simultaneously.

3.2.7. Theories of Error Analysis

The American linguist Robert Lado started in the 1950s studying errors systematically and developed theories about errors known as contrastive analysis. Contrastive analysis claimed that the main barrier to second language acquisition is L1 interference with L2 and that a scientific and structural comparison of the two languages in question might enable people to predict and describe which problems are and which are not. They claimed that errors serve as a negative stimulus which reinforces “bad habits”, hence there was more emphasis in the classroom on mechanical pattern drills and correcting all the errors that learners made. Because there was an overemphasis on language interference, *interlanguage*- a term adopted by Selinker (1972) emerged and it aimed to explore learning strategies based on learners’ errors. Hence, it became the base of error analysis theories. A number of terms have been coined to describe the perspective which stressed the legitimacy of learners’ second language system. Corder (1971) used the term “idiosyncratic dialect” or “language-learners’ language” in 1978, while Nemser (1971) called it approximate system (Fang & Xue-mei, 2007). It is worthy to mention that error analysis aims at examining a large corpus of errors produced by learners of a second language to express themselves in the target language to provide factual empirical data (Schachter & Celce-Murcia, 1983). Spillner (1991) states that error analysis has taken a great consideration by applied linguistics and in foreign language teaching in the past 20 years. The author explains that errors in

contrastive linguistics result due to the unconscious transfer of mother language in the mind of the learner into the target language and can be prevented by teaching. According to the interlanguage hypothesis, moving from zero knowledge to a native speaker competence does not happen suddenly but rather goes through stages and that errors are indicators of the intermediate learning levels which might imply that writing instructors should be tolerant with learners' written errors. Corder (1983) views errors as valuable information for writing instructors, researchers, and learners for a number of reasons. He explains that they give clues for writing instructors on the progress of the students and what needs to be learnt so that teachers can design remedial classes accordingly. He adds that errors can provide evidence for researchers as to how language is acquired or learned as well as they can give learners some resources in order to learn as they test their own hypotheses in writing.

Error analysis distinguishes between errors and mistakes so that students' errors are analysed properly. An error is a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker, reflecting the interlanguage competence of the learner while a mistake refers to a performance error as it is a failure to utilise a known system correctly (Brown, 2000). Interestingly, Richards (1983) explains that there are many sources of errors. For instance, errors might occur because of over generalisation or transfer where the learner applies previously learnt structures to new situations due to superficial similarities (e.g. He *goed* to school) and adding the *ed* rule to all the verbs (regular/irregular) as an indication of past tense. He adds that errors can occur because learners are ignorant of the rule restriction where they apply rules to new contexts due to analogy (e.g. prepositions, articles). For instance, learners might write (I saw the news *in* the TV) or they

might add or remove articles without being conscious that they are validating grammatical rules. He adds that interference from mother tongue is another cause of errors. From experience, I know that some Omani learners might tend to overuse the determiner *the* and add it to almost all the sentences that they write because this is how we speak in Omani Arabic and it is the way we write standard Arabic, too. Richards adds that another cause of errors is incomplete application of rules because some learners' motivation to achieve communication might exceed their level and they end up writing incorrect sentences or questions (e.g. She *opening* the door..... What she *said*?) Another reason of errors can be caused by false concepts hypothesised (e.g. It *was happened*) as if *was* is an indicator of past tense verbs. Constructing irregular past tense verbs is one of the main challenges many Omani learners struggle with in writing.

Many Omani EFL writing instructors find error correction challenging for them due to the fact that learners make too many spelling and grammar errors even though the same errors have been previously corrected by the writing instructor several times. Jain (1983) distinguishes between three types of errors: systematic, asystematic and non- systematic. From my experience, I recall learners who in particular made systematic errors which are rule governed (e.g. fruits) and occur due to over generalisation that a plural form takes an *s* at the end of a noun. Learners also made asystematic errors which can be found in prepositions, articles, and tense system (e.g. irregular past tense verbs, present perfect which has no equivalent in Arabic)- a phenomenon called indeterminacy and that any effort from the teacher to correct asystematic errors will be useless. According to Jain, these errors cannot be corrected and lead to cognitive clutter and frustration on the part of the learner. Moreover, some learners might make non-systematic

errors which are slips of the tongue or pen or keyboard as a result of tiredness and intense emotions such as exam situations. Similarly, Ferris (1999) distinguishes between treatable errors that are rule-governed and can be fixed by consulting a grammar book (e.g. verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, article usage, plural and possessive noun endings, and sentence fragments) and untreatable errors which are idiosyncratic and require retrieving acquired knowledge of the language to fix the error (e.g. word choice errors, with the possible exception of some pronoun and preposition uses, and unidiomatic sentence structure, resulting from problems to do with word order and missing or adding extra unnecessary words). In fact, Ferris et al. (2000) and Ferris and Roberts (2001) found that written corrective feedback was effective in reducing the number of treatable and untreatable errors. If undergraduate programmes prepare future Omani L2 writing instructors with the base knowledge of learner errors and the obstacles that they face when they write essays, they might be more tolerant with learners' written errors. There is another distinction of the type of errors writing instructors might need to be aware of: local vs. global errors. This distinction has been made as early as 1975 by Burt (Fang & Xue-mei, 2007). According to Montgomery and Baker (2007), local errors are grammar and mechanics errors whereas global errors are content and organisation errors. They add that less is known whether writing instructors are aware that they focus more on local rather than global errors. Ferris et al (2011) claim that the distinction between global and local errors is not fixed nor can be easily described because one type of error may be a global error in one text but it may also be a local error in another text and that the key interpretation depends exclusively on the teacher or the reader of the text. Experts (e.g. Ashwell, 2000; Fatham & Whally, 1990; Ferris, 2002, 2003; Lee, I., 2008) recommend an approach to

feedback that balances local and global issues taking into consideration the needs of each learner, text and the task at hand.

3.2.8 The Activity theory

The final theory I will discuss in this section is The Activity Theory. Bitchener and Storch (2016) state that this theory was first discussed by Vygotsky (1978) but was later developed by scholars (e.g. Leontiev, 1979; 1981, Engestrom, 1987; 2001). The theory focuses on the activity rather than on individuals. It proposes that human behaviour such as learners' response to written corrective feedback needs to be considered holistically by taking individual and context specific factors into account simultaneously. Hence, in order to understand what is going on, we need to consider the behaviour of all the people involved in that situation and the role of the mediating tools. Vygotsky (1978) discussed the activity theory by looking at three components: the subject, the tools and the object. According to him, the activity of learning in a language classroom involves the subject which is the learner, who initiates an activity in response to teacher request which is the stimulus and this activity is carried out by a number of physical tools such as pen, pencils, paper, keyboard and abstract tools which is knowledge of L2. The object of the activity is to complete a writing task for assessment or practice purposes. According to Hasan and Kazlauskas, the theory is all about 'who is doing what, why and how' (2014, p.9). They explain that the relationship between the subject (human doer) and the object (the thing being done) forms the core of an activity which results in an outcome. They further explain that the activity both mediates, and is mediated by, the physical and psychological tools used, as well as the social context of the activity and that tools can be primary (physical), secondary (language, ideas, written corrective feedback, etc.) or tertiary (the learning context, teacher-learner relationship). The authors add that there are certain rules

that determine what is the appropriate form of written corrective feedback: its nature and frequency of feedback provision. These rules determine if the feedback given is direct or indirect, whether it is given on interim or only on final drafts, in written or computer (tools), and if unfocused or focused, and if focused which errors are targeted. Moreover, the Activity Theory believes that learning is controlled by rules set by certain subjects (e.g. stakeholders in the educational institution, government educational policies, the society at large, historical & cultural parameters), all of which can influence beliefs on accuracy, shape policies of what is considered as good teaching practice and appropriate forms of written corrective feedback. These subjects are driven by certain motives, and their actions are oriented to achieve certain goals. In order to achieve sustainable feedback as I will propose later in my theory, we need the collaboration of all the parties involved.

In the next section, I will present the literature in relation to written corrective feedback.

3.3 Literature Review on WCF

This section in my research gives a detailed description of the main research and arguments on written corrective feedback (WCF). Some researchers have stepped forward in strong support of WCF (e.g. Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener Young & Cameron, 2005; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010a, 2010b; Chandler, 2003; Ellis, Erlam, & Loewen, 2006; Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum & Wolfersberger, 2010; Ferris, 1997; Ferris & Roberts, 2001, 2004; Hartshorn, Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-Krause & Anderson, 2010; Lalande, 1984; Polio & Sachs, 2007; Sheen, 2007). Others have argued against it for various reasons (e.g. Kepner, 1991; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986; Semke, 1984; Truscott, 1996, 1999, 2007; Zamel, 1985). Some researchers have argued that the variations and

inconsistencies in them negate the possibility of reaching any real conclusions on the matter (e.g. Bruton, 2009a; Ferris, 2004; Gu enette, 2007; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Russell & Spada, 2006). Further, some studies (e.g. Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Robb et al., 1986; Zamel, 1985) indicate that writing instructors are overly concerned about grammar, while other studies (e.g. Lee, I., 2004; Truscott, 1996) suggest that writing instructors are not capable of giving correct grammatical feedback, yet another study (e.g. Ferris, 2006) found that writing instructors are extremely accurate. Some researchers (e.g. Ferris, 2006; Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Goldstein & Conrad, 1990; Hyland, 1998; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lee, I., 2004) have argued that writing instructors take into account the needs and desires of their students when considering whether and how to give written corrective feedback, while others (e.g. Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Lee, I., 1997, 2004; Truscott, 1996) have claimed that writing instructors are so insensitive to student needs that students are incapable of making sense of the feedback given to them. Moreover, Ellis (2009b) pointed out a number of controversies regarding corrective feedback such as whether corrective feedback (CF) contributes to L2 acquisition, which errors to correct, who should do the correction (the teacher or the learner him/herself), the type of corrective feedback (CF) which is most effective, and the best timing for corrective feedback (CF) (immediate or delayed).

3.3.1 Early research on WCF (1980-2003)

I would like to draw the readers' attention that there are 11 published and most often cited studies on written corrective feedback (WCF) as can be seen in Table 3.1 below (extracted from Storch, 2010). Some studies compared the influence of WCF and content commentaries on students' writing (e.g. Fazio, 2001; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Kepner, 1991; Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992) or the differential effect of different types of WCF (Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts,

2001; Lalande, 1982; Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986). The table below summarises the findings reported by these studies on whether WCF leads to improved grammatical accuracy.

Table 3.1 Early research on WCF

Study	Improved accuracy	But... Qualifying notes
Ashwell (2000)	Yes	Investigated only revised texts
Chandler (2003)	Yes	
Fathman & Whalley (1990)	Yes	Investigated only revised texts
Fazio (2001)	No	
Ferris & Roberts (2001)	Yes	Investigated only revised texts
Kepner (1991)	No	
Lalande (1982)	Yes	Improvement not statistically significant
Polio et al (1998)	No	
Robb et al (1986)	No	Investigated only revised texts
Semke (1984)	No	
Sheppard (1992)	Yes	Improvement on one measure (use of verbs) but not on another measure (sentence boundaries) Group which received content feedback outperformed group which received WCF

Researchers (e.g. Ferris, 2004; Guénette, 2007), among others, attribute the lack of conclusive results in support of written corrective feedback (WCF) or of one type of WCF to poor research design and lack of comparability between the studies as I will discuss below. Others, (e.g. Bitchener, 2008; Ellis, Sheen,

Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Sheen, 2007) argue that the lack of concrete evidence about discernible gains in accuracy is because the students in these early studies were given feedback on all their errors (with the exception of Fazio, 2001) and that such feedback overwhelmed the learners.

3.3.2 Recent studies on WCF (2005 onwards)

Ferris (2004) concluded her overview of shortcomings in existing research on written corrective feedback (WCF) by calling for more robust studies on the efficacy of WCF, a call that perhaps explains the larger volume of research on this topic since 2005. These studies which were extracted from Storch (2010) as can be seen in Table 3.2 below investigated whether WCF leads to improved accuracy over time and whether some forms of WCF are more effective than others. Each of the 12 studies was analysed for whether it addressed the major design flaws identified earlier. The last column in the table indicates whether the measures used to capture gains in accuracy relate to the feedback given. As noted earlier, this is only possible if the WCF is focused and the measure used assesses the correct use of the structures targeted by the feedback. The studies below had control groups, and some (e.g. Sheen et al., 2009; Van Beuningen et al., 2008) had two types of control groups. For example, in Sheen et al (2009) study one control group received no WCF but self edited on the occasions when data were collected; the other control group received no WCF and only participated in the pre and final delayed test. The researchers could therefore distinguish between the effects of WCF and of writing practice on gains in accuracy. All the current studies included a new piece of writing. A range of authentic writing tasks were used (not journals) and these were generally completed under timed conditions (with the exception of Ellis et al., 2008). Where the feedback provided was focused (e.g. Bitchener, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008;

Sheen, 2007), this enabled the researchers to use accuracy scores (% of correct usage of the targeted structure) that captured changes in response to the feedback provided. Thus, most of the current studies seem to have successfully addressed the flaws in research design identified in the earlier studies. Perhaps what explains this success is that the majority are experimental or quasi-experimental studies, not classroom-based. The only exception is the Hartshorn et al (2010) study, and this may explain the lack of a control group in that study. The feedback treatment varied, but not as extensively as in the earlier studies. In the majority of the studies reviewed, participants were provided with direct feedback and often on specific errors. For example, in studies by Bitchener (2008), Bitchener and Knoch (2009a, b), and Sheen (2007), feedback was provided on two uses of English articles (indefinite 'a' for first mention and definite 'the' for subsequent mentions). Further, the treatment in many of the studies was uniform, in the sense that feedback was provided only on one piece of writing (one shot), followed by immediate and delayed post tests. The findings of the studies show whether written corrective feedback (WCF) led to improved grammatical accuracy in the short term (on revised texts or immediate post tests) and in the long term (on new texts or delayed post tests) as well as whether some type of feedback is more effective than others. Unlike earlier studies, where the majority showed no effect for WCF, Table 3.2 shows that the majority of studies now provide evidence for a positive and statistically significant effect for WCF. Truscott and Hsu's (2008) study was the only study which reported gains on revised texts but not on new texts. In Van Beuningen et al.'s (2008) study, gains were reported for revised texts following direct and indirect feedback, but on new texts only direct feedback was found to lead to improved accuracy. It should be noted that in both studies, the WCF was unfocused. The other, puzzling, findings

are reported in the study by Ellis et al. (2008) where gains were found in the long term (on delayed post tests) but not in the short term (immediate post tests). Thus the current studies seem to provide evidence that WCF does lead to improved accuracy.

Table 3.2 Recent studies on WCF

Study	Control group	New text	Writing task /conditions	Treatment: type & duration	Findings: Does accuracy improve?
Bitchener (2008)	Yes	Yes	Picture description (30 min)	Focused (articles) Direct (+ explanation) One shot	Yes: Immediate & delayed tests
Bitchener & Knoch (2008)	Yes	Yes	Picture description (30 min)	Focused (articles) Direct (+ explanation) One shot	Yes: Immediate & delayed tests
Bitchener & Knoch (2009a)	Yes	Yes	Picture description 30 min	Focused (articles) Direct (+ explanation) One shot	Yes: Immediate & delayed tests
Bitchener & Knoch (2009b)	Yes	Yes	Picture description 30 min	Focused (articles) Direct (+ explanation) One shot	Yes: Immediate & delayed tests
Bitchener et al (2005)	Yes	Yes	Setter 45 min	Focused (3 structures), direct (+ explanation) Sustained	Yes: Immediate & delayed tests But only on 2 of the 3 focused structures
Ellis et al (2008)	Yes	Yes	Narratives based on reading, In-class untimed	Focused vs. unfocused Direct Sustained	No: Immediate post test Yes: delayed post test
Hartshorn et al (2010)	No	Yes	Short essays: different topics/genre 10 min	Unfocused Indirect (error codes) vs. direct Sustained	Yes: treatment group on post test (new writing)
Sheen (2007)	Yes	Yes	Narrative based on a reading; 12 min	Focused, Direct One shot	Yes: immediate & delayed tests
Sheen et al (2009)	Yes	Yes	Narrative based on a reading; 15-20 min	Focused vs. unfocused Direct One shot	Yes: immediate test. Yes: delayed post test but only for focused WCF
Storch (2009)	Yes	Yes	Data commentary & essay; 30-60 min	Unfocused Direct vs. indirect One shot	Yes: immediate & delayed post tests
Truscott & Hsu (2008)	Yes	Yes	Narrative based on pictures; 30 min	Unfocused Indirect; One shot	Yes: revised text No: new texts
Van Beuningen, De Jong & Kuiken (2008)	Yes	Yes	Email based on pictures; 20 min	Unfocused; Direct vs. indirect ;One shot	Yes: revised texts; delayed post tests but only for direct CF

Storch (2010) states that although the current studies are better designed and have yielded some promising results for language teachers (and students) in terms of the efficacy of WCF, there are still a number of concerns about these

studies. She argues that many of the studies, particularly those which show evidence supporting WCF have focused on a limited number of linguistic structures: the acquisition of the English article system (e.g. Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a, b; Bitchener et al., 2005; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007; Sheen et al., 2009), the simple past tense, and use of prepositions (e.g. Bitchener et al., 2005). It is questionable whether researchers can draw generalisations about the efficacy of WCF on the basis of evidence on only such a limited range of structures (and only in ESL contexts). Furthermore, researchers who focus only on one structure may find few instances of such structures in their students' writing. Xu (2009) points out that in the Ellis et al. (2008) study, some individuals' texts contained only four instances of the targeted use of the article. This means that these participants received relatively little WCF. Xu (2009) also suggests that focusing on one grammatical structure may encourage the students to consciously monitor their use of that structure in the research writing task. And that it is this overt monitoring that may explain why the experimental group outperforms the control group that received no written corrective feedback (WCF). However, the delayed post tests in Bitchener and Knoch's (2009b) study, which took place six and ten months after the initial feedback and which showed a continued advantage for those who received direct WCF, counter this argument. Further, the majority of those studies were single shot episodes. The duration of the study and the use of one shot treatments and allowing students limited engagement with the feedback provided are perhaps attributable to the fact that these studies are experimental or quasi-experimental rather than being real classroom studies. Brief treatments may be easier to implement and control when conducting experimental studies, but lack theoretical and pedagogical validity. Theories of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) (e.g. Gass, 2003;

DeKeyser, 2007) suggest that learning requires extensive and sustained meaningful exposure and practice. Sheen et al. (2009) admit that feedback needs to be sustained to be truly effective. In addition, one of the other major concerns with these experimental and quasi-experimental studies is that they tend to ignore affective factors such as attitudes to the type of feedback provided, the feedback provider, and learners' goals. A growing body of qualitative case study research has attested to the importance of these factors in explaining learner response and uptake of the feedback provided (e.g. Hyland, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010). Bruton (2009b) argues that researchers need to consider learners' motivation to write, to engage with the feedback received, and to revise.

The criticisms levelled at the early research on written corrective feedback (WCF), particularly in terms of the research design, has led to a proliferation of experimental and quasi-experimental studies. Although such studies may be considered more robust in terms of research design, what they lack is ecological validity. Studies which provide feedback on one type of error and only on one piece of writing and in controlled environments are unlikely to be relevant to language teachers because they do not reflect real classroom conditions. Duff (2006) argues that the more controlled and laboratory like the study, the less generalisable are its findings to natural, non-experimental instructional settings. It is interesting to note that in the rush to criticise and dismiss the early studies, researchers seem to have ignored some of their strengths: most were conducted in real classrooms, where the classroom teacher provided sustained feedback over the semester and on writing tasks that formed part of the academic program, and where students were required to engage with the feedback (e.g. Ashwell, 2000; Chandler, 2003; Robb et al., 1986; Sheppard, 1992). Some of these studies

also elicited students' attitudes to the feedback provided (e.g. Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Semke, 1984).

3.4 Assessment at higher education

In this section, I will discuss the main principles of assessment, methods of assessment, types of assessment, and the challenges of assessment.

3.4.1 Principles of assessment

Black and William claim that assessment does not have a tightly defined and widely accepted meaning but they interpret it 'as encompassing all those activities undertaken by teachers, and/or by their students, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged (1988, p. 7-8).' Gronlund (2006) states that assessment refers to a variety of tasks by which teachers collect information regarding the performance and achievement of their students. Carless, Joughin and Liu (2006) state that assessment at higher education has three main purposes. These are to judge achievement, maintain standards and promote learning.

Bloxham and Boyd (2007) state that assessment has four main purposes: certification and providing a licence for practice in the case of professional programmes (i.e. assessment of learning); student learning and motivating learners to study and giving teachers important information to make changes in teaching pedagogy (i.e. assessment for and as learning); quality assurance and providing information for stakeholders (e.g. employers, inspectors, external examiners) to enable them judge the standards on a programme (i.e. assessment of learning); and life-long learning capacity encouraging students to develop knowledge and skills to underpin life-long learning (i.e. assessment as learning). However, these purposes might conflict with one another as the different

purposes emphasise different principles of assessment. While some assessment methods give confidence that the work is that of the student, other methods might promote higher level learning. Further, whereas some techniques might provide reliable information, others might produce widely varying grades from different markers. Bloxham and Boyd add that assessment has a number of principles such as validity, reliability, effectiveness, comparability, equity, practicability, transparency, and attribution. Validity refers to the idea that the assessment tasks are assessing the stated learning outcomes. Reliability means that assessment tasks should be generating comparable marks across time, across markers and across methods. Effectiveness is related to the fact that assessment tasks should be designed to encourage good quality, deep approaches to learning in the students. Comparability means that there should be consistent and comparable approaches to the summative assessment requirements of awards of the same level across programmes and institutions. Equity means that students should enjoy equal opportunity to effectively demonstrate their learning. Practicability means that assessment tasks should be practicable for both staff and students in terms of the time needed for completion and marking. Transparency means that information, guidance, rules and regulations on assessment should be clear, accurate, consistent and accessible to all staff, students, practice teachers and external examiners. Attribution means that tasks should generate evidence that the work (of whatever nature) has been produced by the student.

Previously, in 2007, Carless claimed that for assessment to promote learning, students need to receive appropriate feedback which they can use to 'feedforward' into future work. In a later paper, in 2016, he discusses dialogic feedback which can eventually lead to sustainable corrective feedback. He claims that there are many ways in which feedback can be dialogic: integrated cycles of

guidance and feedback (e.g. support in understanding criteria), technologically facilitated feedback (e.g. Facebook or Twitter), internal feedback (i.e. inner dialogue or self-monitoring in which students are engaged when they are tackling a task), and teacher-generated written feedback. He explains that students can actually refine their ability to self-evaluate their performance when they are involved in activities which require making academic judgments, developing better understandings of what good work looks like and how it differs from their attempts, and strategising to close the gap between the two. For instance, on the cover page of their assignments, students can be asked to state those aspects on which they would most like to receive feedback (Nicol, 2010) which can then prompt learners to reflect on their work and start to develop some partnership in assessment and marking and saves time for instructors because they will focus more on what the learners need. Further, the instructor might provide a summary of how the learner has taken previous comments into consideration.

Most researchers emphasised that assessment has two main objectives. Rawlusk (2018) asserts that formative assessment can promote student learning and summative assessment targets certification, which involves the evaluation of student achievement. Carless (2007) explains that when assessment is successful, these two functions need to overlap.

Formative assessment Formative assessment takes place on a day-to-day basis during teaching and learning, allowing instructors and learners assess attainment and progress more frequently through questions, tasks, quizzes or more formal assessment. Learning outcomes of students' formative assessment constitute a form of diagnostic information which should be analysed to inform writing instructors of their pedagogical practices and help learners achieve their learning needs- a procedure known as Assessment for Learning (AFL) (Chong,

2018). Modification or adjustment of pedagogy can be in the form of slowing down or accelerating the pace of instruction, revisiting past knowledge, supplementing extra materials and fine tuning of learning goals. Hence, written corrective feedback as a method of formative assessment should be brought to the foreground and communicated to the learners while the instructor devises techniques to help students clarify their learning goals and understand the assessment criteria they are judged against. Carless (2006) called this process as assessment dialogue where writing instructors explain to learners the assessment criteria known to writing instructors but less clear to students. This dialogue which can be formed via written commentary and sharing it in class with learners, in addition to face to face consultation sessions, can bridge the gap between students' understanding of how to write a good academic written assignment and how the instructor responds to it.

Rawlusk (2018) asserts that formative assessment encourages students to engage in the subject matter, which helps them become familiar with the information they are attempting to learn. Rawlusk adds that for effective formative assessment, active participation of the student and teacher occurs. He adds that when students are actively engaged in the activities, it results in deeper thinking and long-term retention of learned concepts. Moreover, improvements in learners' performances are achieved through supportive feedback from various assessment tasks. Because of its value to learning, formative assessment is considered assessment for learning (Carless et al, 2010). Because classroom assessment which is formative assessment is intended to aid directly in the learning process (not merely to measure learning outcomes), it should be closely tied to instructional practices and to relevant research on learning (in subjects

such as mathematics, science, and literacy); on motivation, feedback, and self-regulation; on cognitive and sociocultural aspects of learning and identity; on curriculum; on adaptive teaching and teacher-learning; and on theories of formative assessment and grading (Shepard, 2019). Moreover, formative assessment strategies include explicit sharing of learning goals and criteria for judging quality work, questioning and other classroom routines that make thinking visible, explicit feedback plus informal feedback through hearing other students' ideas, as well as peer- and self-assessment. These techniques are important for providing information and for shifting the nature of classroom interactions. Deep learning can only be supported in a cultural context of trust and respect where students are willing to reveal what they currently understand with full confidence that talking about ideas will surely lead to new learning (Shepard, 2019). I believe this part might be missing in the Omani context because there is no dialogue between the teacher and learner in the writing classroom.

Summative assessment Summative assessment is used for judging student achievement and occurs at the end of a course or phase of instruction. Summative assessment is Assessment of Learning (AOL) and sums up what a student has achieved at the end of a period of time, relative to the learning aims and the relevant national standards. Rawlusk (2018) claims that common methods used for summative assessment include tests, exams (midterm, end of term), and final presentations or projects. However, the timing of these practices makes it difficult to modify student learning. Therefore, they are used only to determine grades. Because of this, summative assessment is referred to as assessment of learning. However, Carless et al. (2010) noted that summative assessment could be formative and for learning if there is feedback given that

helps students learn. In higher education, most assessment strategies, such as course assignments, serve both a formative (assessment for learning) and a summative (assessment of learning) function.

Summative assessment is controlled by government bodies and administrations of colleges where instructors are makers of assessment (Chong, 2018) and the content and format of exams is determined by high authorities. Summative exams serve the expectations of the established examination systems, social expectations and expectations of the colleges' administration. However, from the learners' perspective, learning is equivalent to getting higher grades or scores- something which has been promoted by exams at schools and higher education institutions in Oman and will definitely take ages until students change such a belief which might require re-preparing school and higher education institution instructors and educating parents about the value of education and being a good citizen rather than achieving higher marks. We cannot deny the fact that in reality marks highly control Omani students' future when they compete for higher education opportunities after graduating from school. The question is whether the voices of learners and writing instructors are heard when important decisions about learning and assessment are taken by authorities at the Ministry of Higher Education- which is the main provider of higher education in Oman. And are students' needs and struggles to learn English taken into consideration when methods of assessment are developed and demanded by higher education institutions across the country?

In 2003, David Carless coined the concept of "learning-oriented assessment" which aimed to promote a way of thinking that all assessment could target the development of productive student learning processes, regardless of their

formative or summative nature. Since the introduction of the term, David Carless has devoted himself to the research of learning-oriented assessment and has published a series of relevant papers in a number of prestigious international journals. Carless used the term “*The art of compromise*”—the metaphor of good assessment. He believes that enhancing student learning should be a primary aim for all assessment when making compromise among competing priorities. He thinks that assessment can enhance student learning when assessment tasks support student learning, when students develop their evaluative expertise through activities that engage them in understanding quality and standards in their disciplines, and when feedback is forward-looking and feasible. These three key elements of learning-oriented assessment interact with each other and form an integrated whole that exerts a synergistic effect on the learning of students derived from assessment processes. This learning-oriented assessment framework acts as a powerful guide for the reader to comprehend the interplay between learning-oriented assessment and classroom practice as described by Carless. According to Carless et al (2006), learning oriented assessment which encompasses both formative and summative assessment, has three main elements:

- 1- Designing assessment tasks that engage learners in processes that lead to learning
- 2- Involving learners in self-evaluation and peer assessment
- 3- Building complete feedback loops into learning so that students can act on the information received

The ultimate value of these processes is how they lead to desired learning outcomes. Learning oriented assessment focuses on the quality of student learning outcomes through applying the above mentioned processes to help

students achieve key disciplinary and generic understanding, values and skills. There are two activities that are involved in assessment: gathering information and the criteria against which students' work is assessed. First, teachers collect information about the learners' knowledge, understanding, attitudes and skills which is done by looking at students' written work, how they do certain things or simply by talking to them. Second, teachers assess students' work by comparing it to the criteria. Then, teachers look at the gap between performance and standards and make judgment about the quality of students' work and suggest ways to improve it. Though this process might sound simple, it might not be applied easily in large class size.

There are many different learning-oriented assessment practices that have been implemented at the university where I worked. Some of those practices were in the form of researching and higher order thinking (e.g. problem solving, decision making, critical thinking, analysis and reflection); communicating with peers and teacher using technology, communicating orally or in writing (e.g. reports, portfolios, research projects); working in teams (e.g. resolving problems, reporting results); evaluating peers, learning autonomously (e.g. learn how to see their own objectives, seek resources, monitor their progress); evaluating oneself to ensure that their work meets the standards required by their profession, future employers or clients and processing and acting on feedback by making sense of the feedback and act on it to improve their writing. It is worthy to mention that the practices need to be adapted to the learning and teaching context of an organisation, the nature of the discipline or programme, student characteristics, the organisations' policies and many other contextual factors (Carles et al, 2006).

3.4.2 Assessment methods of writing courses

Students at higher education institutions are either assessed based on norm referenced or criterion referenced assessment. Norm referenced assessment compares learners to each other based on their grades or scores as their grades are distributed to a normal bell shaped curve. Criterion reference assessment considers what students have learnt in relation to intended outcomes expressed as performance criteria which can provide a basis for students to judge their ongoing progress. Comparing students with each other rather than with an explicit standard is an attack on students rather than a defence of them because however good the teaching and or the student performance, some students will get low grades (Carless et al, 2006).

The assessment of students' writing at higher education organisations can be carried out through many channels such as the modular system and individual and group assignments, examinations, grading and giving feedback.

Modular system Higher education institutions follow a modular system where students have several modules to study each term. This system is applied at the General Foundation Programme in my context where learners study the writing course each term against which they are assessed throughout the term. However, this system has its own limitations. For instance, having modules can put some students at stress because they might have similar or the same assessment deadlines for different modules- which might accumulate towards the end of the term. As a result, students might not spread their learning effort evenly throughout the term. Moreover, students might not be able to produce their best performance because they might be overloaded nor see connections between modules. Further, the modular system may distance the learners from their lecturers because they might move from one tutor to the next while their learning

problems might not be addressed or followed up. Moreover, learners might not be able to utilise feedback from one module in another. It is worthy to mention that feedback provision is time consuming and labour intensive in particular with large class size. The way feedback is handled currently is that it comes too late to the learners- weeks after they completed a module which can increase the challenge for making use of teacher feedback (e.g. Carless et al, 2006).

Group assignments Group assignments or projects have an academic rationale of encouraging certain skills such as planning, negotiation, compromise and team work- such skills are essential for future work place. Such projects can also increase teachers' marking workload and might make allocating fair marks to individuals in the group a rather difficult task.

Examinations Examinations do not reflect assessment for learning how to write accurately and meaningfully. Testing represents a behaviorist model, which is teacher-centered and not learner-centered because learners play a passive role as they react to the environmental conditions presented to them. Carless (2015) noted that written examinations hinder thoughtful planning of information that requires ongoing drafting and re-drafting and that testing promotes memorisation rather than understanding and applying knowledge nor tests can measure higher-order outcomes. These drawbacks of examinations may cause the neglect of skills such as problem-solving and critical thinking needed in today's world (Carless et al., 2010). It has been stated that higher education instructors primarily assess student learning through testing (Carless, 2015). It is a common practice by Omani English language instructors at tertiary institutions to use summative, written exams every year and they might use the same questions year after year.

Rawlusk (2018) conducted a study which aimed at examining the occurrence and diversity of assessment practices in higher education and their relationship to student learning. To establish whether assessment methods had learning potential, the survey questions centered on the three criteria of learning-oriented assessment (LOA), tasks as learning tasks, self- and peer assessment, and teacher feedback and was answered by 301 academics from 12 postsecondary institutions across Alberta. The study revealed that the academics' years of experience did not impact the use of the different strategies, or examination formats. 54.2% of educators disagreed and 45.8% agreed with the statement that they don't know if students use the feedback. Furthermore, the study found that the students also prefer verbal feedback because the student-instructor interaction allows them to get a clear understanding of what the feedback means and how they can improve. In a study by Maggs (2014), the researcher questioned educators for their perspectives on feedback and found that the teachers viewed individual feedback as repetitive and very time-consuming.

Grading Grading refers to the symbols assigned to individual pieces of student work or to composite measures of student performance on student report cards. Grades or marks, as they were referred to in the first half of the 20th century, were the focus of some of the earliest educational research. Traditionally standards in higher education have been defined by letters or numbers related to a percentage score given to a student for an assessment or aggregate of assessment (Heywood, 2000). The aggregation of assessment produces the overall or final grade. For standards to be accepted, they should not vary from course to course or from year to year. Grading is important to study because it can play a central part in the educational experience of all students. Grades are

widely perceived to be what students earn for their achievement, have pervasive influence on students and schooling, predict important future educational consequences, such as dropping out of school, and applying and being admitted to college, and college success (Shepard, 2019). Grades are especially predictive of academic success in more open admissions higher education institutions. As is evident from the motivation literature, grading might be a problem for learning. Because grading practices elicit comparisons to classmates and imply a permanent lack of ability when learning targets seem out of reach, grading requirements are an obstacle for every teacher hoping to develop a learning-focused classroom culture (Shepard, 2019). He adds that point systems are especially problematic if they are used as external rewards to motivate and control students and that there is ample experimental evidence in the formative assessment literature that students learn more from written comments alone than from comments plus grades. The author adds that the research on grading (e.g., Shepard, Penuel, and Pellegrino 2018) yields recommendations about how best to lessen the distorting effects of grading: by ensuring that grades are based on projects and rich representations of intended learning goals, by establishing routines whereby students can invest effort and improve based on feedback, and by allowing for later evidence of mastery to replace early attempts that fell short. Moreover, the requirement to keep parents informed can better be addressed with substantive examples of progress instead of letter grades or percentages that say nothing about actual learning. Although it might be argued that high school students must be assigned grades as evidence for college admissions, the same cannot be said for young children, for whom parents need evidence about developmental milestones and advice about what they can do to support their children's growth.

Measurement research on grading practices consistently recommends against using enabling factors (McMillan 2001) such as effort, work habits, and participation as ingredients when determining grades- which is the case in the Omani context. The primary technical reason for this argument is that these factors distort the meaning of grades as an indicator of achievement; this is the same reasoning behind arguments for standards-based grading systems (Guskey & Jung, 2009). When writing instructors assign grades on the basis of specific learning standards, the meaning of a grade changes from an overall assessment of learning (e.g., How did this student perform in language arts?) to a description of students' performance on a discrete set of skills (e.g., How well did the student master the ability to identify the plot, setting, and characters in reading passages?). A more compelling reason, however, when considering classroom culture, is that giving points for effort and collaboration leads to the commodification of these endeavors and invites a performance orientation, for example, working to please the teacher, rather than supporting students to develop a learning or mastery orientation. Moreover, factors that enable learning, such as attention, organisational skills, and collaboration, are more appropriate as targets for formative feedback than for grading. I believe that the current assessment practices in the Omani context might dwell heavily on grading to justify achievement which might explain learners' attitudes and focus on grading rather than learning and becoming knowledgeable. One of the major drawbacks of such practice is that Omani students are very fixated on grades rather than learning. It is worthy to mention that research on formative assessment demonstrates its extraordinary potential to improve student learning, but not if it is implemented in a way that is at cross-purposes with the underlying theory of learning. Nor does it make sense to implement formative assessment as its own

intervention. Further, greater coherence and greater effectiveness are much more likely to occur if formative assessment professional development is integrated with ambitious teaching practices and reforms in literacy, mathematics, social studies, and so forth; and if professional learning communities work out explicitly how they will protect the intentions of formative assessment practices from grading requirements.

Feedback Feedback has many functions. It helps clarify what good performance is; it encourages teacher and peer dialogue; it supports self-assessment; it gives students quality information about their learning; it encourages self-esteem and it provides opportunities for students to bridge the gap between current and desired performance (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Rawlusk (2018) argues that historically, teachers considered feedback as the transmission of information from the teacher to the student in which the assumption was that students would know what they needed to do to improve while another assumption was that students understood what the teacher was saying in the comments and act on them. He adds that determining whether there was learning involved was not a consideration whereas feedback is now considered to be the most powerful way to enhance learning. In previous writings, Carless (2009) described feedback as feedforward. Feedforward means that to support learning; the students use the assessor's comments to feedforward to work they will do in the future. In recent writings, Carless (2015) expanded the definition of feedback to include feedback as a process, and the use of dialogue with the teacher, peers, other contacts or self. As a process, feedback is not just a one-way transmission from teacher to student, which identifies feedback as a product, not a process. Instead, students should actively

engage in feedback from various sources, and through dialogue, enhance learning. The process that flows from feedback to dialogue, to learner action completes a feedback loop- a process that might not exist in the current practice of teaching and assessing students' writing in the Omani context. Carless (2015) adds that scholars (e.g. Barker & Pinard, 2014) stressed that effective feedback could only occur when both teacher and student are committed to the process. The most important value of feedback is that it develops self-regulated learners (Carless, Salter, Yang, & Lam, 2011; Carless, 2015; Nicol, 2009). Self-regulation refers to the ability of students to regulate or manage their learning behaviors and to process and act on task feedback to improve their learning (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). The development of self-regulation is an indispensable quality of feedback and central to sustainable feedback (Carless et al., 2011). Sustainable feedback refers to equipping students to maintain the ability to monitor their learning beyond school.

Alshakhi (2019) states that several inquiries related to language assessment have been aroused, such as What are we trying to accomplish with writing assessment? Which should we choose? Multiple-choice tests, timed essays, portfolios, standardised tests, or no assessment at all? Ultimately, the decision of choosing the most appropriate assessment should align with the goals and visions of the targeted program. Every aspect has to be contextualised in order to obtain meaningful consequences of our decisions and that context influences the decisions we make as teachers.

In order for feedback to help improve students' writing, it should have three factors (Carless et al, 2006). First, the teacher should appreciate the learners' effort and provide information on what should be done for further development and improvement. There should be an ongoing dialogue between the teacher and

the learners to ensure that the learner understands the feedback and is encouraged to pay attention to it. Second, it should be timely so that learners can make use of it rather than providing it weeks after the assignment has been completed. Third, teachers should justify the rationale behind using a certain method so that learners can see how they can benefit from it and that it actually serves their learning purpose.

3.4.3 Challenges of Assessment

Assessment can be challenging for a number of reasons. For instance, ongoing discussions center on such topics as whether a student's success in examinations relates to high standards, what assessment tasks are best for learning, whether assessment practices promote lifelong learning, and how feedback could help improve student progress (Carless, 2015). A fundamental challenge is that assessment is about several things at once; it is about learning and grading, it is about summarising students achievements and about teaching them better; it is about standards and invoking comparisons between individuals; concerns what students can do now and what they might be able to do in the future; it has technical aspects and social ones; it communicates explicit and hidden messages (Carless et al, 2006). Another challenge that teachers might face in assessing learners is the fact that technology and in particular the internet has opened the door for massive plagiarism as learners can access loads of information from any website. I have experienced marking written assignments which were merely copied from the internet. Carless et al, (2006) state that plagiarism actually thrives in large classes because it thrives on anonymity. Exams might be the solution for plagiarism but exams have their limitations, too as I have explained earlier. Rawlusk (2018) explains that academics expressed concern that the methods used to assess students are not linked to student

learning. Rawlusk adds that despite the many articles written on assessment practices that promote learning, academics appear to rely on traditional pen and paper examinations to determine student knowledge. Rawlusk continues to say that a possible cause of this problem is the lack of awareness regarding assessment methods used across the various postsecondary institutions. Another challenge of feedback is the possibility that learners might not consider it in future assignments despite of the long hours writing tutors might dedicate to correcting written errors.

Marking at schools and higher education institutions in Oman is outcomes-based or performance based where learners are assessed against a set of objectives or learning outcomes to assess their achievement. In the case of everyday writing practice, writing tutors usually mark students' essays based on their total impression of an essay. In contrast to this impression marking, they do analytic marking during exams where they assess students' written essays against a set of categories on a rubrics (e.g. spelling, grammar, punctuation, organisation). Many writing instructors at higher education institutions might underestimate the value of feedback as a tool for learning (Heywood, 2000). Hence, they tend to focus on correcting errors related to form rather than content when marking students' written assignments and they might give a mark or write one or two evaluative words (e.g. Good) which might not be helpful to the learner at it.

Personally, I believe that grammar correction might be beneficial for learners in order to secure a prestigious job in the future. However, communication and delivery of the message in a written text is nonetheless important. Currently there is a focus on form in the writing classroom in the Omani context where English is

taught as foreign language- which might suggest that there is an imbalance between form and meaning. Hence, academics, exam writers and the board of assessment should steer the gear towards conveying a clear message in teaching and assessing Omani learners with regard to writing essays. They should also raise learners' awareness of the importance of communicating a meaningful text rather than promoting language accuracy for the learners by focusing on grammar rules and practice. When students are deliberately focused on form and taught rules carefully, the impact of grammar study is weak (Krashen, 2005). He adds that studies fail to show that there is a relationship between writing quality and writing quantity which suggests that learners become better writers when they read more than being instructed more. Good writers plan, revise, edit their writing and use cohesive devices to structure their writing. Unfortunately, the current scenario in the Omani context is different where the focus is on grammar accuracy while other aspects of writing are being disregarded. The end result is that learners make more grammar errors and the writing instructors teach more grammar and the circle goes on and on. Grammar correction might give learners a good grasp of the language but it might not help them use the language accurately. Borg and Burn's (2008) study which surveyed 176 English teachers from 18 countries showed that an absolute majority of the teachers disagreed with the idea of teaching grammar separately. Similar to the Omani context, textbooks might not be helping teachers to achieve this goal because many text books have in-built de-contextualised grammar instruction followed by mechanical production practice activities such as fill in the blanks. To conclude, grammar teaching is a controversial area to debate whether how to teach it at all, the effectiveness of explicit grammar teaching and whether it should be integrated with other courses (Ellis, 2006). I think that Omani learners'

awareness should be raised with regard to other aspects of writing. I also believe that there should be clear plans and modified assessment rubrics as part of tertiary institutions' agenda if academics, policy makers and parents wish to witness quality writing produced by Omani students in the generations to come.

3.5 Formative vs. summative WCF

Studies on written corrective feedback show that it has two functions: formative and summative. While formative feedback aims at helping learners improve their performance and can help diagnose weaknesses that the learner needs to address and deal with, summative feedback serves as an assessment tool and focuses on the final product to grade learners' writing. Hyland and Hyland (2006) state that formative feedback took over in L2 classrooms while Lee, I. (2010) states that corrective feedback mainly serves summative purposes and that formative feedback is under-utilised. Campbell and Fauster (2013) provide two reasons for the dominance of summative feedback in writing classes. First, formative feedback is time consuming because it urges writing instructors to provide feedback on multiple drafts. As a result, writing instructors do not provide detailed feedback to learners nor they address learners' specific needs. Moreover, writing instructors might lack a framework for feedback provision and so the feedback they provide is limited to indicating and correcting the errors only by writing an evaluative comment (e.g. *Well done*) or a mark. Therefore, Campbell and Fauster believe that learners can improve their writing when formative feedback procedures predominate in the classroom but that providing effective feedback depends on finding enough time for writing instructors to deal with the specific errors of learners which might not be feasible because of the large number of students in a classroom. They add that there is no guarantee that the time spent on giving feedback can be really productive and writing

instructors cannot be sure that students really understand the feedback or are prepared to act based on it. Moreover, Ferris (2002b) argues that students' prior education background affects their attitudes towards writing and in particular towards the role of teacher feedback especially if learners were exposed to feedback to justify a grade rather than improve a second draft. In other words, if writing instructors' feedback is summative rather than formative. In this case, learners might not be highly motivated to pay attention to error correction, which suggests that instructors' time and effort might be thrown out of the window.

3.6 Usefulness of WCF

There is, an agreement among scholars that accuracy in writing matters to academic and professional audiences and that obvious L2 errors can stigmatise writers in some contexts (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998); and (2) that L2 student writers themselves want and value error correction from their instructors (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1995b; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Leki, 1991; Truscott, 1996). However, the knowledge base on the short and long term effect of error correction on learner accuracy is still inconsistent and inadequate (Ferris, 1999, 2004). In fact, one of the early papers which I read on written corrective feedback and made me overwhelmed with my current research area was Truscott (1996). Since Truscott published his 1996 article "*The case against grammar correction*", there have not been any conclusive studies on the effectiveness of written corrective feedback in second language classrooms. Importantly, since Truscott (2007), the general database for written corrective feedback (WCF) research has substantially expanded, with more studies have been published in the L2 literature. Hyland and Hyland explain that "it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions and generalisations from the literature as a result of varied populations, treatments and research designs" (2006, p. 84),

implying that contextual factors influence the extent to which corrective feedback is effective. Moreover, Liu and Brown (2015) state that there are more than 300 published papers on the efficacy of written corrective feedback including primary studies, literature review, and meta-analyses. However, there is no consensus among scholars as whether written corrective feedback (WCF) is effective in practice and if so how it can be applied in L2 context to improve learners' written accuracy. Truscott (1996) claims that there are a number of ways where teacher feedback can and does go wrong. He claims that WCF would disturb the natural development order of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), there is a possibility of "pseudo-learning", which leads to superficial acquisition of linguistic forms and that written corrective feedback can make learners nervous which leads them to use simple language to avoid making errors and thus they produce simplified writing- something I could personally resonate with in my bachelor degree. Moreover, Truscott claimed that when learners focus on form, this could negatively affect the content and ideas they want to communicate in a text. As a result, he claimed that written corrective feedback is harmful and should be avoided and banned in L2 writing context. While Truscott (1996) claimed abolishing error correction altogether, he made it clear that learners wanted their errors to be marked. However, he stated that learner preference is not an excuse for writing instructors to provide it to the learners. Moreover, Truscott claimed that correcting learners' errors in a written composition might enable them to eliminate the errors in subsequent drafts but has no effect on grammatical accuracy in a new piece of writing (i.e., it does not result in acquisition). On the other hand, Ferris (1999) disputed this claim, arguing that it was not possible to dismiss error correction altogether claiming that the quality of the correction is a key factor- in other words, if teacher's correction was clear and consistent, it might result in

acquisition. Truscott replied that Ferris failed to cite any evidence in support of her argument but he suggested that further research should investigate which techniques or approaches to error correction may have value which was a direct response to Ferris (1999) who argued that Truscott's claims were premature because the studies he reviewed had methodological problems in their design and analysis. Ferris (1999; 2004) argues that there are three major problems with the research review section of Truscott's paper. First, the subjects in the different studies are not comparable. Second, the research paradigms and teaching strategies are totally different across the studies. Third, Truscott overstates negative evidence while disregarding research results that contradict his claim. Ferris (1999) also suggests that L2 writing instructors should devote more time and effort to make feedback more effective because thoughtful correction can improve students' linguistic accuracy and hence their writing. After the long heated debate between Truscott and Ferris in 1999, they came to the conclusion that research on error correction is not sufficient enough to come to rigid conclusions.

While some researchers claim that error correction is ineffective, many other researchers claim that it is effective. For instance, Second Language Acquisition researchers disagree that written corrective feedback plays a role in L2 acquisition. Krashen called error correction "a serious mistake" (1982, p. 74) for two reasons. First, he believes that error correction makes the learner defensive and opt for easier grammatical structures to avoid making errors and hence receiving teacher correction- something I personally used to do at my bachelor degree at university in Oman. Second, he claims that error correction only assists the development of learned knowledge and plays no role in acquired knowledge.

Further, Ferris (2002b) claims that the different methods of teacher commentary on learner compositions have equally small influences on student writing because students often do not understand teacher responses. She adds that even when learners do, they do not always use those responses and might not know how to use them and when learners use those comments, it might not improve their writing in the future. On the other hand, Krashen felt that error correction directed at simple and portable rules, such as third person –s, was of value because it would enable learners to monitor their production when the conditions allowed (i.e., the learner was focused on form and had sufficient time to access learned knowledge). Many SLA researchers, in particular those working within the interactionist framework (e.g. Long, 1999), have viewed corrective feedback as facilitative of language acquisition.

There are many studies on the efficacy of error correction types in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) but there is no consensus on the most effective type of error correction (Ferris, 2006; Kubota, 2001; Truscott, 1996, 1999; Yates & Kenkel, 2002) - which has been supported by the findings of my own study. Hyland and Hyland (2006) explain that the reason behind not being able to draw any rigid conclusions or generalisations regarding the efficacy of written corrective feedback is due to the variation in the population, treatments and research designs as I have mentioned earlier. Hence, there is still an unclear understanding of the effects of written feedback on the development of L2 learners' written accuracy. As a result, there is a tendency in the literature to investigate two major concerns which are developing an understanding of the effectiveness of written corrective feedback and identifying potential mediating factors.

In practice, written corrective feedback can be effective in many ways. It is worthy to mention that formulating effective feedback requires the writing instructor to make decisions on numerous occasions, often with little time for reflective analysis before making a commitment (Black & William, 2009). First, the writing instructor diagnoses and interprets the learners' contribution in terms of what it reveals about the learner's thinking and motivation, and then the instructor chooses the right response- both involve complex decisions, often to be taken within only a few seconds. But when achieved, effective feedback can lead to substantial gains in learning. Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006) propose that good feedback practice helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards); facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning; delivers high-quality information to students about their learning; encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning; encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem; provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance; and provides information to writing instructors that can be used to help shape teaching- I will discuss these objectives in my proposed model. Glover and Brown (2006) add that feedback is effective if it is frequent, timely, sufficient and detailed enough; linked to the purpose of the assessment task and criteria; is understandable given the students' level of sophistication; and focuses on learning rather than marks by relating explicitly to future work and tasks. Sheen (2007) adds that in order to prove that error correction has an effect on writing accuracy, results should show that there is an improvement in writing new texts and that there is an effect based on a post-test or a delayed post-test. Bitchener and Knoch (2008) claim that written corrective feedback can help learners get engaged in guided learning and problem solving issues and add that it promotes reflection and fosters long-term language

acquisition. Simard, Gue'nette and Bergeron (2015) add that feedback can only be effective when learners understand the feedback and when they are willing and able to act on it. However, when everything is said and done comprehensively, and if the learners are not committed to improving their writing skills, they will not improve, no matter what type of corrective feedback is provided.

There are some conditions that need to be met so that error correction can be effective. For instance, learners should be able to attend to the corrective feedback they are provided with, be aware of and notice a mismatch between their erroneous output and the target-like feedback they receive, be able to retrieve the required linguistic information from their long-term memory and be developmentally ready to acquire the targeted forms and structures (Pienemann, 1998; Schmidt, 1995). Bitchener (2012) states that these conditions have pedagogical implications such as ensuring that feedback is clear and appropriate for the developmental proficiency of the learner. He adds that learners should be given ample opportunities to apply the corrections. Bitchener adds that although these conditions have been investigated in oral contexts, they have not yet been fully examined for written feedback. Further, according to the sociocultural perspective, learner activities, goals, and attitudes can have an impact on learners' receptiveness to error correction. Moreover, the Activity theory implies that a learners' attitudes towards certain types of task, different types of feedback, and the task of revising a text might be an indicator of whether or not they are engaged in the task and that any written correction provided might be ignored which suggests that individual factors related to context, performance, and motivation are important conditions for successful information processing.

Further, Storch and Wigglesworth (2010) believe that feedback provision can make learners notice the errors and eventually correct those errors while Hyland (1990) claims that feedback has to be interactive so that it can be genuinely effective- a more elaborative and detailed discussion of how to achieve effective sustainable feedback will be carried out in Chapter Seven. Further, Bitchener and Storch (2016) state that learner cognitive and contextual factors which might explain why some learners find error correction effective while others fail to do so- is an area that has received little attention. Nevertheless, researchers (e.g. Sheen, 2007; 2011; Stefanou, 2014) investigated the effect of learner cognitive factors (e.g. grammatical sensitivity/knowledge of metalanguage, inductive language learning ability/learner aptitude) on learners' writing accuracy. Other researchers (e.g. Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Rummel, 2014) investigated the impact of social and contextual factors on learners' writing (e.g. past learning experiences, teaching and learning focus, degree of success learners feel they have had achieved in applying the feedback they received). It is obvious that more studies are needed to examine the effect of such factors on written corrective feedback.

3.7 Types of WCF

Because my study has examined the types of written corrective feedback in L2 settings, I will discuss this issue with more detail. Reading the literature opened my eyes to the most common types of written corrective feedback: focused vs. unfocused error correction, and direct vs. indirect error correction. Bitchener and Knoch (2008) explain that additional forms of direct feedback may include written meta-linguistic grammar explanation (e.g. the provision of grammar rules and examples at the end of a student's script with a reference back to places in the text where the error has occurred) and/or oral meta-linguistic explanation (e.g.

a mini-lesson where the rules and examples are presented, practised and discussed; one-on-one individual conferences between teacher and student or conferences between teacher and small groups of students). In addition, there are two more types of error correction though they have been very narrowly researched (e.g. reformulation, e-feedback) as can be seen in Figure 3.1 below. In the next sections, I will elaborate on each one of them. It is worth mentioning that teachers' written commentary whether positive or negative might fall into any one of the main categories of written corrective feedback.

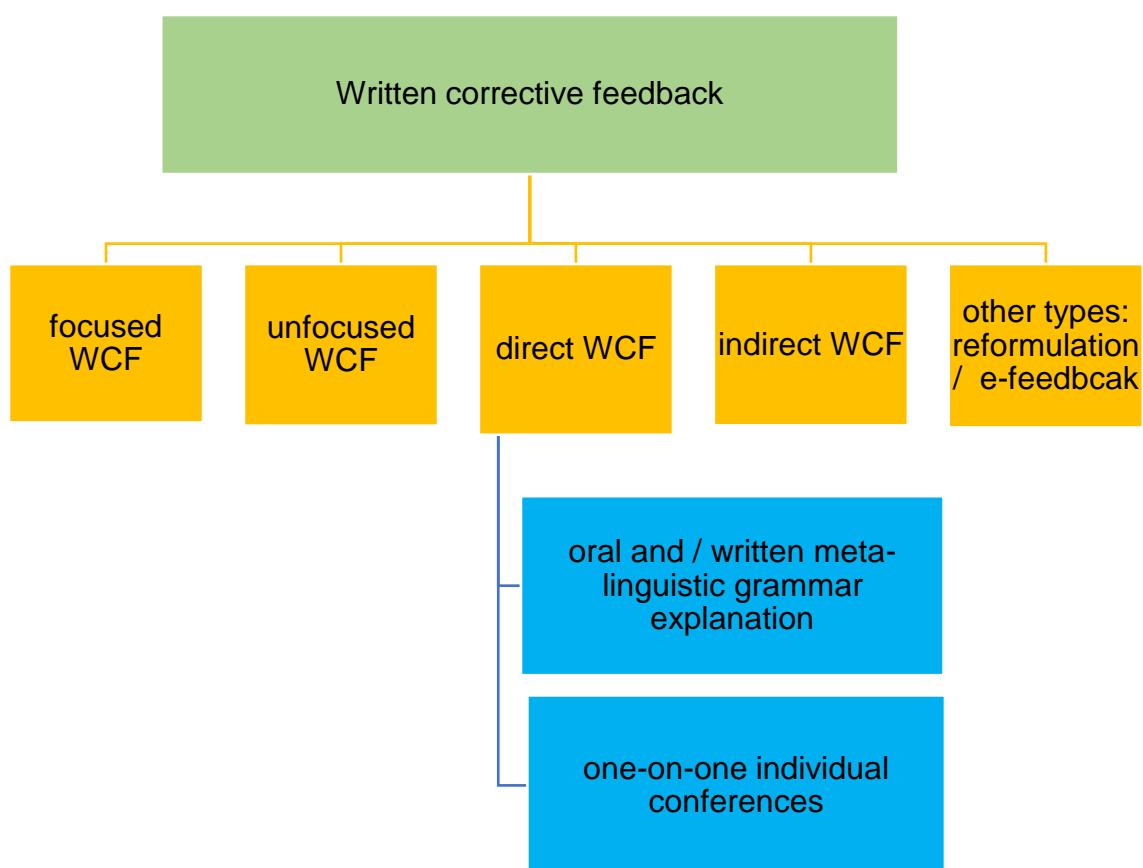


Figure 3.1 Types of written corrective feedback

3.7.1 Focused vs. unfocused WCF

Providing focused or unfocused written corrective feedback is another controversial issue. Focused error correction known as selective feedback

targets specific types or patterns of errors while unfocused error correction known as comprehensive feedback targets all errors or problems in a text without a preconceived feedback approach in mind. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) state that there is a need for more studies on focused and unfocused written corrective feedback because there are conflicting results currently in the literature. Bitchener and Knoch (2009; 2010a; 2010b), and Sheen (2007) focused on one specific form such as learner errors in using past tense verbs ignoring other error types committed by learners. Fazilatfar, Fallah, Hamavandi, and Rostamian (2014) argue that most of the studies are experimental studies on focused error correction found that it has positive durable effect on learners' written accuracy.

According to Bitchener (2008), Bitchener and Knoch (2008; 2009; 2009a; 2009b); Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2008) and Sheen (2007; 2010) focused written corrective feedback is more effective in writing accurately new pieces of writing. Ellis (2009a) explains that a focused approach in written error correction may be more effective because L2 learners are able to examine multiple corrections of a single error. Consequently, L2 learners might obtain not only a richer understanding as to why what they wrote was erroneous, but they are also provided with opportunities to acquire the correct form. Sheen, Wright, and Moldawa (2009) have pointed out that focused corrective feedback may enhance learning by helping learners notice their errors in their written work, engage in hypothesis testing in a systematic way and monitor the accuracy of their writing by tapping into their existing explicit grammatical knowledge. Schmidt (1995) adds that in order to help learners refine their output in these areas, focused feedback can help learners close the gap between their current state and desired state of interlanguage. He adds that focused feedback might give assurance to

writers that although they may have problems in writing, parts of their writing is error-free which adds to their motivation to solve minor writing problems they have. Further, focused error correction can prevent error fossilisation (Modirkhamene, Soleimani & Sadeghi, 2017), facilitates the development of successful self-editing strategies (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005) and reduces the attentional strain on learners and facilitates the awareness of the target structure (Sheen, 2007). Ellis (2009b) adds that focused corrective feedback enables learners to be ready to recognise the difference between their use of grammatical forms and the target like use. Ellis et al claim that “learners are more likely to attend to corrections directed at a single (or a limited number) of error type(s) and more likely to develop a clearer understanding of the nature of the error and the correction needed.” (2008, p. 356). On the other hand, few researchers believe that focused corrective feedback is ineffective. For instance, Lephallala and Pienaar (2008) claim that focused feedback might not be suitable for learners with low proficiency level because they might find it rather hard to find out the reason why they did not communicate their thoughts and ideas accurately. Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum and Wolfersberger (2010) add that although focused feedback might be interesting or necessary for some research, it might be less practical in real writing-class situations where instructors might need to respond to a number of error types simultaneously.

Some research has viewed unfocused corrective feedback as effective. For example, Laland (1982) states that systematic unfocused written corrective feedback leads to fewer errors. Lee, I. (2003) believes that when writing instructors respond to all errors on a students' paper, they want to look at the overall performance of students. He adds that writing instructors might be

considered lazy if they do not mark all student errors and students might not know what kinds of errors they have made. He adds that it is the writing instructors' duty to mark all student errors and that both student and their parents want have all their written errors to be marked. Truscott (1999) argues that the fact that learners want their errors to be marked, does not mean that error correction is effective nor does it mean that it should be done. On the other hand, other research has shown that unfocused written corrective feedback is ineffective. For example, Bae (2011) argues that too much unfocused feedback in the early stages of learning prevents students from freely pouring out their ideas and that writing instructors should not try to correct every minor error and rewrite students' writing by themselves. Krashen (1982) states that unfocused feedback may lead to negative affective response in which case feedback is not acquired. Similarly, Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006) argue that unfocused written corrective feedback may not be the most effective approach because L2 learners have a limited processing capacity. They claim that asking L2 learners to cope with written error correction that covers a wide range of linguistic features all at the same time may lead to a cognitive overload that might prohibit the students from processing the feedback they receive. Mohebbi (2013), Sheen (2008) and Bitchener (2008) add that students, may not be able to process unfocused corrective feedback effectively because they have a limited capacity of short term memory which according to Akhter (2007) might result in frustration and demotivation. Similarly, Sheen et al (2009) add that unfocused corrective feedback runs the risk of providing corrective feedback in a confusing, inconsistent and unsystematic way and overburdening learners. Pienemann (1984) maintains that some of the errors corrected may be related to those cognitively demanding ones that the learners are not ready to absorb; therefore, unfocused corrective feedback may not lead

to improvement in their accuracy. Ferris (2002a) adds that only motivated and competent student writers can make use of unfocused feedback while the rest of the students would look at it and forget it because according to Lee, I. (2003) students cannot remember what writing instructors have marked after those long hours spent on marking paper- one of the main challenges the sample of writing instructors in my study raised as I will discuss later. Ferris (2011) suggests that unfocused feedback can overwhelm the student and it might be impractical for overloaded writing instructors in language programs. Based on the above discussion, it is clear that most researchers are in favour of focused error correction.

3.7.2 Direct vs. indirect WCF

Direct and indirect written corrective feedback is another controversial issue which led to mixed results. Direct error correction occurs when when the writing instructor provides the correct form for the learner, while indirect error correction occurs when the instructor indicates that an error has occurred by underlining, circling, or highlighting the error without providing the correction, thus leaving it to the student to find it. A good number of studies (e.g. Ferris, 1995a;1995b; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986; Hendrickson, 1984; Lalande, 1982) investigated feedback strategies and the extent to which they can facilitate greater accuracy on learners' written performance but they all came up with mixed results. I would like to draw the reader's attention to the fact that there are some more distinctions between direct and indirect feedback- though the distinction between these two feedback types has been little investigated. More recently, studies have focused on an additional form of direct feedback which includes oral or written metalinguistic explanation (e.g. Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; 2010b; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Diab, 2015; Sheen, 2007; Shintani

& Ellis, 2014). Similarly, studies examining the effect of indirect feedback strategies have tended to make a further distinction between those that do or do not use a code (Bitchener et al, 2005). Coded feedback points to the exact location of an error, and the type of error involved is indicated with a code (e.g. *sp.* for spelling errors). Uncoded feedback refers to instances when the writing instructor underlines or circles an error, or places an error tally in the margin, but, in each case, leaves the student to diagnose and correct the error. As can be noticed, there is no consensus or a clear cut distinction of what is considered as indirect feedback. However, I follow Ferris and Roberts (2001), Ferris and Helt (2000) and Ellis (2009a) that when the writing instructor writes the correct answer of the error for the learner, that is called direct feedback and that when the instructor underlines or circles the error for the learners, that is called indirect feedback.

Some researchers advocate for direct written corrective feedback (i.e. providing the correct form) while others might find direct error correction ineffective. Those who prefer direct error correction have explained that teachers and students prefer direct feedback (e.g. Ferris & Roberts, 2001). In addition, they suggest that direct feedback reduces the kind of confusion that can result when students fail to understand or remember the meaning of error codes used by teachers. Ferris and Roberts (2001) explain how this can easily occur with lower proficiency learners while Ellis (2009b) adds that beginners need explicit guidance to extend their linguistic repertoire. Bitchener and Storch (2016) suggest that direct error correction can reduce confusion if learners do not succeed to understand indirect error correction, provides them with information to resolve more complex forms/structures and idiomatic usage, offers more feedback on hypotheses that

have been tested, and it is more immediate than indirect written corrective feedback. Eslami (2014) states that direct error correction requires minimal processing on the part of the learner but might not lead to long-term learning. On the other hand, some scholars believe that direct corrective feedback is ineffective. Ferris (2002) explains that the danger of direct error feedback is that writing instructors might misinterpret what the learner has meant at first place and put words into their mouths. Sheen (2007) states that direct corrective feedback can only promote the acquisition of specific grammatical features.

On the other hand, some researchers advocate for indirect corrective feedback (i.e. indicating that an error has been made). For instance, Lalande (1982) argues that indirect feedback is suitable for most student writers, because it engages them in guided learning and problem solving leading to reflection about linguistic forms that may foster long-term acquisition while Ellis (2009b) claims that indirect feedback is more suitable for advanced learners, who, due to their high proficiency, are able to identify errors by themselves. Further, it has been argued that once the error has been noted, indirect feedback has the potential to push learners to engage in hypothesis testing—a process that Ferris (2002) suggest might trigger deeper internal processing and promote the internalisation of correct forms and structures. Moreover, Ferris and Robert (2001) add that indirect error correction makes the learner reflect about linguistic forms that might foster long-term acquisition. Similarly, Ferris (2006) highly recommends the use of coding as one of the forms of indirect corrective feedback because it is more effective in the long run. Chapin and Terdal (1999) state that indirect feedback can promote student learning as long as the students have sufficient knowledge of English to interpret the writing instructors' comments correctly or could seek help from other

sources- which might imply that indirect error correction should not be used at early stages of learning. Students then might be unwilling to take risks much of themselves. On the other hand, some researchers believe that indirect corrective feedback is less effective. Leki (1991) and Roberts (1999) point out that students sometimes feel that indirect feedback does not provide them with sufficient information to resolve more complex errors such as idiosyncratic and syntactic errors. Moreover, Chandler (2003) explains that the greater cognitive effort expended when students are required to use indirect feedback to make their own corrections is offset by the additional delay in knowing whether their own hypothesised correction is in fact correct. Ferris (2002) claims that students might not understand what the underlining or circling mean in indirect error correction if there is no coding or labeling system that the learner can follow which might make the problem doubled for the learner. I can conclude that there are mixed results with regard to direct vs. indirect error correction and that more studies are required to build more confident research base knowledge.

3.7.3 Other types of WCF

Apart from the broad and more popular types of written corrective feedback, there are two more types which have not been widely researched. These are reformulation and electronic feedback- two methods Ellis (2009a) discussed in his paper entitled as *A typology of written corrective feedback types*. According to Qi and Lapkin, reformulation 'refers to a native speaker's rewriting of an L2 learner's composition such that the content the learner provides in the original draft is maintained, but its awkwardness, rhetorical inadequacy, ambiguity, logical confusion, style, and so on as well as lexical inadequacy and grammatical errors are tidied up' (2001, p. 281). Ellis explains that electronic feedback can be accessed by Google through an extensive corpora of written English and provides

learners with the means where they can appropriate the usage of more experienced writers. Ellis adds that there are software programmes that can be used such as *Mark My Words*, where the writing instructor can mark learners' essays and provide some comments. He adds that reformulation involves a native-speaker rewriting the student's text in such a way as 'to preserve as many of the writer's ideas as possible, while expressing the meaning in his/her own words so as to make the piece sound nativelike'. (p. 103) and then the student-writer revises by deciding which of the native-speaker's reconstructions to accept. It is important to mention that very limited studies investigated reformulation (e.g. Sachs & Polio, 2007; Lopez-Serrano & Manchon, 2010).

In addition to these two under-researched types of written corrective feedback, writing instructors might give marks, use marking rubrics, and peer correction in their written response to learners' assignments as I will discuss in the findings of my study later on.

Personally speaking, I think that the use of any approach of error correction depends on a number of factors (e.g. learners' level of language proficiency, age) as well as other factors (e.g. instructor workload, expertise, aim of error correction, type of genre). Further, I think that the different types of error correction can be used interchangeably. Moreover, I think that e-feedback can lead to more sustainable feedback as I will discuss in my proposed theory.

3.8 Good practice of WCF

There are elements of good practice of written corrective feedback (WCF) (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). It should feed forward by providing specific and sufficient comments and suggestions on strengths and areas for further development. Moreover, it is important not to overload the student with too much

detailed information neither to over correct their written work but should rather limit the comments to three or four so that they are most helpful to the student in understanding the grade awarded and in improving their future work. Further, feedback should encourage positive motivation and on improvements which are within the control of the students or what Vygotsky refers to as zone of proximal development (ZPD). Moreover, speeding up the feedback can be advantageous. While students might not be able to decipher some tutors' handwritten comments, e-mailed feedback to individual students or using feedback banks and grids might be better options. Careful attention to the design of the feedback forms or coversheets is important because it can shape the feedback provided in terms of its focus and detail. Teachers can apply the feedback 'sandwich' technique starting with praise, followed by filling of key areas of weakness and strategies for improvement and the final layer is a positive statement providing an overview of the assignment.

However, from my own experience and observation of the current assessment practice at tertiary institutions in Oman, there seems to be many actions that need to be taken by writing instructors as there might be a deficiency in their feedback practice as it seems that they do the opposite of what has been recommended in the literature of corrective feedback and assessment in higher education.

Winstone and Carless (2020) discuss in their book the notion of an old versus new paradigm of feedback as can be seen in Figure 3.2 below. Paradigm is referred by the authors as a way of thinking about feedback. They claim that there is a shift in paradigms of feedback in higher education. In the old paradigm the students received information while the new paradigm focuses on interaction and students making sense of the feedback. In the old paradigm, learners were

passive and only acted as recipients of feedback while in the new paradigm, learners are active individuals who negotiate feedback with the teacher.

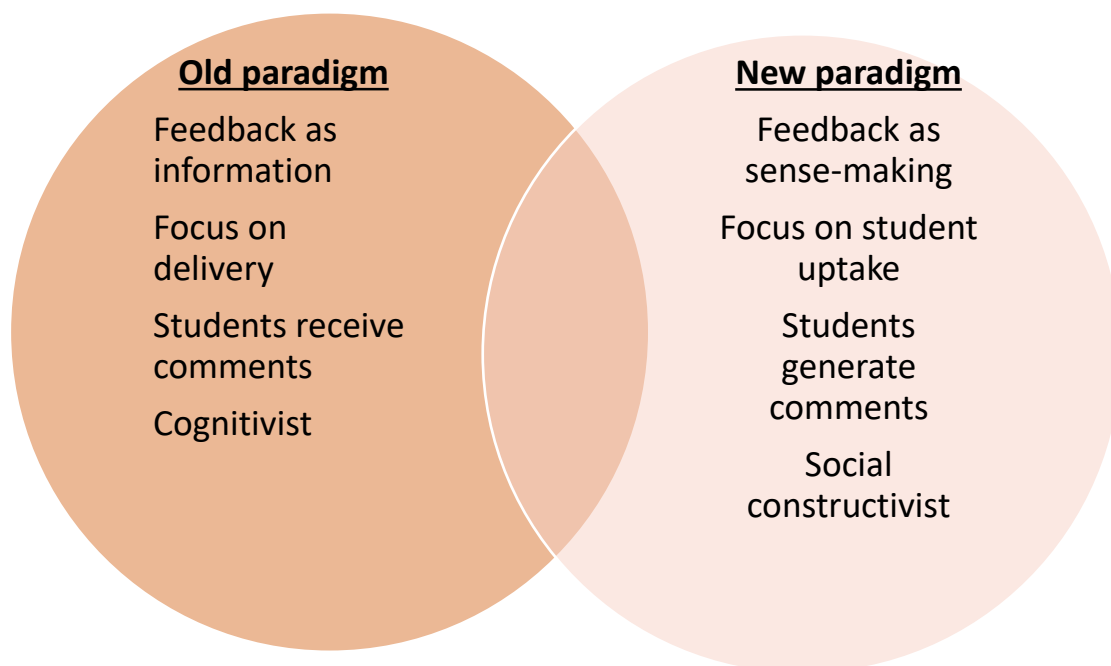


Figure 3.2 Old and new paradigms of feedback

3.9 Related Studies on WCF

This section presents the related studies on written corrective feedback (WCF). It is worth noting that the majority of empirical research have been experimental studies with very few qualitative or mixed methods studies. (See Appendix 1 for tables of related studies).

3.9.1 Usefulness of WCF

A great number of studies have investigated the efficacy of written corrective feedback and whether it can enhance learners' grammatical accuracy either on

revised texts or on new texts. The results of those studies are rather very diverse and have mixed results (e.g. Fazio, 2001; Han & Hyland, 2015; Al Ajmi, 2015).

3.9.2 Teacher attitudes and practice of WCF

Based on my review of related studies, I can confirm that there is a rather large body of studies that investigated teacher attitudes and perceptions and practice. For instance, some studies examined teacher perceptions and attitudes alone and found that they valued written corrective feedback (e.g. Lee, I., 2009; Jones & Tang, 2017). Other studies examined teacher versus learner perceptions on written corrective feedback and found some discrepancies between teachers and learners perceptions (e.g. Halimi, 2008; Atmaca, 2016; Hamouda, 2011). While Min (2013) found that teachers' perceptions and attitudes matched their practice, other studies found that there was no match between teacher perceptions and practice (e.g. AlBakri, 2015). Further, some studies investigated teacher and learner perceptions and teacher practice of written corrective feedback (e.g. Lee, I., 2004; AlShahrani & Storch, 2014). In addition, some studies only investigated teacher practice of written corrective feedback and found it effective in reducing the number of errors learners made (e.g. Lucero, Fernández & Montanero, 2018; Hamlaoui & Fellahi, 2017). Moreover, a very limited number of studies investigated other types of error correction such as conferencing (e.g. Bitchener et al, 2005; Khansir & Hozharbi, 2014; Atai & Alipour, 2012) and reformulation (e.g. Santos, Lopez-Serrano & Manchon, 2010).

3.9.3 Instructor motivations behind WCF

A small number of studies investigated the factors or rather motivations that might affect or contribute to writing instructors' written corrective feedback efficacy and the extent to which learners can make use of that feedback (e.g. Ferris, Pezone,

Trade & Tinti, 1997; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lee, Leong & Song, 2017; Spivey, 2014).

3.9.4 Focused vs. unfocused WCF

One of the areas of written corrective feedback that has been investigated thoroughly is focused (where the teacher focuses on a number of selective errors) versus unfocused (where the teacher corrects all the errors) written corrective feedback. While some studies found that focused error correction was more effective (e.g. Sadeghpour, Shabani & Behnam, 2019; Farrokhi & Sattarpour, 2012), other studies found that there was no difference in students' grammatical accuracy between focused and unfocused feedback (e.g. Ellis, Sheen, Murakami & Takashima, 2008; Frear & Chiu, 2015). Further, some studies either investigated focused corrective feedback (e.g. Ferris, 1995, 1997) or unfocused corrective feedback (e.g. Pan, 2010; Fazilatfar, Fallah, Hamavandi & Rostamian, 2014). However, they all found that written corrective feedback was effective. Hence, I can conclude that both types of corrective feedback are effective in improving learners' grammatical accuracy.

3.9.5 Direct vs. indirect WCF

Investigations of direct (where the teacher provides the correct answer to the learner) vs. indirect (where the teacher makes an indication that an error has been made either by underlining, circling, crossing out the erroneous form) written corrective feedback (WCF) has been widely researched. However, I found mixed results with regard to the efficacy of direct or indirect corrective feedback. Some studies investigated the efficacy of direct written corrective feedback and found it effective (e.g. Sarie, 2013; Afraz & Ghaemi, 2012; LaLande, 1982) while others found direct written corrective feedback as being ineffective (e.g. Kepner, 1991; Polio, Fleck & Leder, 1998; Sheppard, 1992). However, some studies only

studied indirect WCF and found it effective (e.g. Poorebrahim , 2017; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). Further, some researchers investigated direct versus indirect written corrective feedback where they found that direct corrective feedback was more effective (e.g. Chandler, 2003; Jokara & Soyooof, 2014;), other studies found indirect corrective feedback more effective (e.g. Eslami, 2014; Talatifard, 2016). Further, some studies found that both types of corrective feedback (direct and indirect) were effective (e.g. AlHarrasi, 2019; Ahmadi, Maftoon & Mehrdad, 2012; Maleki & Eslami, 2013).

3.9.6 Metalinguistic vs. direct/ indirect WCF

A number of studies examined metalinguistic written corrective feedback and compared to either direct or indirect written corrective feedback and the findings of those studies were rather mixed. Metalinguistic written corrective feedback occurs when the writing instructor decides to write a code or symbol of the error and it can occur when the writing instructor provides a grammatical explanation of the rule that has been used inappropriately by the learner. Some studies compared coded to un-coded written corrective feedback. While some studies found coded written corrective feedback more effective (e.g. Hong, 2004; Sampson, 2012), other studies found no difference in students' performance (e.g. Wagner & Wolf, 2016). Further, some studies compared the effects of direct versus coded corrective feedback. While some studies found that coded corrective feedback alone could increase students' accuracy (e.g. Tang & Liu, 2018), other studies found that direct written corrective feedback was effective for the short term while coded written corrective feedback was more effective for the long term (e.g. Tootkaboni & Khatib, 2014). On the other hand, some studies found that direct and coded CF were both effective and that there was no difference between the two types (e.g. Semke, 1984; Erel & Bulut, 2008).

Moreover, some studies focused on indirect versus coded written corrective feedback. Greenalade and Felix-Brasdefer (2006) found that coded WCF was more effective than indirect written corrective feedback, whereas Modirkhamene, Soleimani and Sadeghi (2017) and Ferris and Roberts (2001) among other scholars found no difference between the two types. Moreover, some studies examined the efficacy of metalinguistic explanation alone and found it effective in improving learners' accuracy (e.g. Mansourizadeh & Abdullah, 2002; Anderson, 2010). Further, some studies investigated the efficacy of direct versus metalinguistic explanation and found mixed results. Most of those studies found that both types of written corrective feedback were effective (e.g. Diab, 2015; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008). Some studies found that direct written corrective feedback was more effective (e.g. Stefanou & Revesz, 2015) while other studies found metalinguistic explanation to be more effective (e.g. Shintani & Ellis, 2013). Though some studies believe that metalinguistic written corrective feedback is a type of indirect feedback, I believe that it is rather a category on its own.

3.10 Omani studies on WCF

There are few studies in the Omani context on written corrective feedback but were crucial to me because my study departs from their work both conceptually and methodologically. For instance, Al Bakri (2015) conducted a study on Omani EFL writing instructors' beliefs and challenges with regard to WCF and the reasons for their practices at a public college. The researcher conducted an exploratory case study. Unlike my study which is mixed method and focused on writing instructors' attitudes and practice, she collected qualitative data by conducting semi-structured interviews with six writing teachers and analysing WCF provided on 18 students' written assignments. In her study, she found that the majority of the corrections were devoted to grammar and mechanism with

very few corrections on content though the course aimed at writing business/scientific essays and scientific reports- which one would assume that the focus would be on content and conveying the right message to the reader. Moreover, the written assignments were produced by students who were rather proficient in English while low proficient students did not volunteer to participate in the study. This finding supports my view that although the focus of the written correction is grammar based rather than any other aspect of writing (e.g. organisation, content), Omani Foundation students might not be in a position to convey the message clearly due to their limited knowledge of English grammar. As a result, error correction becomes a burden on writing instructors because students' essays might be loaded with grammatical errors. It is worthy to mention that the researcher analysed teachers' error correction by classifying them into six categories: content/organisation, grammar, mechanics (spelling, punctuation and capitalisation) words/expressions, sentence structure, and comments as well as classifying the corrections based on the directness (i.e. direct, indirect).

Unlike my study, Al Ajmi (2015) conducted a quasi-experimental study which targeted the use of prepositions by 50 foundation year students at a public college in Oman. The researcher applied a pre-test, immediate post-test and delayed post-test as well as an open-ended questionnaire targeted at investigating learners' perceptions on the best method of written corrective feedback (WCF) and the type of WCF they received from their teacher. The researcher found that the experimental group outperformed the control group on the target features and that learners reported that WCF was beneficial to them. Although there were suggestions in the literature to avoid the weaknesses in the design of the experiments that occurred in early empirical research on WCF, Al Ajmi gave

general comments to the experimental group which means that all groups had some form of intervention. It has been suggested in the literature that research should move from experimental studies because it has been exhausted.

While I investigated Omani writing instructors' attitudes and practice by collecting the data via a questionnaire and examining learners' written essays, AlBadwawi (2011) conducted an interpretive study that investigated first year students' perceptions and practice of academic writing as well as teachers' perceptions through 15 semi structured interviews with teachers and seven focus groups with learners at one public college in Oman. Though the focus of the study was on academic writing per se, the researcher investigated learners' perceptions on WCF and the strategies they employed to make use of teacher written feedback. The teachers in her study revealed that learners struggled with writing accurately in English and that their essays were loaded with grammatical errors. The study also found that learners used different strategies in dealing with the feedback they received from their teachers: some students might accept the feedback and revise their assignments accordingly; some learners might accept the feedback, but not know how to correct the error so they delete problematic sentences and some learners might ignore the feedback and re-produce the same essay without any revision or change. The researcher suggested that more studies which incorporate samples of students' assignments with teachers' written feedback are needed.

Another study which was conducted at public schools and investigated two types of written corrective feedback (i.e. direct/indirect) was carried out by Al Harrasi (2019). Unlike my study which examined a wide range of WCF types, Al Harrasi conducted a mixed method research. She limited the scope of her study to the

efficacy of direct and indirect written corrective feedback (WCF) on improving the grammatical accuracy of Omani EFL school students at Grade Six (aged 12 years old) regarding two linguistic structures: the comparative and prepositions of space. The researcher employed a quasi-experiment (81 students) and think aloud protocol (six students) to answer her research questions. The researcher found that direct and indirect WCF were both effective but that written WCF had a short-term effect when targeting already-learned linguistic structures (as the majority of the previous research found) as well as newly-learned linguistic structures.

To conclude, Al Bakri (2015) examined teacher written error correction to the exclusion of written commentary, Al Ajmi (2015) did an experimental study where the control group received general comments about their writing which indicates that both groups received some form of intervention, Al Badwawi (2011) suggested that future studies examine teacher written corrective feedback on a sample of students' actual written assignments, and Al Harrasi (2019) examined two forms of error correction (i.e. direct vs. indirect) at schools. The works of those researchers have paved the path for me to conduct a mixed method research which aimed to investigate teacher practice (i.e. types of WCF being employed by the writing instructor and whether or not teacher practice was based on learners' language proficiency level) and teachers' attitudes towards WCF at higher education organisations all over Oman. The work of my colleagues have in fact helped me examine WCF from a different angle both conceptually and methodologically.

To date only a few empirical studies investigated teacher practice on written corrective feedback (e.g. Lucero, Fernández & Montanero, 2018; Hamlaoui & Fellahi, 2017) or teacher practice and perceptions (e.g. Mahmud, 2016;

Rajagopal, 2015; Al Bakri, 2015) teacher motivation behind written error correction (e.g. Lee, Leong & Song, 2017; Spivey, 2014) or metalinguistic error correction (e.g. Anderson, 2010; Mansourizadeh & Abdullah, 2002). The majority of studies are experimental in their nature and they investigated comprehensive versus selective error correction and direct versus indirect error correction. However, most classical studies in this field which are heavily cited by researchers of error correction remain those works by Truscott, Ferris, Bitchener and Storch, Ellis, Lee, I., Semke, Lalande, Robb et al, Polio et al, Kepner, Leki, Sheppard and Sheen.

3.11 Summary of Chapter Three

This chapter started by discussing the main theories that underpin written corrective feedback (WCF), written corrective feedback as a form of assessment, efficacy of corrective feedback, types of written corrective feedback, and the related studies in the area of written corrective feedback in relation to the research questions of my study. The present chapter helped me develop the methodology of my research. The next chapter presents the theoretical paradigm on which my study was based. Moreover, it presents the research methodology, data collection methods, data analysis and key ethical considerations.

Chapter Four: Methodology and Research Design

4.1 Organisation of the Chapter: Overview

My study which was set in English as a foreign language (EFL) writing context, is an exploration to advance the understanding of writing instructors' attitudes towards written corrective feedback (WCF) and the types of written corrective feedback (WCF) they use in L2 settings, as well as addressing the issue of whether or not writing instructors' written corrective feedback vary based on learners' writing proficiency. In this chapter, I will present the methodology of my research by presenting the theoretical paradigm, the research methodology, the credibility and trustworthiness of my research methods and the ethical considerations. Table 4.1 below displays my research questions, instruments and data analysis technique for each instrument.

Table 4.1 Research questions, instruments & data analysis methods

Research Questions	Instruments	Data analysis
1 What are Omani EFL foundation year writing instructors' attitudes on giving written corrective feedback to learners?	• Teacher online survey	• Descriptive & inferential statistics
2 What types of written corrective feedback do Omani EFL foundation year writing instructors employ when they respond to learners' essay writing assignments?	• Teacher WCF on students' essays	• Content analysis • Descriptive
3 Does Omani EFL foundation year writing instructors' written corrective feedback vary according to learners' level of writing proficiency in English?	• Teacher WCF on students' essays	• Content analysis • Descriptive

Creswell (2018) states that effective central research questions facilitate making the design choices and the process of targeting the right data by means of proper methods, guiding the data analysis and the emergence of the study findings. By

answering my research questions, I hope to come to a better and deeper understanding of the situation of written corrective feedback being practised in the EFL context. Hence, it was necessary to choose the most appropriate paradigm which can frame my study based on my study's aims and topic of research. Paradigms frame studies with certain ontological and epistemological assumptions which guide the study's decisions. Based on the paradigm, I have decided on my research methodology, tools and methods, procedures, data analysis, validity and reliability of my online survey, and the credibility and dependability of my analysis of writing instructors' written corrective feedback on learner essays. "Fitness of purpose" is the basic principle in choosing a paradigm for a study according to Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2007, p. 3).

4.2 Theoretical paradigm

People have been searching for truth for a long time through three main categories: experience, reasoning and research. Research is self-correcting because the scientific method has built-in mechanics to avoid errors and the procedures and results of research are open to public scrutiny by fellow researchers. In addition, research combines reasoning and experience (Cohen & Manion, 1980). The researchers claim that paradigm consists of a set of assumptions which can guide the researcher's area of research interest, research questions, research methods, data analysis methods, and a particular theory or explanation.

4.2.1 Pragmatism

John Dewey, George Mead, Charles Peirce, and James Williams collectively are known as the classical American pragmatists with James 1907 book *Pragmatism*

serving as a manifesto. Pragmatism opens the door to multiple methods, different worldviews and different assumptions as well different forms of data collection and analysis. Pragmatism can be best viewed as a tradition of thought where the pragmatist researcher- like myself focuses on the what and how to research based on the intended consequences where they want to go with it and establishing a purpose for combining and providing a rationale for the reasons why quantitative and qualitative data need to be combined in the first place. Pierce's pragmatic maxim brings philosophical questions into the realm of experience, if a question cannot be answered in such a way that leads to some tangible difference in behaviour, then pragmatists think it is unworthy of their attention (Creswell, 2014). Further, pragmatism promotes that our beliefs about the world determine how we in fact act in the world insofar as they reflect rules of action embodied in established habits (Burke, 2013). Moreover, pragmatists see the world as a set of practical solutions that are born from thinking. Further, there is no dualism between theory and practice; rather they are two sides of the same coin (Tautila & Raij, 2012).

In the following sections I will discuss pragmatism, its characteristics, its limitations and my rationale for being a pragmatist researcher.

Pragmatism can be considered as the philosophical partner for mixed methods research. It provides an alternative through its abductive-intersubjective-transferable aspects of research. While the quantitative approach takes a strictly theory-driven or deductive mode in research, the qualitative approach takes a data-driven or an inductive mode of research. However, pragmatists rely on abductive reasoning moving back and forth between the deductive and inductive

modes of research- first converting observations into theory and then assessing those theories through action. It has been argued that the forced dichotomy between the subjective and objective reality is an equally artificial and false summary of the relationship between the researcher and the research process. Hence, the classical pragmatism emphasises on an intersubjective approach which captures duality for pragmatists or the practical researchers rather than being completely subjective or objective (Morgan, 2007). Being a pragmatist myself, I believe that there is no problem in asserting both that there is a single real world nor that all individuals have their own unique interpretations of that world. I do not believe that the knowledge I gain can either be completely specific to a particular context or more generalised that it can be applied to every possible context. I believe that the important question is to ask to what extent I can take the things that I learn with one type of method in one specific setting and make use of that knowledge in other circumstances. This process involves working back and forth between specific results and their more general implications and finding out the factors that could affect the knowledge I gain which can be transferred to other contexts- a process that has been called by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as transferability.

Feilzer (2010) explains that one of Dewey's (1925) contentions is that the main research paradigms of positivism and subjectivism derive from the same paradigm family, that they seek to find "the truth" —whether it is an objective truth or the relative truth of multiple realities (Dewey, 1925, p. 47). Both objective as well as subjective inquiry attempt to produce knowledge that best corresponds to, or represents, reality (Rorty, 1999, p. xxii). Thus, pragmatists are "anti-dualists" (Rorty, 1999, p. ix) questioning the dichotomy of positivism and

constructivism and calling for a convergence of quantitative and qualitative methods, reiterating that they are not different at an epistemological or ontological level and that they share many commonalities in their approaches to inquiry (Hanson, 2008; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Hanson (2008) argues that the distinction between phenomenon as objective or subjective are primarily a result of political divisions among social scientists combined with the development of distinctive skill sets for quantitative and qualitative research. In a way, pragmatism is a commitment to uncertainty, an acknowledgement that any knowledge “produced” through research is relative and not absolute, that even if there are causal relationships, they are “transitory and hard to identify” (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009, p. 93). This commitment to uncertainty is different from philosophical skepticism saying that we cannot know anything but an appreciation that relationships, structures, and events that follow stable patterns are open to shifts and changes dependent on precarious and unpredictable occurrences and events (Mounce, 1997).

4.2.2 Characteristics of Pragmatism

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) summarised the characteristics of pragmatism. Pragmatism rejects traditional dualisms (e.g., rationalism vs. empiricism, realism vs. antirealism, free will vs. determinism, Platonic appearance vs. reality, facts vs. values, subjectivism vs. objectivism) and generally prefers more moderate and common sense versions of philosophical dualisms based on how well they work in solving problems. It recognises the existence and importance of the natural or physical world as well as the emergent social and psychological world that includes language, culture, human institutions, and subjective thoughts. Moreover, knowledge is viewed as being both constructed *and* based on the reality of the world we experience and live in.

It endorses eclecticism and pluralism (e.g. different, even conflicting, theories and perspectives can be useful; observations, experiences, and experiments are all useful ways to gain an understanding of people and the world). Human inquiry (i.e. what we do in our day-to-day lives as we interact with our environments) is viewed as being analogous to experimental and scientific inquiry. We all try out things to see what works, what solves problems, and what helps us to survive. We obtain warranted evidence that provides us with answers that are ultimately tentative (i.e., inquiry provides the best answers we can currently master), but, in the long run, use of this “scientific” or evolutionary or practical epistemology moves us toward larger Truths. It endorses a strong and practical empiricism as the path to determine what works. It views current truth, meaning, and knowledge as tentative and as changing over time. What we obtain on a daily basis in research should be viewed as provisional truths. Capital “T” Truth (i.e., absolute Truth) is what will be the “final opinion” perhaps at the end of history. Lowercase “t” truths (i.e., the instrumental and provisional truths that we obtain and live by in the meantime) are given through experience and experimenting. Instrumental truths are a matter of degree (i.e., some estimates are more true than others). Instrumental truth is not “stagnant,” and, therefore, James (1995, p.1907) states that we must “be ready tomorrow to call it falsehood.” It prefers action to philosophising (pragmatism is, in a sense, an anti-philosophy). It takes an explicitly value-oriented approach to research that is derived from cultural values; specifically endorses shared values such as democracy, freedom, equality, and progress. It endorses practical theory (theory that informs effective practice; praxis). Organisms are constantly adapting to new situations and environments. Our thinking follows a dynamic homeostatic process of belief, doubt, inquiry, modified belief, new doubt, new inquiry, . . . , in an infinite loop, where the person

or researcher (and research community) constantly tries to improve upon past understandings in a way that fits and works in the world in which he or she operates. The present is always a new starting point. It generally rejects reductionism (e.g., reducing culture, thoughts, and beliefs to nothing more than neurobiological processes). It offers the “pragmatic method” for solving traditional philosophical dualisms as well as for making methodological choices.

The concept of truth is a key element of pragmatical thinking. Taatila and Raij (2012) explain that Pierce considers truth to be what comes at the end of the journey. He believes that an inquiry begins as a person (i.e. researcher) no longer believes in his internal view and struggles to acquire a new belief. The end of this struggle is a new belief about the state of the subject in question. It is not relevant in pragmatic world whether or not something is true if no one acts on that truth. Moreover, pragmatists believe that research in social sciences should not try to unveil unquestionable truths about the social world but rather try to discuss and present practically relevant and situational actions to be taken (Taatila & Raij, 2012). The authors explain that pragmatists believe that change (i.e. reality) is constantly taking place and man is an active agent and conductor of transformation, either by thought or by action; interaction does not function one-way, but as man changes the environment, the environment changes man, hence, two-way interaction takes place in the dialectal reflective practice of pragmatism; the pragmatic dialogue requires real dialects between individuals not just as an isolated discussion with self; truly new view can be only acquired by seeking out alternative views and imposing one’s own thinking on them; in order for dialogue to be fruitful, the individuals should disagree over what they consider important; when addressed to a real situation, this discussion leads into truth that is used

for solving the puzzle at hand; individuals do not have to agree on the situation; and the truth will be the actions that are really taken. The choice of social sciences research questions and methods, is a reflection of researchers' epistemological understanding of the world, even if it is not articulated or made explicit. Feilzer (2010) explains that the interpretation of any research findings will expose the researchers' underlying philosophies, drawing on, and extending the notion that all knowledge is knowledge from some point of view. At the level of translating epistemological concerns into research methodology and finally the decision of research methods, a pragmatic paradigm, poses some methodological questions (Feilzer, 2010). For instance, if a phenomenon has different layers, how can these layers be measured or observed? Mixed methods research offers to plug this gap by using quantitative methods to measure some aspects of the phenomenon in question and qualitative methods for others. Pragmatism does not require a particular method or methods mix and does not exclude others (Feilzer, 2010). It does not expect to find unvarying causal links or truths but aims to interrogate a particular question, theory, or phenomenon with the most appropriate research method.

4.2.3 Rationale for being a pragmatist researcher

There are many reasons for being a pragmatist. For instance, pragmatism can offer an immediate and useful middle position philosophically and methodologically; it offers a practical and outcome-oriented method of inquiry that is based on action and leads, iteratively, to further action and the elimination of doubt; and it offers a method for selecting methodological mixes that can help researchers better answer many of their research questions. There are a number of criteria for choosing a pragmatic stance such as the research problem and questions, and personal experiences (Creswell, 2014). First, in my context, the

survey was the most appropriate instrument to investigate teacher practice and attitudes from all over the Sultanate of Oman. However, the survey on its own was not adequate to best understand teacher practice. Hence, I analysed student documents with teacher written corrective feedback on. The survey helped me transfer the findings of my study to the population of my context while the document analysis helped me develop a deeper and more detailed understanding of individual teachers' practice of written corrective feedback provision. As a result, collecting and analysing quantitative and qualitative data proved advantageous for my research. Second, I am familiar with both quantitative and qualitative research. Hence, it was more convenient for me to take a pragmatic stance in my research through the mixed method design though it took longer to administer, analyse and interpret. I am concerned with applications and what works and solutions to my research problem. Moreover, my focus was not on the methods but rather on how I could answer my research questions by using pluralistic approaches available to understand my research problem and derive knowledge about the problem.

Being a pragmatic researcher myself, I reject forced choices between positivism/post positivism and constructivism with regard to methods, logic, epistemology, ontology and generalisability of findings. Rather, I made use of both quantitative and qualitative methods in addressing my research questions by collecting the data and analysing the findings. I do not perceive logic as an either-or contrast. Rather, I believe that research on any given question at any point in time falls somewhere within the inductive-deductive research cycle. I recognise explicitly that I chose both deductive and inductive logic and methods simultaneously to address my research problem and I used abductive logic to

explain any surprising event and determine what might have caused it and generated a theory. With regard to epistemology, truth in pragmatism is judged in light of its practical consequences. This practical epistemology is relevant for the social sciences whose main practical contribution is to supply methods for identifying and solving problems (Taasila & Raij, 2012). Hence, I challenge the dualism approach of the relationship between the research and the researcher as being either objective or subjective. I understand that I might have needed a highly interactive relationship with the participants to answer complex questions but I did not refer back to the participants because I collected some of my data through a large scale survey. Moreover, I challenge the idea that ontology (reality, truth) is real, apprehensible, and understandable as being perceived by positivists or that it can be co-constructed with the participants as being perceived by constructivists. I deny that truth can be determined and I am not certain if one explanation of reality is better than any other. However, I believe that one explanation might be better than another at producing anticipated or desired outcomes. I believe that truth is normative and that truth is what works. Further, I emphasise ideographic statements and am more concerned with issues of external validity and the transferability of results.

4.3 Methodology: Mixed methods design

Methods have been defined as “the range of approaches used in educational research to gather data which are to be used as a basis for inference and interpretation (Cohen & Manion 1980, p. 26)”. The authors add that while methods refer to the techniques and procedures used in the process of gathering data, methodology aims at describing and analysing those data in an attempt to understand the process of scientific enquiry. According to Paltridge and Starfield (2007), a good review of methods includes strengths and limitations of the

methods used in previous studies. According to Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2011), the researcher's ontological and epistemological views guide the choice of the research problem, research questions, characteristics of participants, methodological issues and the mode of treatment. Because I am a pragmatist and my study is mixed method, I implemented an online survey which had closed ended and open ended questions which I believe have served well in addressing my first research question. I have then analysed the collected data quantitatively and qualitatively. I have also collected a sample of 96 learner essays with writing instructors' written corrective feedback on to address my second and third research questions and analysed those documents qualitatively and quantitatively based on two frameworks: Ellis (2009a) and a modified version of Ferris (2007). Ferris (2007) framework was originally developed by Ferris, Pezone and Tinti (1997) for analysing teachers' written comments. Sheen (2011) later modified Ellis (2009a) typology but I used Ellis typology in this study because it was more straightforward to follow. Hence, by using a mixed method design, I examined writing instructors' perspectives as well as their experiences. As a result, both paradigms directed my choice of methods, data analysis techniques and interpretation and discussion of the main findings.

Mixed method research has been defined by Tashakori and Teddlie (2010) as "research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings, and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study or program of inquiry".

The positivist notion of a singular reality, the one and only truth that is out there waiting to be discovered by objective and value-free inquiry underpins quantitative research methods. It is contrasted with the idea that there is no such

thing as a single objective reality and that “subjective inquiry is the only kind possible to do” and for that reason constructivists favour qualitative research methods (Creswell & Clark, 2007). These two paradigms are still dominating methodological textbooks and epistemological debates in social sciences (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Moreover, mixed methods research has been hailed as a response to the long-lasting, circular, and remarkably unproductive debates discussing the advantages and disadvantages of quantitative versus qualitative research as a result of the paradigm “wars”. The main paradigms or worldviews that traditionally are presented as being fundamentally opposed are those of positivism/postpositivism and constructivism/interpretivism (Feilzer, 2010).

A key feature of mixed methods research is its methodological pluralism or eclecticism, which frequently results in superior research (compared to monomethod research). Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) state that mixed methods research can be viewed as the third research paradigm in educational research. It does not replace either of the two approaches (i.e. quantitative or qualitative) but rather draws from the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies. If one can visualise a continuum with qualitative research anchored at one pole and quantitative research anchored at the other, mixed methods research covers the large set of points in the middle area. If one prefers to think categorically, mixed methods research sits in a new third chair, with qualitative research sitting on the left side and quantitative research sitting on the right side. Taking a non-purist or compatibilist or mixed position allows researchers to mix and match design components that offer the best chance of answering their specific research questions. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) add that taking a pragmatic and

balanced or pluralist position rather than a dualistic approach as has been debated by purists (i.e. positivists and constructivists) will help improve communication among researchers from different paradigms as they attempt to advance knowledge. The authors add that pragmatism helps to shed light on how research approaches can be mixed fruitfully and offer the best opportunities for answering important research questions. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie add that mixed methods research also is an attempt to legitimate the use of multiple approaches in answering research questions, rather than restricting or constraining researchers' choices (i.e., it rejects dogmatism). Pragmatism is an expansive and creative form of research, not a limiting form of research. Moreover, it is inclusive, pluralistic, and complementary, and suggests that researchers take an eclectic approach to method selection and the thinking about and conduct of research.

Proponents of mixed methods research strive for an integration of quantitative and qualitative research strategies and thus, this approach does not fall comfortably within one or the other worldview described above. As a consequence, researchers have attempted to construct an alternative framework that accommodates the diverse nature of such research (Creswell & Clark, 2007). However, there appears to be little agreement amongst mixed methods researchers on the nature of this framework. Thus, whereas Creswell and Clark (2007) describe three alternative stances on the paradigm issue, Greene, Benjamin, and Goodyear (2001) list four different frameworks for mixing methods, and although Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) discuss only one framework in detail, they include another framework, namely the transformative perspective, in their latest textbook on mixed methods research. The approach most commonly

associated with mixed methods research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009), although clearly not the only one, is pragmatism, which offers an alternative worldview to those of positivism/postpositivism and constructivism and focuses on the problem to be researched and the consequences of the research.

The mixed method design in my study was a convergent mixed design (Creswell, 2018) as can be seen in **Figure 4.1** below. It clearly shows the inter-dependence of the qualitative and quantitative data collection tools.

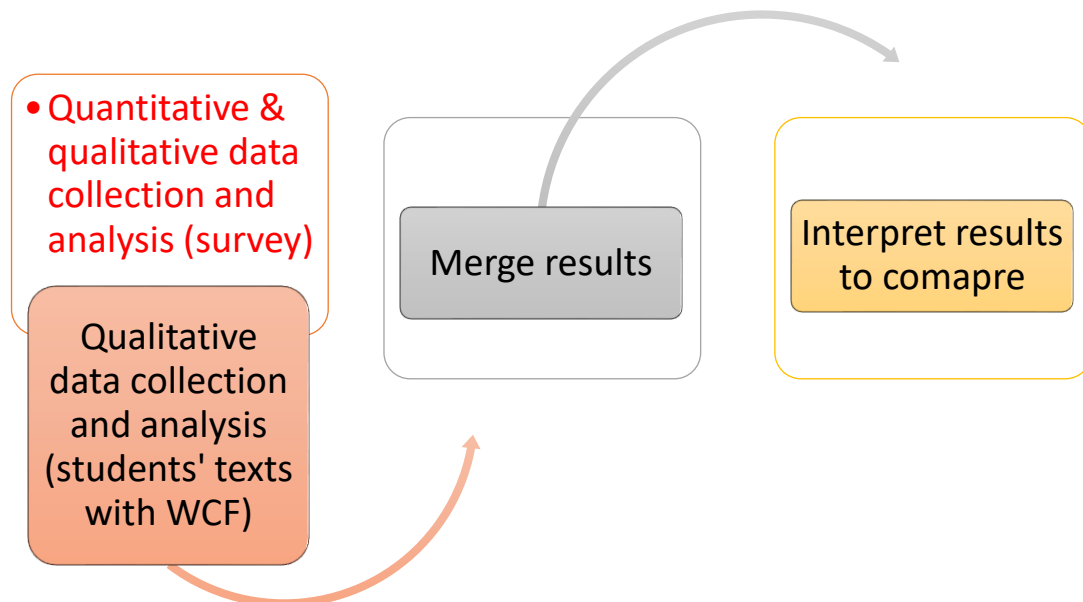


Figure 4.1 Convergent mixed method one phase design

Tashakori and Teddlie (2010) discussed this design but called it concurrent mixed. According to the authors, concurrent implementation happens when the 'qualitative and quantitative components are implemented at the same time or within close proximity and are independent in terms of collection and analysis. They explain that integration of data obtained from both instruments occurs at the data interpretation stage of the mixed inquiry. In my study, I collected my data

from the online survey and a sample of students' essays with writing instructors' written corrective feedback on at the same time. However, I analysed the data sets from both instruments separately. However, I merged findings from both data sets in order to answer my first research question on writing instructors' attitudes and practice of written corrective feedback and my second research question on the types of written corrective feedback writing instructors actually applied when they feedback on students' essays. In fact, combining two approaches of data collection provided me richer data than either approach (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Further, the mixed method design gave me the opportunity to make use of the strengths of quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques (Onwuegbuzie & Teddlie, 2003). Getting more out of the data generated more meaning and hence enhanced the quality of my data interpretation. Though the number of participants is not equal in the design (174 online survey responses and 96 student written assignments with teacher written corrective feedback on), I included the qualitative sample in the larger quantitative sample so that when I make comparisons between the two data bases, they are more similar (Creswell, 2018).

Moreover, given the nature of my research, I aimed to achieve triangulation. In fact, I found it rather useful and served the purpose of my research given the nature of my research questions and research design. Cohen and Manion define triangulation as the "use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behaviour" (1994, p. 208). To start with, my rationale for using a mixed method design was that my data collection methods would complement each other. Thomas (2016) argues that triangulation does not necessarily mean that triangles have to happen. He explains that the word

triangulation came originally from geometry and surveying and it means that “viewing from several points is better than viewing from one.” (2016, p. 69). Maxwell (2013) argues that triangulation is applied when there are different methods used as a check on one another. Further, depending on only one method of data collection might bias or distort the reality the researcher is trying to investigate. In order to implement triangulation in my research, I have decided on the type of information I aimed to gather. I selected the right methods through which I could gather that information. Moreover, I decided how I would use the data based on my study’s aims and objectives. Hence, triangulation helped me reduce the risk of drawing biased conclusions due to the fact of using only one method.

4.4. Population and sample

There are 41 universities and colleges in the sultanate of Oman, all of which have a foundation year programme based on the requirements of the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE) which is responsible for monitoring higher education policies in Oman. Out of the 41 universities, I targeted seven branches of Colleges of Technology located all over the Sultanate. However, six branches responded and were thus involved in my study. The sample was representative of the population because the first-year General Foundation Programme (GFP) at all universities in Oman aims at helping learners gain the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening in English. The learners are not expected to excel by the end of the programme, but that they should have gained the necessary knowledge and skills as English language learners in order to cope with course requirements when they move to the next level at tertiary institutions which is the credit courses. Further, learners are taught mathematics and information technology as pre-requisite courses which can prepare them to start their

specialisations at any of the 41 universities based on their personal choices and preferences.

4.4.1. Writing instructors

There are twelve governates in Oman and my sample was drawn from Colleges of Technology from six governates. The sampling procedure in my research was convenient, meaning that the 'theoretical purpose of the project, rather than a strict methodological mandate, determines the selection process (Marvasti, 2004, p. 9)' but it had a principled plan that is lined up with the purposes of the study (participants, settings, events, processes) (Dornyei, 2007). I targeted Omani English a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instructors at the Language Center (LC) which is part of the General Foundation Programme (GFP) at those colleges. Since I was an outsider and due to feasibility and availability reasons, I could only get approval from six colleges which agreed to participate in my study. Therefore, the population of the writing instructors in my study was 588 writing instructors in the six colleges. The sample was 174 writing instructors; all responded to the online survey and four writing instructors volunteered to collect students' essays with their written corrective feedback on. Since this was a purposive sample, participation was totally voluntary. Due to feasibility reasons and the fact that my study covered six governates in Oman not to mention the geographic distance between them, I approached the writing instructors through the head of department of the Language Center (LC) in each college. I contacted the heads by sending them emails and explaining to them my research aims and questions. Further, I sent them all the required documents including consent forms for the administration and writing instructors along with the abstract of my research. I asked the heads to invite the writing instructors to complete the online survey. After the initial introduction and a couple of correspondence to ensure

that the necessary paper work was done, the link of the survey was sent to all the writing instructors in my study. Table 4.2 below shows the distribution of the sample of writing instructors in my study based on gender, first language, qualification, the type of training they had on giving written corrective feedback (WCF), years of experience at tertiary level, number of students per class, number of teaching hours per week, and number of times they read an essay before responding to it.

Table 4.2 Descriptive statistics of the sample of writing instructors

Variable	Sub-variable	Frequency	Percent %
First language	Arabic	43	24.7 %
	English	35	20.1 %
	Other languages	94	54.0 %
Highest educational degree	Bachelor	13	7.5 %
	Master	118	67.8 %
	Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)	28	16.1 %
	Other	15	8.6 %
Years of experience	Less than a year	1	.6 %
	One to five years	22	12.6 %
	Six to ten years	49	28.2 %
	11- 15 years	45	25.9 %
	16-20 years	24	13.8 %
	Over 20 years	33	19.0 %
Total number of writing instructors	174		

In total , 174 EFL writing instructors at six colleges in the Sultanate of Oman participated in my study. There were 88 (51%) male writing instructors and 86 (49%) female writing instructors in my sample. They varied in their degrees from

bachelor holders to Phd holders. Slightly more than half of the sample 94 (54%) spoke languages other than Arabic or English as their first language. While the majority of those languages 75 (43%) were one of the Indian languages (e.g. Hindi, Malayalam, Punjabi, Tamil, Urdu), 19 (12%) writing instructors spoke other languages as their first language (e.g. Filipino, Turkish, Persian, Russian, Uzbek, Armenian). A small number of writing instructors 43 (25%) spoke Arabic or English 35 (20%) as their first language. The sample had a mixed range of teaching experiences from one year to more than 20 years at tertiary level. Further, an absolute majority of the writing instructors 144 (83%) taught 16 to 20 hours per week. Similarly, an absolute majority of the writing instructors 153 (88%) had 21 to 30 students in their writing class. Moreover, slightly more than half of the sample 97 (56%) read the essay twice before responding to it. Further, slightly less than half of the sample 74 (43%) had training on giving written corrective feedback as part of their pre service or in service training. Moreover, slightly more than half of the sample 97 (56%) of the writing instructors read the essay twice before responding to it while less than half of the sample 67 (39%) read it once before responding to it. For feasibility reasons, four writing instructors from one of the six colleges volunteered to collect students' essays with their own written corrective on. The writing instructors were experienced in teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and have been teaching at tertiary level for some time. For ethical reasons, I am not able to describe them with more elaboration.

4.4.2 Learners

In total, there were 2827 students enrolled at 80 classes at the Language Center (LC) at one of the Colleges of Technology. Out of that number, 96 learners actually participated in my study. The learners were school leavers and in their

first year at the Language Centers (LCs). The aim of the LCs is to teach students all the basic skills needed to thrive in their academic life. It is a pre-requisite for students before they can move to the credit courses and majors they wish to specialise in. All universities and colleges in my country have similar objectives with regard to the writing skill. They all aim at training students produce comprehensible content and cohesive and coherent essays and reports to make them ready for the credit courses and labour market after graduation. Similar to the procedures used in the selection of writing instructors in my study, the learners were selected based on feasibility and availability. Students at the Language Centre at the selected college are distributed into four different levels based on their scores in the placement test they have to undertake right from the beginning of their first year prior to joining the foundation programme. Level one is the beginner level; level two is the intermediate level; level three is upper intermediate and level four is advanced. The placement test is designed to assess learners' proficiency level regarding reading, writing words only, vocabulary and grammar. The placement test consists of 100 multiple choice questions on grammar, and a reading comprehension question. Hence, the test does not test learners' ability to write in English. Moreover, some learners might be lucky at guessing and selecting the right answer in the grammar question though in reality they might not be high achievers. As a result, some learners might be placed at an upper level based on their placement test scores, but their writing might be below the expected level. Based on their scores, learners are required to attend language classes which are aimed at improving their language skills. They take speaking, reading and writing, grammar, and listening classes throughout the term. I selected the students from four writing modules across the board, i.e. beginners, intermediate, higher intermediate and advanced. The reason why I

collected and analysed teacher written corrective feedback on learner essays from all the four proficiency levels was to examine teacher written corrective feedback and explore if there were any significant differences in terms of the type of written corrective feedback writing instructors give to learners based on students' proficiency level of English. The sample I drew upon was Omani nationals first year college students aged between 18 to 20 years old. They all had a similar background in terms of their first language which is Arabic. They shared the same Omani culture and they belonged to the same religion which is Islam. They also came from a similar educational background. They had all studied at public or private schools in Oman where the medium of instruction is Arabic. Moreover, they have learnt English as a foreign language since grade one at school. All the students that were approached through their writing instructors, were provided with an information sheet about my study in Arabic and those who agreed to voluntarily participate in the study, were asked to sign a consent form. I asked the writing instructors to explain to the volunteers orally the aims and objectives of my research to ensure confidentiality and anonymity. Once the consent forms were signed by the four instructors and their students, the essays were collected, submitted to the head of the Language Center at the targeted college and handed over to me. Hence, 96 students agreed to participate in the study as can be seen in Table 4.3 below.

Table 4.3 sample of learners

Level of English	No. of students	Total no. of students
Beginners	20	96
Intermediate	30	
Upper intermediate	26	
Advanced	20	

4.4.3. The writing courses

The learners were approached from all the four English levels (beginners, intermediate, higher intermediate, advanced) in four writing courses. Below Table 4.4 illustrates and summarises the information about the course books and teaching materials used at each level according to the college's course outline.

Table 4.4 Description of the writing courses

Level of student	Course-book title	N. contact hours per week
Beginners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep writing 1 • Cutting Edge Starter 	five
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ready to Write • New Cutting Edge Elementary students' class book • New Cutting Edge Elementary students' workbook 	four
Upper intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-house-writing book • Q: Skills 2 • Cutting Edge Pre-Intermediate 	six
Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-house materials • supporting websites: www.lessonsonmovies.com; www.imbd; http://film-english.com/ ielts-simon.com; http://www.scoop.it/t/ielts-writing-task-2-practice. 	six

4.5 Data collection methods

My study was a mixed method study which means that I used more than one data collection tool and had to analyse my data qualitatively and quantitatively. I investigated writing instructors' attitudes on written corrective feedback via online surveys which had closed and open questions to answer my first research question. The survey was further used to gather information about their attitudes of the most effective types of written corrective feedback as well as the main challenges they faced. I also examined the actual practice of giving written corrective feedback of four writing instructors on a sample of 96 student essays to answer my second on the types of error correction the writing instructors provided to learners' written assignments and third research question on whether or not the instructors' written response varied according to learners' level of English proficiency. Table 4.5 below displays my research questions, and data collection methods and analysis.

Table 4.5 Data collection and analysis methods

Research Question	Research method	Number	Data analysis method
1- What are Omani EFL foundation year writing instructors' attitudes towards giving written corrective feedback?	Surveys	174 responses of writing instructors	Closed Q: descriptive (means, std. deviation, percentages); inferential statistics (paired sample t test). Open Q: themes; descriptive (frequencies, percentages)
2- What types of written corrective feedback do Omani EFL foundation year writing instructors employ when they respond to students' essay writing assignments?	learner-essays with WCF	96 student essays with WCF	content analysis; frequencies & percentages
3-Does Omani EFL foundation year writing instructors' written corrective feedback vary according to learners' level of writing proficiency in English?	learner-essays with WCF	96 student essays with WCF	frequencies, percentages; content analysis

Though collecting data using technology might not be the perfect tool for data collection, I found the online survey a more suitable tool in my study given the

fact that data were collected from six different governates in Oman where distance was one of the issues I had to consider in constructing the instruments of my research.

4.5.1 Online Surveys for writing instructors

We all know that any research instrument has its advantages and disadvantages. Online surveys are no exception. I implemented an online survey because it served well the purpose of my research which aimed at investigating writing instructors' attitudes on written corrective feedback. Moreover, I collected data from all over Oman which made it more convenient and cost and time effective for me as a researcher. Surveys can be considered as population-tools, because they can be easily implemented and distributed to get information from a large number of people quickly from a wide geographical area (De Vaus, 2014; Gillham, 2008). Further, using online surveys eliminated any pressure for an immediate response as my respondents could answer the survey at their own convenient time. Moreover, implementing an online survey gave me the luxury of starting the data analysis phase by downloading the writing instructors' responses and converting the data into a Microsoft word document once the data collection phase was complete which made analysing the data rather straightforward. Further, it helped me collect some demographic information about the participants of my study (e.g. gender, education, teaching experience, number of teaching hours, number of students per writing class, number of times writing instructors read an essay before responding to it, and whether writing instructors had any sort of previous training on responding to student essays). Such data allowed me to make comparisons among the sample when discussing the findings of my study (Peterson, 2000). In fact, I placed the demographic section towards the end of the survey so that failure to answering them would be

less critical because they are not a threat to the research objectives unlike the main research questions which are substantive and more important to be answered by the participants. Moreover, the closed ended questions in the surveys were easier to answer because they did not require any physical or sophisticated mental effort on the part of the participants. Hence, my respondents could select an answer rapidly from a list of answers presented in front of them by clicking on the answer. Further, I wanted to provide the respondents with some space to express their ideas and views based on their belief system and teaching and learning experiences. Hence, I asked the respondents two open ended questions on the most effective methods and the main challenges of written corrective feedback.

Apart from the advantages of surveys, there are some disadvantages, too. It has been argued that one of the strengths of surveys is their ease in construction (Dörnyei, 2010). However, I found constructing the survey one of the biggest challenges I faced as a researcher. Apart from ensuring reliability and validity of the survey, it was very time consuming. Further, the response rate is usually low in social sciences because respondents might not benefit from answering a survey (Dörnyei, 2010). As a result, I placed an incentive for the respondents prior to the start of the survey to motivate the participants to respond to my survey. Luckily, the response rate was 25% which I found satisfying given the fact that I was an outsider. Moreover, another weakness of surveys I was aware of was social desirability or prestige bias referring to the fact that some respondents might give the desirable/acceptable/expected answer rather than being transparent and truthful in answering the question (Dörnyei, 2010). However, if that was the case in my context, it would have been totally beyond my control as

a researcher. Further, attrition is a real problem and threat to any study because it could affect the generalisability (external validity) and inference quality (internal validity) of the conclusions of the survey results especially if the non-respondents are systematically different from the rest of the sample (Mangione, 1995) in terms of their teaching and learning experiences and might add rich and unique data if they had responded to the survey. In order to decrease no-response or participant attrition, I paid careful attention to the design and appearance of the survey, its final layout, length, and readability. For instance, I constructed my online-survey in an interesting manner through the use of colourful fonts for the headings, applied different question formats (e.g. multiple choice questions, open ended questions, five Likert scale questions), and added a deadline for responding to the survey which was a three month period to allow enough time for the participants to answer it. Further, I made sure that the words were clear, and that each statement contained one idea rather than having multiple meanings in one statement since wording of the survey questions is important (Fowler, 2014). I also made sure that the words had consistent meaning to all my respondents by replacing the specialised phrase 'written corrective feedback' in my study by simple language, e.g. teacher comments or teacher response. As a result, 179 writing instructors opened the link to the online survey but five writing instructors rejected the written consent and hence, the survey software platform namely Qualtrics took them to the end of the survey with a thank you note. Consequently, I excluded those five cases from my statistical analysis by deleting them before carrying out any procedures on the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) so that they would not affect the mean scores and other statistical analyses I did to ensure that I reached valid and reliable results. However, one of the advantages of using an online survey is that respondents can go back to the

link if they changed their mind later on and wanted to answer the survey. It is worth mentioning that in order to avoid receiving long complex answers in the open ended questions of my survey (Peterson, 2000), I asked the respondents to answer in five bullet answers and restricted the space provided for them to answer the questions on the most effective methods and challenges of giving written corrective feedback to student essays. However, I found the open ended questions difficult to analyse and sort into themes (Gillham, 2007) because the respondents described their views in their own words which resulted in redundant answers constructed in many different ways but had the same idea.

4.5.2 Documentary Sources: teacher WCF on essays

My second research question on the types of written corrective feedback writing instructors provided in response to students' written assignments was addressed by examining a sample of 96 students' essays. Ferris (2002b) divided written corrective feedback into corrective feedback on preliminary drafts and corrective feedback on subsequent drafts. However, I only examined writing instructors' written corrective feedback on preliminary drafts because the college I got access to did not ask learners' to produce more than one draft as part of the daily classroom writing practice. According to Lichtman (2013), documents are a wide range of written, physical or visual materials which can be termed as arti-facts. He adds that they can be personal such as autobiographies, diaries, or official such as files, reports, minutes, or documents of popular culture such as videos, books, and films. In my context, the writing instructors' written corrective feedback on student essays were in fact primary documents, which means that they were produced regardless of my research. The essays were produced by students and commented on by their writing instructors and I as the researcher had first experience with the written corrective feedback on those essays. For the

purpose of my study, I used writing instructors' written corrective feedback on learner essays as a complementary method in addition to the online survey. Fowler (2014) proposed four criteria for using documents. His proposal consisted of authenticity (i.e. whether the documents are primary or secondary sources); credibility (i.e. the accuracy of the documentation, and the reliability of the person or organisation that produced the document); representativeness (i.e. whether the document is a typical record or not and whether it includes information that a typical record includes) and meaning questions (e.g. what is the intended meaning and message of the document? What is the intended meaning for the reader or different readers? What is the social meaning of that document for the researcher?). Having said that, in my context, the students' essays were primarily written to be graded by the writing instructor as part of the daily continuous assessment embedded in the course requirement. Moreover, the documents were accurate because they were written for a specific class with the intention to be graded so that learners can improve their writing and pass the writing exams. Further, the learners were real students who produced essays as part of the daily class routine at their college. Moreover, students' essays are typical records because they were produced on a daily basis by learners. In addition, the intended meaning in the documents I examined depended on the topic and genre that students wrote about and the social meaning for me as a researcher was to look at these documents and analyse the documents based on two frameworks (i.e. Ellis, 2009a; a modified version of Ferris, 2007).

Though documents can be very enriching sources of data, they have their weaknesses, too. And this is one of the reasons why I used mixed methods in my data collection so that the weakness of one method can be eliminated by the

strength of another method. One of the weaknesses of documents is that they might not be accessible to researchers unless under certain conditions by gatekeepers (Fowler, 2014) who were the college administrative staff and the writing instructors in my context. Personally speaking, I was asked by the head of the Language Center at the targeted college to agree on their terms and conditions in order to allow me get access to students' essays. Apart from students' essays, I asked for the course descriptions of all the four writing classes, some demographic information about the students and writing instructors (e.g. number of students; writing instructors' nationalities and experience in teaching writing). They asked me to deal with whatever document I get hold of from their college with total confidentiality and that it should not be shared with a third party in addition to keeping the writing instructors who participated in the study totally anonymous. Hence, I agreed on that condition and all the four writing instructors and the 96 students involved in the study signed the written informed consent I had sent to the head of the Language Center prior to the data collection phase. The written consents were later collected by me along with the students' essays. In the next section, I will elaborate on the data collection process which aimed to address my three research questions.

4.6 Data collection process

I started the data collection process by designing the study's instruments in particular the online survey and targeting the four different levels of language proficiency (i.e. Beginners, Intermediate, Upper intermediate, advance) in order to collect students' essays. I decided to include all the four levels of English at the Language Center at the targeted college. I then, piloted the survey and the two frameworks for content analysis of students' essays with teacher written

corrective feedback on. After making the necessary changes and modifications, I started collecting the data for my research.

4.6.1 Design of the study instruments

I will first present the design of the online survey followed by the two frameworks being used for the purpose of content analysis of students' essays with teacher written corrective feedback on.

4.6.1.1 Design of the online survey

In order to address the first research question in my study, I designed an online survey which was based on my own experience as a language lecturer and my readings in the wider literature on written corrective feedback. Hence, I adapted some items from the work of Lee, I. (2009), Ferris (1995); Ferris et al (1997), Leki (1991), Rajagopal, 2015; Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum & Wolfersberger (2010); Evans, Hartshorn and Tuioti (2010); and Amrhein and Nassaji (2010). The reason behind adapting some items from the literature is because they have been widely used by a number of researchers and they could answer my research question with regard to teacher attitudes on written corrective feedback (see Appendix 2 on survey questions 1-57). Brown, J. (2001) discussed six categories that surveys can address (behaviour/experience, opinion/value, feelings, knowledge, sensory and demographic/background) which I found useful for designing my own survey. Practically, my survey started with items on writing instructors' actual practice and experience of written corrective feedback, their feelings and attitudes towards written corrective feedback and it ended with asking the participants some demographic questions. Table 4.6 below presents the different sections in my survey.

Table 4.6 Sections in the online survey

Section No.	Area of investigation
1	Practice of written corrective feedback (WCF) including (types of WCF; focus of WCF; teacher motivations behind WCF)
2	General feelings and attitudes towards WCF
3	Open ended questions (most effective methods & main challenges of written corrective feedback)
4	Demographic information of the respondents

Since the survey I designed was in an online format, I constructed the questions on a five Likert scale using the software Qualtrics. In fact, Likert scales which are multiple-item measurements are popular because they can capture the totality of a broad concept (Bryman & Gramer, 2011). After constructing the survey questions on Qualtrics, I coded the multiple choice answers that the respondents would select when answering the survey by assigning a value to each option based on the nature of the answer. For the first part of the survey which asked participants about their their actual practice of giving written corrective feedback, I coded the answers as follows: Always (5) , usually (4), sometimes (3), rarely (2), and never (1). As for the second part of the survey which asked participants about their attitudes towards giving written corrective feedback, I coded the options as follows: strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1). I coded the questions on participants' demographic information by assigning a number to each answer. Hence, I gave a coding number (e.g. 1, 2, 3) to each option for the questions. Moreover, the software could upload a test file to find out if attachments were accessible for respondents to open in the actual data collection phase. However, in my context, I had attached the abstract of my

study, the written informed consents and the information sheet to the initial email I sent to the writing instructors via the administration of their colleges.

Prior to doing any statistical calculations and tests based on the online teacher survey in preparation to present the findings of my study with regard to the first research question, I calculated the total scale scores for each section: attitudes and practice. Based on that, I checked the normality of the data by running the normality test. The P-value of Kolmogorov-Smirnov was .200 in the survey for both sections: practice and attitudes. Hence, the data were normally distributed as there was a non-significant result of more than .05 as can be seen from Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7 Normality test in online survey

Kolmogorov-Smirnov			
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Total Attitudes	.056	174	.200*
Total Practice	.047	174	.200*

My second research question aimed at examining writing instructors' actual practice of written corrective feedback on a sample of 96 students' essays at one branch from the targeted six Colleges of Technology. In the following section, I describe the writing classes in terms of their objectives, how writing was taught and assessed (i.e. written corrective feedback) and the frameworks that I used in order to examine writing instructors' written corrective feedback.

4.6.2 EFL writing courses

For the purpose of this study, I decided to examine students' assignments with writing instructors' written corrective feedback on from all the four English proficiency levels at one of the Language Centers so that I can have reliable and

sound data in addition to examining if there were any substantial differences in writing instructors' written response to students' essays based on learners' level of English. Below I present the writing courses and methods of assessment.

4.6.2.1 Writing objectives

The college where I collected my data had a number of aims, and objectives. For instance, Beginner students were expected to write simple phrases and sentences for a variety of basic purposes (e.g. personal information, habits, routines, family life, places, hobbies, and vacation activities). They were also expected to produce descriptive essays on jobs, write short and simple messages or notes (e.g. SMS, social media messages, postcards, emails) consisting of at least 75 words. In addition, they should have been able to link sentences to produce a 100 word-paragraph using simple conjunctions and simple punctuation. As for intermediate students, they were expected to write and take short, simple notes and messages, write simple personal letters or emails consisting of at least 100 words, describe plans and arrangements, explain likes or dislikes, describe past and current education and qualifications, describe present and past activities, write a simple story describing a person or past event, write simple instructions and directions, produce a text consisting of at least 150 word- text, and use prewriting strategies to generate and develop ideas. Regarding upper intermediate students, they were expected to describe the plot of a book or film and describe their own reactions to the book or film, describe processes, write clear instructions to operate a piece of equipment, write five-body-paragraph essays consisting of at least 175 words, and write essays which might require expressions of agreement and disagreement, cause and effect, comparison and contrast and giving opinion. Further, advanced students were expected to write 250 word-essays showing control of layout, organisation,

punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, grammar, and vocabulary. Furthermore, they were expected to gather and synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources and write reports of a minimum consisting of 500 words. In addition, they were expected to construct a reasoned argument, and speculate about causes, consequences and hypothetical situations. Moreover, they were expected to analyse problems and propose solutions. Moreover, they were expected to construct questionnaires as part of a mini piece of research. In addition, they were expected to summarise and paraphrase a report consisting of 500 words following academic conventions to avoid plagiarism. In addition, they were expected to describe and summarise visual data such as graphs, and charts.

4.6.2.3 Teaching writing

The targeted college has 14 weeks on its calendar, with weeks 13 and 14 being devoted to Level Exit Exam (LEE) which are the final exams of each term. All the essays were written in the period between weeks nine and 11 on the course outline. The essays were collected from the students' portfolios as they were asked to keep portfolios for assessment purposes as well as revising for their exams. In the next section I will present the pedagogical procedures of teaching writing in each class including the topic/genre and teacher's and students' roles. The steps being followed are usually implemented by the writing instructors during the writing course regardless of the topic except that the teaching prompts would differ based on the genre. Further, it is worth noting that the students had been introduced to the genre they produced earlier in the term and all the essays I collected and analysed, were written in the classroom. Further, the writing instructors are provided with checklists or rubrics which they can depend on when marking exams- which was the case for intermediate students who happened to

have a test. However, the other writing instructors did not use marking rubrics for the in-class writing practice. Below are detailed descriptions of how writing was taught in each level (e.g. beginners, intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced) according to the four writing instructors' own accounts.

Beginners In the beginner class, the writing instructor had introduced the learners to the topic of describing a country a week earlier. The students brainstormed ideas for the main points to look at when writing a paragraph about a country as a whole class with the help of the instructor at this stage. In groups, the students formed sentences for each point and they produced a paragraph about Japan. In the following lesson, the writing instructor asked the students to write about four different countries and were given information in four boxes as writing prompts. The students identified the main points and wrote their first draft. The teacher marked the written assignments by pointing out all the errors on those paragraphs. The main mistakes where all the students had issues with, were highlighted and discussed with the whole class. Based on that discussion, the students wrote their second draft- which might have not been marked by the instructor for many reasons, one of which would be time constraint. Then, the students were given slips of paper with some information about another country to write about.

Intermediate The objective of the writing topic in week nine and ten for intermediate students was to teach students how to write a narrative. Before teaching the students how to write a narrative, the writing instructor elicited from the students their daily routines and wrote the paragraph on the whiteboard. The instructor highlighted the subject, the present tense verb, and object in each

sentence. Then the students were asked how they could change that sentence and write about what they did yesterday. The students were able to change the present tense verbs into the simple past tense verbs. After that, the writing instructor elicited the grammatical structure for writing sentences in the simple past tense and wrote it next to the paragraph. Then the students were given worksheets about past events using the simple past and past continuous. The students were encouraged to draw mind maps and use the handout following the step by step examples, and mind maps. As a result, the students wrote a narrative in the past about what they did yesterday. The following week, the students had their second assessment test for the term. The test was given in the last 35 minutes of their class time. The students were not allowed to use any worksheets or dictionaries and they had to write an essay consisting of approximately 150 words on the happiest day in their life.

Upper intermediate Upper intermediate students were taught how to write similarities or differences essays separately (i.e. similarities only or difference only). They practiced writing sentences on both types. After that, the students were introduced to similarities and differences essay (i.e. similarities and differences in one paragraph) and that was the focus of the writing task. First, the students were asked to think about a structure for the essay. They were given time to think about it in pairs and were then prompted to say how they thought the essay would be written. Based on students' response, the writing instructor made an outline of the essay structure on board. The students were asked what information would go into each of the four paragraphs (introduction, body paragraphs one and two and conclusion). The instructor-student interaction continued for a while with the instructor prompting what kind of content would go

with each paragraph. After having an oral discussion with the whole class on the components of an essay including a thesis statement, topic sentences, body paragraphs and a conclusion, the students were asked to write 3-5 well explained points about a given topic. They were informed that they should not have moved to the next point before they had explained the previous one with sufficient details. They then were asked to write a summary and were told that they may restate the thesis or write their opinion on the topic if they wished to do so. It was emphasised that the two body paragraphs should be longer than the introduction and conclusion because the body paragraphs which required thinking of examples, facts and explanations. Students were also asked to refer to page 57 in their writing books because there were more examples of topic sentences and thesis statements and students were encouraged to write their own. They had practised writing these sentences when they wrote about similarities or difference separately. Then the students were asked to sit in groups of three or four where they were given a topic which was similarities and difference between villages and cities. They were asked to brainstorm as many points as possible. After that the writing instructor divided the board into two columns: similarities and differences. The instructor wrote the students' answers in bullet forms rather than full sentences. After that, the students were asked to make use of the bullet points from the board and write their essay individually. They were encouraged to only write about the points that they were able to explain. Moreover, the instructor referred the students to make use of the three handouts that they had been given which contained extensive examples on the language used to express similarities and differences.

Advanced The advanced level students had ample practice on how to describe line graphs. Hence, the students were asked to describe a line graph making use of the handouts they had in class and the practice they received on similar line graphs. Then, the learners were asked to describe a line graph which illustrated changes in the amount and type of fast food (pizza, fish and chips, hamburgers) consumption by some teenagers over a period of 25 years. Table 4.8 below summarises the writing task in each class.

Table 4.8 Characteristics of writing task in each class

Writing prompt	English Proficiency			
	Beginners	Intermediate	Upper intermediate	Advanced
objective of writing task	Write a short paragraph about a country	Write an essay on the happiest day in students' life	Similarities & differences of cities vs. villages	Line graph description of change of fast food eating habits
text genre	Description	Narrative	Comparison & contrast	Graph description
Task target	Describe in simple sentences	150 word narrative	Comparison & contrast essay	A report
an outline	mind maps	mind maps	mind maps	Follow line graph

4.6.3 Assessment in writing course

The students' performance in writing in English at the targeted college in this study was assessed in the same manner in all the four classes. Students were asked to write two in-class-writing-assignments. There was a progress test which equaled a mid-term test (30% of the overall amount of assessment). In the progress test, the students were given a set of pictures to write about those pictures or a table of information and they composed a text based on their level

of proficiency. The remaining (20% of the overall amount of assessment) was dedicated to student attendance, portfolio, and in class participation. Students were asked to keep all their in-class-writing-activities, and assignments in a portfolio so that they could refer to them and use them in preparation for their final exams. There was a final exam at the end of the term (50% of the overall amount of assessment). The final exam consisted of two main parts. In part one, there was a guided writing question where students were provided with a set of pictures or a table of information. In part two, students were asked to produce a paragraph or an essay. Level one and two students were asked to write a paragraph and level three and four students were asked to write an essay. All the tests and final exams were written by test-coordinators and reviewed and approved by the administrative management team at the selected college. The writing instructors were responsible for the daily activities since those activities were informal assessment of student' writing. The quizzes and exams were designed by a board of exam writers and copies of those quizzes and exams were distributed among the writing instructors to make the required number of copies for their classes. The only difference between the four levels of proficiency was regarding the genre that the learners at different levels were required to produce during the term and is illustrated in Table 4.9 below.

Table 4.9 Genre type in all the writing classes

Level of students' English	Genre					
Beginners	Descriptive	Informative				
Intermediate	Descriptive	Informative	Narrative	Instructions		
Upper intermediate	Descriptive	Express feelings	Cause & effect	Comparison & contrast	Argumentative	
Advanced	Summaries	Cause & effect	Comparison & contrast	Argumentative		

For the purpose of the current study, I selected my sample of students' essays with teacher written corrective feedback on from 96 in class- written essays which were produced by learners from the four classes as a daily continuous assessment procedure where students wrote the essays as part of the daily requirement of their writing course. Hence, the audience in all the cases was the writing instructor. All the essays were written individually by the students after having a discussion with partners and group members except for intermediate students who had to answer a test question as part of the continuous assessment they had during the term. I started the data collection phase at a very busy time in 2017 and that was towards the middle of the first term and few weeks prior to the start of the final exams at the selected college. Hence, the college asked me to send them all the required documents and suggested that they would introduce my research to the faculty at the Language Center at their college due to time constraint. Hence, I sent them my study's abstract with the aims and objectives, my research questions, information sheets and the written consent forms for the administration, writing instructors and students. The college introduced my

research to their faculty and asked for volunteers to participate in my study. Four writing instructors each teaching a different class in terms of proficiency level (beginners, intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced) along with their students agreed to participate in my study and they signed the written consents. Based on students' written informed consents, the writing instructors collected the essays and made copies of each essay with teacher written corrective feedback on. After three months from the initial contact with the college to collect the data, the written informed consent forms, student essays with teacher written corrective feedback on from all the four levels, writing instructors' lesson plans and elaborative explanation of the four writing instructors' methods of giving written corrective feedback to learners were handed over to me as hard copies and soft copies. I will describe each writing lesson according to the documents I received.

I will now explain to the reader how the four writing instructors gave written corrective feedback in response to their students' written assignments according to the documents I received from the college. Ideally speaking, I should have attended the classrooms myself and observed what went on there. However, due to feasibility reasons, I did not attend the writing classes myself but rather I relied on writing instructors' written accounts to me of what they actually did inside the classroom. I totally trust the writing instructors because I do not think that they had any hidden agendas as not being sincere in reporting to me their practice. The writing instructors of beginner, intermediate and upper intermediate classes reported to me the manner in which they dealt with students' errors (Refer to Figure 2.1) except the instructor of the advanced class who reported that the essays were responded to in a comprehensive manner (i.e. all the errors were marked) during the first two or three weeks of the term. However, from the third

or fourth week (depending on students' overall progress), feedback was given to those students by using the following error codes:

- ^ for a missing word or phrase
- Gr. for grammar mistakes
- Sp. for spelling mistakes
- Caps for not using capital letters
- Circling a word if it was the wrong word

The instructor limited the number of error codes to only five categories so that students do not take much time to decipher their errors on their essays and might be able to write their second drafts with ease. Further, the instructor reported using error codes deliberately in order to make learners refer back to them for more clarification- which would provide some extra help and guidance for some learners who might be struggling with writing. Similar to other classes, the cycle of introducing a new writing topic or genre and responding to essays went on for the duration of the term.

4.6.4 Piloting the study instruments

The reason why I piloted the research methods was to make sure that the survey items were stated clearly so that I could make the necessary modifications to the finalised version. Moreover, I had to make sure that my modified version of Ferris (2007) framework for analysing teacher written commentary and Ellis (2009a) typology of error correction that I used were in fact suitable for the students' documents I collected for my own research.

4.6.4.1 Piloting the online survey

Based on the recommendations of a panel of the four experts in the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as I have mentioned earlier, I sent the survey for piloting. I sent it to ten EFL lecturers at different universities and

colleges in the Sultanate of Oman. The piloting stage helped me to change the order of the some of the questions and clustering questions under certain constructs. The piloting stage also helped me deal with and solve some technical issues regarding opening the link on multiple devices. In fact, the first time I sent the link to some friends who were EFL lecturers, the survey stopped at the section of demographic features and it did not display the questions under that section at all. On other occasions, the link opened only for one respondent. Because I was an outsider, I was not sure if I could get the email addresses of all the writing instructors in the six colleges which was easier to do to solve the technical issue of the survey link. Hence, I had to find out how to send the survey to the heads of Language Centers at the six colleges and make it workable for all the respondents no matter what device they used whether it was a smart mobile phone, a tablet, a personal computer, or a laptop and no matter how many times they opened the survey. I also had to find out how to make the survey available for writing instructors who might not be able to complete the survey at one go. Hence, I found that there was a feature in the Qualtrics software that could enable respondents open the survey and go back to it at a later stage and complete the rest of the questions. Moreover, I designed the survey in such a way that can enable writing instructors who might change their minds and decide to complete the survey later. Being able to activate all of these features in addition to making sure that the survey was rigorous and well built in terms of clarity of the statements, display with regard to font size and type and flow of the survey, required a lot of hard work. After double checking on all the items and survey features, I felt confident in sending the survey to the writing instructors. By doing so, I could reach a broader audience and made sure that I wrote clear, direct statements as the survey items, assured anonymity of my respondents, sent

polite reminder emails, and tested the drafts of my survey by sending the link to some friends and colleagues prior to the actual data collection phase. The aim of sending the link to friends and colleagues prior to the piloting phase was to make sure that the items were clear, and that the electronic link actually worked efficiently on different devices such as mobile phones, and tablets via social media platforms as have been discussed earlier. Moreover, I answered the survey myself several times to double check the font size of the questions and answers, whether the color I used were appropriate for the eye. I also checked the flow of the survey and that all the pages opened well. Moreover, I enlarged the size of the box for the open ended questions so that respondents could write freely in text format rather than asking them to answer closed ended questions only. After modifying the items based on the panel's suggestions, the survey was sent to be piloted. Ten writing instructors who teach at university level have been asked to complete the online survey and give their feedback on it. However, they reported back to me that the link stopped at the demographic section and that there was a technical issue with the survey. Hence, I went back to the survey and found out that I did not activate the survey so that respondents can enter texts and write their answers. Hence, I activated the relevant questions and sent them the link back. Moreover, one of the respondents could not open the link to the survey and the reason behind that was because I selected the wrong feature which only allowed people who were invited to the survey to take part in it. Hence, I modified the link and made it available to anyone receiving the link.

In addition, the items of the survey were revised by the panel for content validity. There were some general comments from the panel. For example, I was asked to write a short introductory text and give writing instructors clear instructions at

the start of each section in the survey so that they would know exactly what they should do and how to respond to the survey questions. Another general comment was that most statements in the survey were rather short. Hence, I modified the statements and made them a bit longer. Another comment was regarding the location of demographic features and that it was better to place it at the beginning of the survey rather than towards the end. But I left it as is because my aim was to investigate teacher perception and practice on written corrective feedback. Based on the recommendations from the panel, I reduced the number of the survey items from 91 items to 57 items and sent the link to the writing instructors in the six colleges. It is worth mentioning that the level of the language used in designing the survey questions was neither too high where respondents might have felt threatened or unsecure, nor very low where the language sounded like simple-minded (Brown, J., 2001). Moreover, the panel made suggestions regarding the clarity of some of the words such as mechanics which was replaced by punctuation and the word rubrics which was supported by the synonym checklist. Moreover, the item about the use of WhatsApp as a chatting platform on social media has been modified to ask writing instructors if they chatted with their students individually or in groups. I first wrote a statement to ask writing instructors if they focused on these writing aspects: spelling, grammar, wrong word, punctuation, and organisation. However, based on the comments from the panel, I had to break down that item into separate items asking about each writing aspect in a separate statement. The item on feeling frustrated was modified into *I feel frustrated and/or resentful when I mark students' essays*. I had to clarify the wording in the item on teacher methods of written corrective feedback and came up with this item *I feel that I have developed a number of methods for giving written feedback over time*. In addition, the panel suggested I might ask the

writing instructors whether they explained the rubrics of giving written feedback to students by discussing the rubrics orally only or by discussing, and distributing handouts for all the students. Hence, I created two more items asking about the use of rubrics. Further, as I mentioned earlier, I tried to limit my survey items so that it will not take more than 20-30 minutes on average to complete though I wanted to construct a whole section on the relationship between teaching grammar and writing. However, item 36 in my actual survey asked the writing instructors implicitly if they gave extra practice on grammar by directing students to websites related to writing in which case most of them are grammar-based activities. I had the word grammar written in the item but I deleted it in the last minute because I did not want to confuse the respondents. In fact, I am in favour of grammar instruction in the writing class but in my context grammar is taught as a separate course at the Language Centre and hence writing instructors would not teach grammar in the writing class- which I will discuss in my own theory in Chapter seven. Moreover, some of the writing lessons have built-in grammar-activities so that students can practice constructing sentences using certain grammatical structures or rules before writing an essay. Based on the panel's suggestions and recommendations, I modified the survey and sent it out for piloting. In fact, I constructed the survey based on my own knowledge and experience as an EFL lecturer. In addition, I adapted some of the items from the wider literature. For example, items 1-21 were adapted from Leki (1991); Lee, I. (2009); Ferris (1995); Ferris, Brown, Liu & Stine (2011); Rajagopal (2015); AlKhatib (2015); Alshahrani & Storch (2014); Evans et al (2010a & 2010b). Items 22-33 were modified from Lee, I. (2009); Ferris et al (2011); Rajagopal (2015); AlKhatib (2015) and Amrheein and Nassaji (2010). Items 42-46 were modified from Ferris et al (1997; 2011). The items in the demographic section were

modified from Leki (1991); Ferris et al (1997); Ferris et al (2011); Al Alshahrani & Storch (2014); Rajagopal (2015); and Evans, Hartshorn and Tuioti (2010). The rest of the questions were constructed by myself.

For piloting the survey, I sent it to six in-service Omani tertiary Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) writing instructors in Foundation Programme departments. The purpose was to pilot the suitability of the survey items. Based on the recommendations of the panel, I reduced the number of the survey items from 91 items to 57 items and sent the link to the writing instructors in the six colleges. Then, I tested the internal consistency reliability of the survey items by applying Cronbach's alpha for inter-reliability correlations. Cronbach's alpha coefficient is an indicator most commonly used for internal consistency (Pallant, 2016), and its value is sensitive to the number of items in a scale: fewer than 10 items will affect its value (Pallant, 2016). Further, if the number of items increases, the value of α will increase (Field, 2018). The Cronbach's alpha coefficient value in my study reached above .8 (α : .829) indicating that the survey met the internal consistency reliability. According to Cohen et al (2011) reliability of 0.80-0.90 is considered to be high. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient value of a scale should ideally be above .7 (DeVellis, 2012, cited in Pallant, 2016). According to Litwin, 'Levels of 0.7 or more are generally accepted as representing good reliability.' (1995, p.31). Nunnally (1994) states that increasing the value of Cronbach's alpha to more than .8 is waste of time and money because the items will be repeated in the survey. Based on the pilot, I decided to add more items in order to clarify some of the unclear items and break down some of them into two items. Hence, I ended up with 57 items in total including the closed and open ended questions along with questions on teacher

demographic information. Alpha Cronbach can be as low as .5 if the items in the scale were fewer than ten items (Pallant, 2016). Moreover, reliability of a scale depends on the sample of the study. Hence, I ensured that the scale was reliable with the sample of my study by ensuring validity of the survey (Pallant, 2016).

4.6.4.2 Piloting the frameworks for analysing students' documents

Regarding teacher written corrective feedback on learner essays, I made use of the frameworks of Ellis (2009a) typology of written corrective feedback and a modified version of Ferris (2007) on teacher commentary on a sample of 96 students' essays. In fact, each framework served a particular purpose which eventually led to a deeper knowledge and better understanding of teacher response to students' essays. Prior to analysing teachers' written corrective feedback, I selected 10% randomly out of a total of 96 essays in order to examine the adequacy of Ellis (2009a) typology and Ferris (2007) framework to the context of my own study. As I have mentioned earlier, these frameworks helped me understand the types of written corrective feedback writing instructors applied in response to students' essays. Ellis (2009a) typology focused on the types of written corrective feedback throughout the essay. Ferris (2007) focused on teacher commentary in the form of end comments (i.e. comments that were provided by the writing instructors at the end or on top of an essay) and text-based comments (i.e. comments that were provided by the writing instructors at the margin of an essay on specific sentences or paragraphs). I took notes of any new categories that might have arisen from writing instructors' written corrective feedback. I noticed that there were some other end-comments and text-based comments that were not included in Ferris (2007). For instance, I noticed that the writing instructors wrote evaluative expressions in the forms of positive and negative comments and question marks, all of which were not covered by the

Ferris framework. As a result, I decided to modify Ferris (2007) framework so that it can suit writing instructors' comments in the sample of my study as can be seen in Table 4.10 below.

Table 4.10 Modified version of Ferris (2007)

Comment	Level of EFL student language proficiency
Ask for information (Question)	Question
Request information	Question Statement Imperative
Give information	Question Statement
Grammar	Imperative Statement Question
Positive statements	
Evaluative expression	Positive Negative
Question marks	
Hedges	

However, I decided to keep Ellis (2009a) typology as is because it served well the purpose of my research and its context. I then analysed and interpreted teacher written response and answered my second and third research questions.

4.6.5 Administering the study instrument (online survey)

Before I actually sent the online survey out to Omani writing instructors, I made the necessary modifications based on the piloting stage and recommendations from the panel of experts in the field of teaching writing to foreign language learners. The 57- item survey was constructed and administered in English and

there was no word translation into Arabic to any item because the respondents I targeted were university degree holders who had been exposed to English as language learners at university and worked as academics at colleges in Oman. I constructed my online survey via www.Qualtrics.com, which is a survey-building platform software and analysed the data via the statistical software package, namely Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Moreover, I wrote a cover letter and it appeared on the first page once the participant opened the link of the survey. I introduced myself in the cover letter, my research aims and objectives, and assured the participants that their identities will remain anonymous and their responses to the questions will be completely confidential and will only be used for research purposes. I also included my main supervisor's email address along with my email address in case the participants wished to ask about my research.

In order to collect my data via the survey, I first sent initial emails to heads of departments of all the six colleges introducing myself to them. Second, I sent them the consent documents for writing instructors, students, and administration. They later asked for letters from the Ministry of Higher Education that proved that I was an Omani PhD student doing research in the United Kingdom. The colleges asked me to send this letter along with the abstract of my study to the dean of their colleges. After the heads of the Language Centers gained the approval of the deans, they sent the link to all the Omani writing instructors in their colleges. The survey took two months until it was fully completed by 174 writing instructors from all the colleges.

4.7 Data analysis and research findings

I have collected quantitative (an online survey) and qualitative (students' essays with teacher written corrective feedback on) data for the purpose of my study. Hence, each analysis required different steps for data analysis, organisation and presentation.

4.7.1 Data analysis of online survey

In order to address my first research question, I distributed an online survey among writing instructors at six Colleges of Technology in Oman. In total, 174 out of 588 writing instructors responded to my survey. Hence, the response rate of the survey was (25%), which is not surprising in social sciences (Brown, J., 2001). I exported these data from Qualtrics.com to a Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) document. SPSS allowed me to make statistical calculations and describe and present the results according to the mean, standard error, standard deviation and percentages of each answer from the online survey. Moreover, SPSS allowed me to do a number of other statistical calculations to describe and present the scores of the responses which I later displayed in tables and charts. I analysed my surveys in two ways. I first, analysed the online surveys statistically via the software- SPSS. I calculated frequencies, and the demographic features of the sample through descriptive analysis. I also carried out some inferential analyses such as a paired sample t-test to compare between the means of the respondents with regard to their preference of direct and indirect type of written corrective feedback and find out if the difference was statistically significant or otherwise. Paired sample t-tests can be used "when you measure the same person in terms of his/her response to two different questions." (Pallant, 2016, p.209).

4.7.1.1 Coding, categorisation, and thematisation of qualitative data

Writing instructors in this study were asked two open ended questions in the online survey. The two open ended questions aimed to ask the respondents to provide a list of three to five most effective types of giving written corrective feedback. The second open ended question asked participants to provide a list of three to five main challenges they faced in responding to student essays. All the writing instructors in the sample 174 (100%) answered the two open ended questions in my survey. I analysed the responses manually first and then via the software NVivo 12- a software programme designed for qualitative analysis in social sciences. Moreover, I used pseudonyms when quoting the writing instructors in reporting and discussing the findings of my study. Practically, I did content analysis of the open ended questions in the surveys- sometimes referred to as discourse analysis or thematic analysis because content analysis is convenient, and can simplify and reduce large amounts of data into organized segments (Silverman, 2013). Further, unlike most approaches to content analysis which often begin with predefined categories, thematic analysis allows categories to emerge from the data (Saldaña, 2013). For the purpose of coding, categorisation, and thematisation, I fully transcribed writing instructors' response in the two open ended questions. Practically, I followed the six steps of applying thematic analysis based on Braun and Clark (2006) to analyse the open ended questions. Those steps included familiarising myself with the data. In this stage, I immersed myself in the entire data set by reading the open ended answers looking for meanings and patterns. I found that there were 138 answers on the most effective methods of written corrective feedback and 176 answers on the main challenges of responding to students' essays. The second step was generating the initial codes where data are organised into meaningful groups. I

sorted all the answers into Microsoft word tables (See Appendix 3). Based on that, I created a code book. Saldaña describes a code as a word or phrase that “symbolically assigns” a particular attribute to a piece of data from the written questionnaire responses (2013, p. 3). Hence, I coded the data, meaning that I organised them into text segments that were then narrowed down and given labels or codes (titles). Effective methods of written corrective feedback resulted in eight code titles (e.g. type of feedback, oral and written feedback, direction of feedback, focus of feedback, feedback factors, feedback delivery, effective writing, other techniques). The main challenges writing instructors faced in responding to students essays resulted in ten code titles (e.g. students’ language proficiency, student behaviour, feedback requires hard work, time, students attitudes, tough decision, emotional factors, cannot control, gender, extra challenges). The last category in both the open ended questions was devoted to miscellaneous answers which I could not locate in this stage. Moreover, this last code title consisted of some codes which seemed to belong to more than one category. Further, some of the answers appeared in response to both questions. For instance, some writing instructors reported that one of the effective methods of written corrective feedback was to ask students to write a second draft meanwhile other writing instructors reported that asking students to produce more than one draft was a real challenge. At this initial stage, I coded the answers as they were so that I would refine them later. The third step was looking for themes which I first did manually and then converted the tables I had into Nvivo 12 (See Appendix 4 for Nvivo 12 screenshots). I created two themes for the most effective methods of written corrective feedback because I found that most of the answers were copied from earlier questions in my own survey (e.g. direct indirect feedback) and other answers did not serve the purpose of my research question

on teacher attitudes (e.g. immediate vs. delayed feedback). In my context, written corrective feedback was not immediate because my research did not aim to address oral feedback nor the writing instructors gave immediate feedback to students' writing but rather they responded after the students produced the essays, collected them all and returned them marked. Further, I created eight themes on the main challenges of responding to students' essays. According to Saldaña, themes 'should be stated as simple examples of something during the first cycle of analysis, then are woven together during later cycles to detect processes, tensions, explanations, causes, consequences, and /or conclusions.' (2013, p.177). He adds that, for the quantities of qualities, most qualitative studies in educational research produce around 80-100 codes which can then be organised into 15–20 categories, resulting in five to seven main concepts as the researcher synthesises the data. In fact, I kept the final number of the major themes in my study to the minimum so that my study would become coherent. The fourth step consisted of reviewing the themes and here the themes were refined and tightened into one theme on most effective methods of written corrective feedback (guidelines to respond effectively to students' essays) and one sub theme (asking students to produce a second draft). I also refined the themes on the main challenges of written corrective feedback into one theme (responding to students' essays is hard work) and three sub themes (responding to students' essays is time consuming, students do not take responsibility for their learning, students make spelling and grammar errors). The fifth step consisted of defining and naming the themes- which I explained in the previous step and resulted in the theme titles and names I will later resent in the Findings Chapter. The sixth and last step was going back to the data set and deciding on

which extracts would be sufficient enough to serve best in presenting and discussing my findings in relation to my research questions.

4.7.2 Data analysis of student documents

Apart from analysing teacher attitudes and practice via an online survey, I analysed a sample of 96 students' essays with teacher written corrective feedback on from four levels (e.g. beginners, intermediate, upper intermediate, advanced) (See Table 4.3 for distribution of students). In order to do that, I followed ten steps. Before starting the data analysis, I made sure that I had plenty of colourful pens to use for each code. I started the analysis as follows. First, I collected student essays with teacher written corrective feedback on from those students who had volunteered to participate in my study. I made copies of those texts and assigned each essay a number (1-96). Second, I examined teacher comments and traced the writing instructors' marking with a colored pen and numbered each error correction and written comment on all the essays. Third, I gave each method of written corrective feedback a code according to the type of error correction or written comment the teacher gave based on Ellis (2009a) typology. For instance, I wrote D (referring to direct error correction). I applied a modified version of Ferris (2007) framework when examining teacher commentary. For example, I wrote EE (referring to evaluative expression). Fifth, I calculated the percentages of each classification code and presented them in tables as I have done in Chapter Five. Once, I analysed all the errors and written comments on all the essays, I re-analysed a sample of 10% of the same essays in order to find out, intra-reliability of my analysis. According to Bachman (1990), intra-reliability can be 'accomplished by rating the individual samples once and then re-rating them at a later time in a different random order.' (p.179). Hence, two months later and once all the essays were analysed quantitatively and

qualitatively and the results were tabulated, I re-analysed 10% of the 96 essays randomly based Ellis (2009a) typology and a modified version of Ferris (2007). A combined rating for each individual (student) essay was obtained by adding the two ratings for each essay. I then, calculated the variance for each rating and the variance for the summed ratings. Based on the intra-coding analysis, this second round of analysis of teacher written corrective feedback and teacher commentary was 95% compatible with the first round of analysis. Hence, there was a strong agreement between the two rounds of analysis. In fact, increasingly scholars are using intra class correlation coefficient (ICC) as a means of providing some measure of internal consistency for a questionnaire.

4.8 Research quality

In order to ensure research quality in a mixed-method design like the one in the current research, I had to pay careful attention to the procedures involved in my research. Hence, I paid extra attention to the validity, reliability, trustworthiness and credibility of my data as I present in the coming sections.

4.8.1 Validity and reliability of quantitative data

In addition to trustworthiness and credibility, I made sure that my data collection methods were valid and reliable. Brown, J. defines reliability as consistency and that the survey is consistent with itself as ‘the degree to which the results of the observations or the measures are consistent, and/or the degree to which the results of the study as a whole are consistent (2014, p.119). He also defines validity as ‘the degree to which a study’s quantitative results can be accurately interpreted as representing what the researcher claims they represent’ (p.119). He discusses replicability in quantitative studies and defines it as ‘the degree to which a study supplies adequate information for the reader to verify the results by replicating or repeating the study’ (p.119). Hatch and Farhady (1982) claim

that the validity of the survey is assessed by its construct validity, content validity and face validity. Construct validity was achieved by assessing how well the items in each construct were linked up with theoretical assumptions about written corrective feedback. Content validity was assessed by examining the adequacy of the survey items to be tested on writing instructors' attitudes towards written corrective feedback, carefully selecting the items in the survey to ensure that they reflected the aims and objectives of my research, and ensuring that there was a representative sample of the content that I was measuring, i.e., written corrective feedback. Hence, I compared my survey items to previous studies in the literature on written corrective feedback (e.g. Ferris et al, 1997; 2011; Ferris,1995; Al Kahtib, 2015; Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Evans, Hartshorn, & Tuioti (2010); Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum & Wolfersberger (2010); Leki, 1991; Lee, I., 2009; Rajagopal, 2015; Amrheein & Nassaji, 2010). Moreover, I revised the survey items based on the suggestions and recommendations of four experts in the field of teaching English as a Foreign Language with whom I discussed my survey. Face validity which is related to content validity was assessed by sharing the survey with a number of Omani (EFL) foundation year writing instructors' to determine whether on the face of it the survey was a good measurement of teacher written corrective feedback. The Cronbach Alpha correlation coefficient values should be above .70 in an ideal world because if the value was rather low that indicates that the scale is too short or that the items within the scale have little common among them (Dornyei, 2010). Oppenheim adds that reliability 'is never perfect.' (1992, p.159). Dornyei (2010) states that a multi-item scale is a group of differently worded items that focus on one idea or category or target. These items can be found throughout my survey and not necessarily in the same order or in one construct. Internal consistency reliability can be achieved by using

multi item scale rather than single items. Multi-item scales should be homogenous and measure the same construct which means that each item on a scale should correlate with the other items and with the total scale score. Hence, a survey can be internally consistent if the items have strong relationships and correlate highly with one another (Oppenheim, 1992). In my study, Cronbach Alpha internal consistency of writing instructors' general attitudes towards giving written corrective feedback was (α : .644). This is a good reliability score. Cronbach Alpha internal consistency of teacher practice of written corrective feedback writing instructors give to learners was (α : .839). This is a high reliability score. Table 4.11 below shows the value of Cronbach Alpha for each construct in the survey.

Table 4.11 SPSS Cronbach's Alpha of all the constructs in the survey

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of items
Types of WCF	.756	.770	29
Focus of WCF	.874	.874	9
Usefulness of WCF	.691	.698	5
Motivations behind WCF	.650	.676	3
General attitude and attitudes towards WCF	.696	.686	11
Total no. of items		57	

Moreover, the reliability of a survey depends on the number of items in a scale. The more items, the higher the reliability rate (Hatch & Farhady, 1982). Reliability

also depends on the number of the sample being approached in a study. Hence, I made sure that all the items aimed at asking writing instructors at tertiary level.

4.8.2 Trustworthiness and credibility of qualitative data

I followed a mixed method approach as the design of my study, and therefore, I encountered issues with trustworthiness and credibility with regard to the qualitative data collection method I used which was teacher written corrective feedback on learner essays and the open ended questions in the online survey.

A study can be considered trustworthy if the findings are similar to other views and researchers are willing to act based on the findings of a study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility addresses the questions of whether the reconstructions or the research findings and interpretations which have been arrived at through the study are acceptable to the research participants. Trustworthiness is an essential element of conducting any sort of interpretive research (Merriam, 1998). Given (2008), Lewis-Beck (1995), and Bryman (2016) state that trustworthiness is one of the ways in which qualitative researchers ensure that transferability, credibility, confirmability and dependability are evident in their research. Hence, transferability and generalisability can be compared. While generalisability refers to the fact that research findings can be applied across the widest possible contexts, transferability urges the need to be aware of and to describe the scope of the interpretive study so that it can be applicable to other contexts and judged as being useful to other researchers. Thus, my study is not deemed unworthy if it cannot be applied to broader contexts. Rather my study's worthiness is determined by how well other researchers can decide through a paper trail that my study can be replicated in alternative contexts. Credibility and internal validity can also be compared. A study can have internal validity if it has successfully measured what it aimed to measure (Given, 2008). By contrast, a credible study

has accurately and richly described the phenomenon in question. Hence, I attained credibility by accurately presenting the data that I collected by including direct quotations from my research participants, i.e. writing instructors. In addition, using triangulation ensures the credibility of the data I collected through teacher written corrective feedback on learner essays. Objectivity and confirmability can be contrasted. In a positivist study, data is considered to be unbiased by the researcher's views and opinions. However, confirmability in interpretive research requires ensuring that my study's findings and my own interpretations match the data and so my claims have to be supported by the data I collected through online surveys and teacher written corrective feedback on student essays. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that if we do not know how other researchers analysed their data, or what assumptions informed their analysis, it will be difficult to evaluate their research, and to compare and/or synthesise it with other studies on the same topic. It might also impede other researchers carrying out related projects in the future. Hence, it is important that researchers clarify the process and practice of their content analysis. Therefore, I elaborated on the process of data collection and analysis in my study to achieve dependability.

4.8.3 Role of the researcher

I worked as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) lecturer at a private university in the Sultanate of Oman. However, I collected my data for this research at six governmental colleges. Hence, I had access difficulties and the data collection phase took longer than usual because I was an outsider. The administrative procedures were long and the progress towards gaining access and collecting data was rather slow. Some of the colleges went to extremes and asked for contact details of my sponsor so that they could make sure that I was

an Omani citizen and a registered student in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, other colleges were totally supportive and distributed the link of the survey among their faculty members more than once. I had in fact the leading role in the entire process of data collection, data analysis procedures and reporting of the findings and conclusions. In order to minimise my subjectivity as a researcher, I tried to stay as objective as possible (Kvale, 2007); this also may add to the credibility of the findings. However, being human, I cannot assure that there were not instances of bias and subjectivity in discussing the findings of my research. I believe we are all biased in our conclusions one way or another but we try our best not to be so in academic research.

4.9 Ethical considerations

Punch (2014) states the ethical considerations form an integral part of any research. In this section, I discuss the ethical principles in my study namely access, acceptance, written informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality.

4.9.1 Access and acceptance

Since I am not part of the faculty board at the Colleges of Technology in Oman as I have mentioned earlier, I had to seek access and get acceptance as a researcher to conduct my research there. I can assure you that it was quite a long journey and I got couple of doors being shut into my face when I visited some private colleges myself even though I proved to them that I was a researcher and would be collecting data for research purpose by giving them a copy of the letter of cooperation from the Ministry of Higher Education, which is the organisation responsible for providing higher education. Consequently, I decided to change my direction and try another path which was public colleges hoping that they would cooperate with me. Luckily, they did but under one condition. They asked me not to reveal any sort of information about the colleges. I agreed at once

given the fact that it was part of the ethical considerations to keep everything private and totally confidential. I am not able to attach any copies of any documents I collected for the purpose of this research (e.g. course outlines, students' essays). Hence, I made it clear to the participants that any information they declared would be kept confidential. However, due to the fact that Colleges of Technology in Oman are under the patronage of the Ministry of Manpower (MoM), I had to contact all the colleges myself one by one. Hence, I initially, contacted the Heads of the Language Center at all the seven branches of the colleges via emails. I introduced myself to them and attached all the paper work they needed to examine in order to cooperate with me.

4.9.2 Written informed consent

As a researcher, it was my duty to seek voluntary participation and written informed consent from each and every participant in my study and to ensure that my participants were fully aware and understood what they gave consent to (Punch, 2014). Moreover, I gained written informed consent not only because it shows good practice (Edwards & Holland, 2013) but to protect the identities of the participants. In addition, I made it clear to my participants that they were autonomous individuals, responsible for their actions and had the right to withdraw from my study at any time (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012; Cohen et al, 2011). Moreover, I ensured that the necessary requirements of ethical considerations were taken care of by myself. In the written informed consents, I clarified to the participants the nature and purpose of my study, type of data to be collected, confidentiality of the data, anonymity of my participants, any potential publication of the findings of my study, the participants' right to reject taking part in my study, the freedom to quit the survey while completing it, and how to contact

me if necessary. (See Appendix 6 for certificate of ethical approval from the University of Exeter).

4.9.3 Anonymity and confidentiality

As part of the informed consent form which is included in the general ethical guidelines of the University of Exeter, I stated issues of anonymity and confidentiality very clearly. Briggs and Coleman claim that researchers are obliged to protect subjects from physical or psychological harm by “maintaining privacy, confidentiality, anonymity, avoiding harm, betrayal and deception” (2007, p. 112-113). Furthermore, the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research suggest that ‘researchers must recognise the participants’ entitlement to privacy and must accord them their rights to confidentiality and anonymity, unless they or their guardians or responsible others, specifically and willingly waive that right’ (BERA, 2011, p. 7). Polit and Beck (2012) state that researchers become very much involved with participants in qualitative studies that it becomes difficult to assure total confidentiality, and so confidentiality becomes replaced by anonymity. However, total anonymity might not be possible because the data that I collected from my participants might be made public for one reason or another, either through disseminating the findings of my research at seminars or publishing the findings of study in journals. Nevertheless, I made it clear on the consent form that were signed by the participants that I would keep the identities of my prospective participants confidential and anonymous by not asking for any names in my online survey and not including any information that might refer to the students in one way or another. Polit and Beck clarify that one of the ways of assuring anonymity of participants is through disguising the person's identity “through the use of a fictitious name” (2012, p. 162) or pseudonyms. Hence, I quoted some writing instructors’ answers from the open ended question when I

presented and discussed the findings of my research. In my context, the writing instructors might have left the college to another work place by the time I make my dissertation open access on the University of Exeter's website. Hence, it will be difficult to find out the personalities of my participants by the time I publish my study.

4.10 Summary of Chapter Four

This chapter outlined the paradigms and methodological underpinnings of my research. It is in alignment with pragmatism which values objectivity and subjectivity at the same time. My research design relied on a mixed method design in the form of an online teacher survey and document analysis of writing instructors' written corrective feedback (WCF) on a sample of 96 student essays. The data were collected at Colleges of Technology in the Sultanate of Oman. The data were statistically and thematically analysed and represented. Further, I discussed in this chapter the ethical principles considered by me as the researcher in relation to the nature of my research. Further, I addressed the scope of the current study. I present in the next chapter the major findings of my research quantitatively and qualitatively in relation to my research questions.

Chapter Five: Findings

5.1. Introduction

I present in this chapter the findings obtained from my data analysis, taking into consideration my research questions and providing answers to them. I addressed these research questions using a mixed methods approach where I applied two research instruments in my study to find answers to the respective research questions and analysed the data quantitatively and qualitatively. I first present the findings from the online survey (closed ended questions and open ended questions) with regard to the first research question on writing **instructors' attitudes and actual practice** of written corrective feedback. I then present the findings from content analysis of actual teacher written corrective feedback on a sample of 96 students' essays which aimed to find out whether the writing instructors have actually practised what they reported in the online survey which can strengthen my findings as well as finding out whether the writing instructors' written corrective feedback varied based on students' level of English language proficiency.

5.2 Data analysis results from closed ended questions

I present in this section the results of the online survey analysis by presenting findings from the descriptive statistics, and inferential statistics (e.g. paired sample t-test).

5.2.1 Writing instructors' attitudes of WCF

In order to answer the first research question in my study, I ran some descriptive statistics and computed the frequency, mean values and standard deviations of the survey items. The use of descriptive and inferential statistics helped me as the researcher to meaningfully describe and summarise the raw data in the online

survey, which consisted of 57 items answered by 174 Omani English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instructors in six Colleges of Technology in Oman. The descriptive statistics obtained from the online survey demonstrated that there was a considerable variation in writing instructors' responses. I first present the results of teacher practice with regard to the two broad areas discussed in the literature of written corrective feedback (WCF): comprehensive (unfocused) versus selective (focused) WCF, and direct versus indirect WCF. I then present the results regarding writing instructors' attitudes on a wide range of other types of WCF, their focus of WCF, teacher motivations behind WCF, their feelings towards WCF, usefulness of WCF and challenges in giving WCF. Later, I present the findings from the open ended questions on writing instructors' views on the most effective methods and main challenges of providing written corrective feedback to learners.

5.2.1.1 Comprehensive vs. selective WCF

Comprehensive written corrective feedback (WCF) refers to holistically correcting all the errors on an essay, whereas selective WCF only addresses a number of errors on an essay. Table 5.1 below shows the results of writing instructors' practice of comprehensive (unfocused) versus selective (focused) WCF.

Table 5.1 Instructor practice of comprehensive vs. selective WCF

Item	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Comprehensive	72 (41.4%)	64 (36.8%)	27 (15.5%)	7 (4%)	1 (.6 %)
Selective	19 (10.9%)	36 (20.7%)	28 (16.1%)	42 (24.1%)	46 (26.4%)

Based on the results in Table 5.1 above, I can conclude that an absolute majority of the writing instructors in the sample 163 (94%) reported that they applied comprehensive written corrective feedback (WCF) while less than half of the sample 83 (48%) reported that they applied selective WCF.

5.2.1.2 Direct vs. indirect WCF

Direct written corrective feedback (WCF) refers to providing a direct answer to the errors on an essay whereas indirect WCF means that the instructor makes an indication by underlining or circling an erroneous form and leaving it to the learner to correct that error themselves.

Table 5.2 below shows writing instructors' practice for using direct vs. indirect WCF.

Table 5.2 Instructor practice of direct vs. indirect WCF

Item	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
underline error only	10 (5.7%)	41 (23.6%)	55 (31.6%)	31 (17.8%)	34 (19.5%)
underline error + provide direct correction	37 (21.3 %)	57 (32.8%)	56 (32.2%)	16 (9.2%)	6 (3.4 %)
Circle error only	4 (2.3%)	26 (14.9%)	44 (25.3%)	51 (29.3%)	47 (27%)
Circle error + provide direct correction	35 (20.1%)	45 (25.9%)	55 (31.6%)	26 (14.9%)	11 (6.3%)
cross out a wrong word or expression only	4 (2.3%)	25 (14.4%)	29 (16.7%)	51 (29.3%)	65 (37.4%)
cross out a wrong word or expression + provide direct correction	34 (19.5%)	54 (31%)	51 (29.3%)	25 (14.4%)	10 (5.7%)

As can be seen from Table 5.2 above, there was a tendency in the sample of my study towards applying direct written corrective feedback. An absolute majority of the writing instructors 150 (86%) reported providing direct correction after underlining student errors. Further, a large percentage of them reported providing direct correction after circling the errors 135 (78%) and crossing out the errors 139 (79%). Similarly, while a large percentage of the writing instructors 106 (61%) reported that they underlined the errors, less than half of the sample 74 (43%) reported that they circled the errors, or crossed out the errors 58 (33%) without providing any direct correction to the errors on the students' essays. It is worthy

to mention that unlike having two items in the survey to assess instructors' practice on their actual application of comprehensive vs. selective written corrective feedback (WCF), there were six items in the survey that assessed writing instructors' practice on their actual application of direct vs. indirect WCF. The reason behind having more than two items for this method of WCF was based on the recommendations of the panel of experts that examined the content validity of the survey as I have discussed in Chapter Four. Thus, I had to run a paired sample t-test to find out if there were any statistically significant differences between the mean scores of writing instructors' responses on direct versus indirect written corrective feedback. Table 5.3 below shows the inferential statistics of the paired sample t-test results.

Table 5.3 Paired sample t-test practice on direct vs. indirect WCF

		Paired Differences		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Error Mean	lower	upper			
Underline error only		-.80	.141	-1.07	-.52	-5.69	169	.000
Underline error & correct								
Circle error only		-1.04	.134	-1.30	-.77	-7.76	170	.000
Circle error & correct								
Cross out error only		-1.29	.137	-1.56	-1.02	-9.44	173	.000
Cross out error & correct								

Table 5.3 above shows that the mean difference of the first pair (MD= -.80) was statistically significant $p=0.00 < 0.05$. Mean difference of the second pair (MD= -1.04) was statistically significant $p=0.00 < 0.05$. Mean difference of the third pair (MD= -1.29) was statistically significant $p=0.00 < 0.05$. Hence, I can confirm that the writing instructors reported that they provided the correct form for the learners rather than indicating that an error has been made.

5.2.1.3 Other types of WCF

In addition to the comprehensive vs. selective written corrective feedback (WCF), and direct vs. indirect, the online survey aimed at investigating a wide range of WCF types. Some of the items were borrowed from the wider literature and others were construed by myself based on my own experience as an EFL writing instructor as I have mentioned earlier in Chapter 4. Figure 5.1 below shows a number of written corrective feedback types as has been reported by the sample of the study.

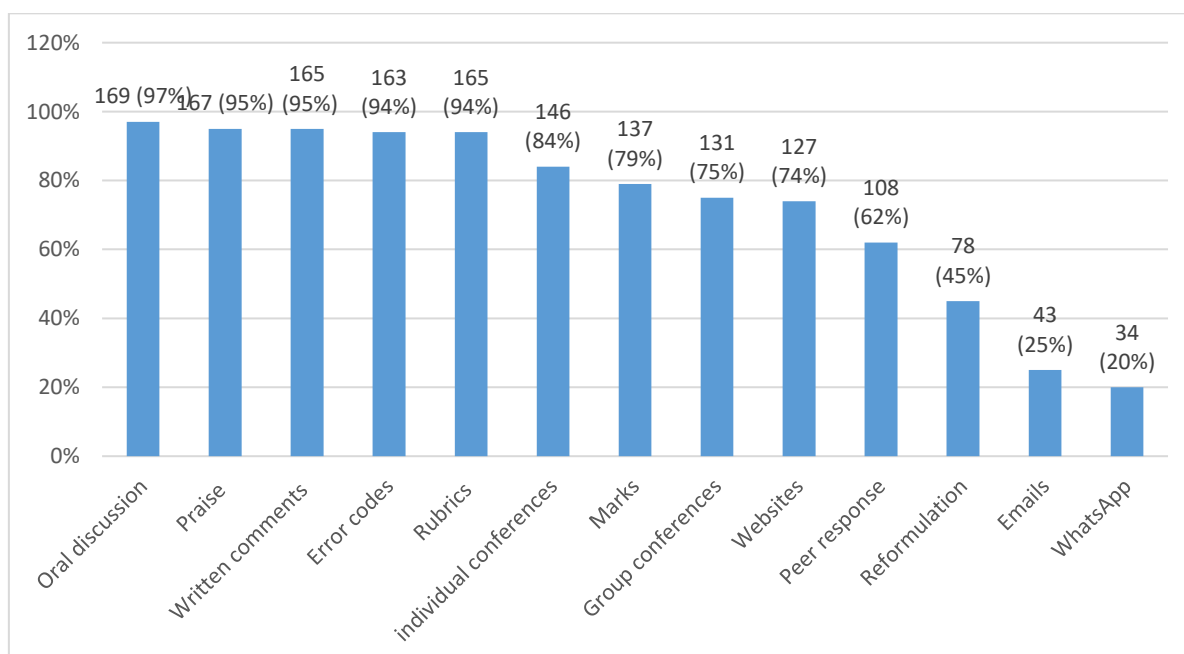


Figure 5.1 Frequency of other types of WCF

As can be noticed from the Figure 5.1 above, almost an absolute majority of the sample 169 (97%) reported having oral discussions with the whole class regarding the most common errors that occurred in student essays, giving praise 167 (95%), following a marking rubrics or checklist 165 (94%), writing comments on students' essays 165 (95%), using error codes 163 (94%), and conducting individual teacher-student conferences 146 (84%). However, communicating with students via emails and social platforms such as WhatsApp were the least reported types of written corrective feedback by the sample. In addition, the instructors were asked about a number of sub categories of two types of WCF: marking rubrics or checklists, and written comments including imperatives (direct requests from the writing instructor to make changes and modifications), complete sentences and questions. Table 5.4 below shows those sub categories.

Table 5.4 other types of WCF (sub categories)

Item	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Discuss rubrics orally	83 (47.7%)	60 (34.5%)	21 (12.1%)	9 (5.2%)	1 (.6%)
Share rubrics with students as handouts	46 (26.4%)	40 (23%)	34 (19.5 %)	24 (13.8%)	30 (17.2%)
Imperative comments	49 (28.2%)	53 (30.5%)	40 (23%)	27 (15.5%)	5 (2.9%)
Complete- sentences	23 (13.2%)	34 (19.5%)	62 (35.6%)	42 (24.1%)	13 (7.5%)
Questions	7 (4%)	29 (16.7%)	70 (40.2 %)	41 (23.6%)	26 (14.9%)
Evaluative expressions	77 (43.3%)	64 (36.8%)	22 (12.6%)	9 (5.2%)	2 (1.1%)

As can be seen from Table 5.4 above, an overwhelming majority of the sample 164 (94%) reported that they discussed the rubrics with the whole class so that learners can have an overview of what the writing instructor expects from the writing assignment and 163 (93%) of the sample reported writing evaluative expressions as comments. Further, an overwhelming majority of the sample 142 (82%) reported writing imperatives as comments.

5.2.1.4 instructor Focus of WCF

The online survey aimed at finding out what aspects of writing the instructors focused on when responding to students' essays which can be seen in Table 5.5 below.

Table 5.5 Instructor focus of WCF

Item	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
coherence	78 (44.8%)	81 (46.6%)	12 (6.9%)	3 (1.7%)	0
punctuation	69 (39.7%)	82 (47.1%)	20 (11.5%)	3 (1.7%)	0
cohesion	69 (39.7%)	87 (50%)	16 (9.2%)	2 (1.1 %)	0
clarity of content	60 (34.5%)	95 (54.6%)	16 (9.2 %)	1 (.6%)	1 (.6%)
vocabulary	66 (37.9%)	82 (47.1%)	23 (13.2%)	1 (.6%)	1 (.6%)
Organisation	86 (49.4%)	66 (37.9%)	19 (10.9%)	2 (1.1 %)	1 (.6%)
grammar	90 (51.7%)	68 (39.1%)	12 (6.9%)	2 (1.1%)	1 (.6%)
Spelling	85 (48.9%)	68 (39.1%)	16 (9.2%)	4 (2.3%)	1 (.6%)
word choice	39 (22.4%)	83 (47.7%)	45 (25.9%)	7 (4%)	0

As can be noticed from Table 5.5 above, I found that the writing instructors in the study reported that they focused with similar proportions on a number of writing aspects when they responded to students' essays. An absolute majority of the

sample 171 (99%) reported that they focused on cohesion when responding to students' essays. Similarly, an absolute majority in the sample 171 (98%) reported that they focused on coherence, punctuation, clarity of the content and use of the right vocabulary, and organisation. Further, 169 (97%) of the participants reported that they focused on grammar, and spelling when giving WCF with word choice being the least frequent aspect of writing to be focused on as only 167 (96%) of the sample reported that they focused on it.

5.2.1.5 Instructor motivations behind WCF

The online survey asked the sample about their motivations to correct students' errors. The results are displayed in Table 5.6 below.

Table 5.6 Inductor motivations behind WCF

Item	Always	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
The type of error students make (e.g., content, grammar, punctuation).	50 (28.7 %)	83 (47.7%)	30 (17.2%)	9 (5.2%)	2 (1.1%)
Students' level of English.	44 (25.3%)	79 (45.4%)	37 (21.3%)	11 (6.3%)	3 (1.7%)
Administrative expectations by the head of the department at college.	19 (10.9%)	55 (31.6%)	48 (27.6%)	27 (15.5%)	23 (13.2%)
Give positive feedback to avoid students' complaints	8 (4.6 %)	26 (14.9%)	22 (12.6%)	25 (14.4%)	92 (52.9%)

As can be seen from Table 5.6 above, I found that an absolute majority of Omani EFL writing instructors 160 (92%) responded to student essays based on the

students' level of proficiency in English and 163 (94%) responded based on the type of error the students made. Only one third of the sample 56 (32%) reported that they gave students positive written corrective feedback in order to avoid students' complaints and arguing over the marks that they receive. Interestingly, a large percentage of the writing instructors 122 (70%) took the administration's expectation by the head of the college into consideration when responding to students' essays.

5.2.1.6 Instructor feelings towards WCF

One of the aims of the online survey was to examine writing instructors' feelings toward written corrective feedback, whether those feelings were positive or negative. The findings are displayed in Table 5.7 below. As I have explained earlier in Chapter Four, the scale on the attitudes tests instructors' level of agreement or disagreement with the item.

Table 5.7 Instructor feelings towards WCF

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
WCF is interesting	73 (42%)	75 (43.1%)	23 (13.2%)	3 (1.7%)	0
WCF is challenging	32 (18.4%)	62 (35.6%)	44 (25.3%)	29 (16.7%)	7 (4%)
Feel frustrated towards WCF	5 (2.9%)	16 (9.2%)	47 (27%)	65 (37.4%)	41 (23.6%)
Would rather do anything else than mark students' paper	2 (1.1%)	10 (5.7%)	33 (19%)	70 (40.2%)	59 (33.9%)
My role is to teach rather than respond to students' essays	7 (4%)	19 (10.9%)	28 (16.1%)	83 (47.7%)	37 (21.3%)
Teachers should provide positive feedback to learners	41 (23.6%)	71 (40.8%)	41 (23.6%)	20 (11.5%)	1 (.6%)

It is obvious from Table 5.7 above that the sample in my study had strong feelings towards responding to student essays and that they regarded written corrective feedback (WCF) as an important aspect of their teaching role. For instance, an absolute majority of the sample 146 (85%) reported that written corrective feedback was interesting. Further, there was a total agreement among slightly more than half of the sample 94 (54%) that written corrective feedback was challenging while 44 (25%) of the writing instructors neither agreed nor disagreed that WCF was challenging. Further, a large percentage of the sample 106 (61%)

disagreed that they felt frustrated towards responding to students' essays while 47 (27%) of the writing instructors neither agreed nor disagreed that they felt frustrated towards written corrective feedback. However, a large percentage of the sample 129 (73%) disagreed that they would rather do anything else than respond to students' essays.

5.2.1.7 Usefulness of WCF

The sample of the study was asked about their attitudes on the usefulness and benefits of written corrective feedback (WCF) as can be seen from the findings in Table 5.8 below.

Table 5.8 Usefulness of WCF

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	disagree	Strongly disagree
WCF is a necessary skill for writing teachers.	95 (54.6%)	70 (40.2%)	7 (4%)	1 (.6%)	0
I have developed many methods of responding to students' essays.	64 (36.8%)	90 (51.7%)	17 (9.8%)	2 (1.1 %)	1 (.6%)
WCF helps my students improve their writing.	100 (57.5%)	66 (37.9%)	6 (3.4%)	1 (.6%)	1 (.6%)
Students need enough time to process WCF	49 (28.2%)	102 (58.6%)	17 (9.8%)	6 (3.4%)	0
Students are responsible for editing their essays before submission	70 (40.2%)	88 (50.6%)	9 (5.2%)	5 (2.9%)	2 (1.1%)
Teachers should explain procedure of giving WCF so that students do not have high expectations from their teachers.	52 (29.9%)	91 (52.3%)	24 (13.8%)	7 (4%)	0
Students consider my feedback.	25 (14.4%)	101 (58%)	36 (20.7%)	9 (5.2%)	2 (1.1%)

As can be seen from Table 5.8 above, Omani EFL writing instructors have very positive attitudes towards written corrective feedback (WCF). An absolute majority of the sample 166 (95%) agreed that WCF helped students improve their writing. Similarly, 165 (95%) agreed that WCF was a necessary skill for the writing instructors and 154 (89%) agreed that they developed many methods of responding to students' essays. Moreover, 158 (91%) of the writing instructors agreed that students were responsible for editing their essays before submission. However, 36 (21%) of the writing instructors neither agreed nor disagreed that students considered teacher WCF in writing future assignments.

5.2.1.8 Challenges of giving WCF

The online survey examined writing instructors' attitudes regarding the reasons that might have made written corrective feedback rather a difficult task for them.

Table 5.9 below shows the results.

Table 5.9 Challenges of giving WCF

Item	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
It is difficult to give feedback because students make too many errors.	9 (5.2%)	44 (25.3%)	38 (21.8%)	61 (35.1%)	21 (12.1%)
It is difficult to give feedback because of administrative duties.	14 (8%)	33 (19%)	45 (25.9%)	52 (29.9%)	30 (17.2%)
It is difficult to give feedback because of heavy timetable.	6 (3.4%)	41 (23.6%)	43 (24.7%)	55 (31.6%)	28 (16.1%)

It is obvious from Table 5.9 above that slightly less than half of the majority of instructors 83 (48%) disagreed that written corrective feedback was difficult due to the fact that they had heavy timetables at college. Similarly, 82 (47%) of the instructors disagreed that WCF was difficult because learners made too many errors or because they had to do redundant administrative duties. I can conclude that there might be other reasons that could have made WCF challenging to the writing instructors.

5.3 Qualitative and quantitative analysis of open ended questions

This section deals with the qualitative and quantitative data analysis of the two open ended questions in my online survey on the most effective types and main challenges of error correction.

5.3.1 Most effective types of WCF

Thematic analysis of the open ended question on the most effective types of written corrective feedback yielded to one theme (guidelines to respond effectively to students' essays) and one sub theme (asking learners to produce a second draft). Originally, I created 95 codes, two categories and seven themes which were then analysed via Nvivo 12 (See Appendix 5). The themes were later reduced because the responses were either copied from the closed ended questions in the online survey, or were the same but written differently.

5.3.1.1 Guidelines to respond effectively to students' essays

The writing instructors reported that they believed that there was no such a thing as the most effective type of error correction, but rather provided a list of guidelines that can be applied in response to students' errors. However, I discarded most of the answers and I narrowed down those guidelines to one sub theme because it was most relevant to my research question and I could find the

relevant extracts from the data set to support my finding. The theme on guidelines led to a sub theme entitled as:

❖ **Asking students to produce a second draft**

The writing instructors in the sample suggested that asking learners to write a second draft was an effective method of responding to students' essays. For instance, some of the responses were:

'Students can learn from their mistakes if they write a second draft. Teachers can help learners understand and experience that writing is a process where ideas develop and improve with each rewrite.' (Majda)

'A second draft should be written in the class if the time permits because some students are not very careful while writing the second draft at home.' (Amani)

'Teachers can ask individual students if there is anything that is unclear on their paper before they write their second draft. In the class, ask students to start their second draft while the teacher is checking and helping them to clarify few errors that learners cannot correct themselves. Later, ask learners to finish writing their second drafts at home.' (Abdullah)

Asking students to produce a second draft might reflect the writing instructors' teaching philosophy and their teaching experience as language learners and instructors. By asking students to produce a second draft, the writing instructors might have aimed to help students develop their writing skills by making use of the written corrective feedback they received on their essays.

5.3.2 Main challenges of WCF

Thematic analysis of the second open ended question in the survey on the main challenges that Omani EFL writing instructors encounter in giving written corrective feedback (WCF) to learners was conducted by using NVivo 12 which

resulted in 203 codes but because they were redundant, I later reduced them to 154 nodes (codes), five categories, and eight themes (See Appendix 5) which were then narrowed down into one theme (responding to students' essays is hard work) and three sub themes as can be seen in Table 5.10 below.

Table 5.10 Main challenges of giving WCF

Theme	Sub themes
Responding to students' essays is hard work	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Responding to students' essays is time consuming <li>2. Students do not take responsibility for their learning <li>3. Students make spelling and grammar errors

5.3.2.1 Responding to students' essays is hard work

The Omani EFL writing instructors mentioned that one of the main challenges they faced in giving written corrective feedback (WCF) was the fact that responding to students' essays was not an easy task at all. For instance, some of them wrote:

'I feel that correcting students' paper is not easy.' (Asia)

'Personally I think that giving feedback is such a difficult challenge.' (Ahmed)

'I think it is difficult to discuss all the errors in one class.' (Khadeja)

Some of the reasons behind that might be the fact that WCF took a great amount of writing instructors' time at college and some students repeated the same errors

even though the writing instructors spent large amounts of time fixing those errors. Hence, I created three sub themes from the main theme entitled as:

❖ **Responding to students' essays is time consuming**

When I analysed writing instructors' responses via the software NVivo 12 on the challenges they faced, some words appeared several times as can be seen in Table 5.11 below. In fact, the words 'mistakes, errors' appeared 57 times. Further, the verb 'make' which was attached to making mistakes appeared 16 times. Moreover, the word 'many' which was attached to the words 'mistakes, errors, students' appeared 14 times.

Table 5.11 Frequency of words linked with challenges of WCF

word	Number of times appeared
Mistakes; errors	57
make	16
many	14
Total	87

In addition, I found that the Omani EFL writing instructors reported that responding to students' essays took a large amount of their time at college as they reported that:

'Marking students' essays is time consuming especially with large class size.'

(Fatma).

'I feel that marking is time consuming especially at the end of the semester.'

(Salim)

'Marking students' paper is a time consuming process in particular if there are two drafts.' (Warda)

'We have to teach large classes, cover too many topics, and write more than one draft, in addition to many administrative duties given by the management.'
(Khalfan)

In fact, there are more than 20 students in each class at the Foundation Programme where I collected my data for this study and each teacher would teach four different courses (e.g. listening, speaking, reading, writing, grammar) per term. Hence, marking students' written assignments is one of the main responsibilities that the instructors were bombarded with let alone other redundant administrative duties they had to do as part of their daily duties. Moreover, they are not obliged to give comprehensive written corrective feedback to the daily classroom-based writing practice. Nevertheless, all of them responded to students' essays in a comprehensive manner (i.e. correcting all the errors).

❖ **Students do not take responsibility for their learning**

Another sub theme that I created based on the analysis of the challenges writing instructors faced was the fact that learners do not take responsibility for their own learning. The writing instructors reported that students were rather carefree. For instance, they said that:

'Students don't take the corrections seriously. Sometimes they just receive their paper, fold them away without much thought.' (Hamad)

'From my point of view, students do not have a serious attitude towards learning English.' (Marwa)

'One of the challenges I face is that students just do not care about learning from their errors.' (Sana)

'Students are careless and do not give attention to feedback in many cases.'

(Manal)

'Students don't care at all about the feedback given to their essays, so I feel like I'm wasting my time at times.' (Kwther)

Hence, the writing instructors made it clear that students did not take teacher written corrective feedback seriously in the writing course though large amounts of time were spent on correcting those errors. The instructors reported that students were more concerned about knowing their marks on the writing assignment rather than developing their writing skills and learning from their errors. Some writing instructors, talked about the fact that students' essays were full of grammar and spelling errors as I will explain in the next section.

❖ **Students make spelling and grammar errors**

One of the major issues that kept reoccurring in the results of my study was the problem of spelling and grammar errors. In fact, the Omani EFL writing instructors mentioned that students' written assignments were full of spelling and grammatical errors. For instance, they reported that:

'Students make many spelling and grammar errors.' (Nasser).

'Students often have poor grammar and spelling skills that require a lot of remedial work on their part.' (Asma)

'Students are weak in grammar. Therefore, they find it extremely difficult to write a grammatically correct sentence.' (Tahani)

'Many of the students write compound complex sentences without a single verb or contradicting their ideas in the same sentence. It would just be rubbish without any sense and I would have no clues how to fix such issues for example what to teach, when and how much? This is why giving feed back is such a difficult challenge.' (Sana)

'It is difficult to correct students' errors because they have been promoted to a level above their abilities and so have difficulty grasping even the simplest explanations of grammatical structures.' (Salim)

'Most of the students are not aware of the very basics of English language like grammar and even capitalisation and punctuation. My first writing lesson is capitalisation and punctuation. The challenge is, I have to teach what they are supposed to learn from school.' (Abeer)

In fact, I found that the word 'spelling' appeared 49 times, the word 'grammar' appeared 12 times, and the word 'poor' which was attached to 'poor grammar and spelling' appeared four times. Hence, it seems that the majority of writing instructors' time was spent on addressing and fixing spelling and grammar errors.

5.4 Quantitative and qualitative analysis of teacher WCF on students' actual written assignments

This section presents the qualitative and quantitative findings resulted from analysing a sample of 96 students' essays with teacher error correction on. I applied two frameworks (e.g. Ellis, 2009; a modified version of Ferris, 2007) to answer my second research question aimed at addressing the types of written corrective feedback that Omani English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instructors employed when they responded to students' essays and my third research question which investigated whether or not writing instructors' written corrective feedback varied based on learners' English language proficiency.

Table 5.12 below presents the frequency of teacher written corrective feedback based on Ellis typology (2009a). I would like to remind the reader of the writing topics in each class. The beginner students wrote a paragraph where they described a country. The intermediate students wrote an essay on the happiest day of their lives. The upper intermediate students wrote an essay on the

similarities and differences between villages and cities. The advanced students described a line graph on fast food consumption.

Table 5.12 Frequency of WCF types (Ellis, 2009a)

EFL Students' level of language proficiency	Type of WCF									Total
	Direct	Indirect: Indicating + locating error		Metalinguistic WCF		Focus of WCF		Electronic CF	Reformulation	
		a. Indicating + locating	b. Indication only	a. Use of error code	b. Brief grammatical descriptions	a. Unfocused CF	b. Focused CF			
Beginners	306 (26.2%)	275 (23.5%)	-	-	-	583 (100%)	-	-	2 (.17%)	583
Intermediate	1055 (23%)	1122 (24.7%)	-	-	36 (.79%)	2263 (100%)	-	-	50 (1.1%)	2263
Upper intermediate	548 (23%)	597 (25%)	-	17 (.71%)	3 (.12%)	1189 (100%)	-	-	24 (1%)	1189
Advanced	116 (13.6%)	236 (27.6%)	-	71 (8%)	-	426 (100%)	-	-	3 (.35%)	426
Total no. of instances	4460									

As can be seen from Table 5.12 above, and based on Ellis (2009a) all the corrections were comprehensive in their nature (i.e. all the errors were corrected) and none were selective (i.e. selected errors were corrected). Moreover, there were more instances of indirect written corrective feedback (WCF) than direct WCF in all the classes. Further, the least frequent and applied types of WCF were metalinguistic WCF, and reformulation. However, for ethical considerations I am not able to attach any copies of students' actual essays as appendix in this study. In addition, I analysed writing instructors' written comments based on the modified version of Ferris (2007) framework. Table 5.13 below shows the descriptive information of teacher written commentary on all the 96 essays.

Table 5.13 Frequency of teacher commentary (modified Ferris, 2007)

Teacher commentary	Frequency	Percentage
End-comments only	100	51%
Marginal comments only	74	38%
End-comments combined with marginal comments	20	10%
Total	194	

As it is obvious from Table 5.13 above, I found that there were more end comments (i.e. comments at the end/beginning of the essay) than marginal comments (i.e. comments at the margin of the essay next to specific sentences/paragraphs). Table 5.14 below shows more details of the types of end-comments based on a modified version of Ferris (2007).

Table 5.14 Frequency of end-comments across levels (modified Ferris, 2007)

End comment	Level of EFL student language proficiency				
	Beginners	Intermediate	Upper intermediate	Advanced	
Ask for information (Question)	-	1 (1%)	-	-	
Request information	Question	-	-	-	
	Statement	-	-	1 (1%)	
	Imperative	-	5 (5%)	7 (7%)	
Give information	Question	-	-	-	
	Statement	-	-	-	
Grammar	Imperative	-	15 (15%)	1 (1%)	
	Statement	-	8 (8%)	-	
	Question	-	-	4 (4%)	
Positive statements	-	4 (4%)	-	-	
Evaluative expression	Positive	1 (1%)	35 (35%)	10 (10%)	1 (1%)
	Negative	-	3 (3%)	1 (1%)	-
Question marks	-	-	-	-	
Hedges	-	3 (3%)	-	-	
Total			100		

As can be seen from Table 5.14 above, I found that there were more end-comments in particular in the form of evaluative comments. Moreover, the comments were directed into fixing linguistic errors related to grammar and mechanics. In addition to that, five students out of the 96 students, received a comment such as AA- a term well known among writing instructors and learners in my context which refers to Academic Advising or teacher-learner conference.

Based on content analysis, I found that some of the intermediate students received comments such as:

'This is not 150 words... You need to use past simple/past continuous. You need to give more details about your day. What you did. Where you went. How you felt. etc.' Essay no. 24

Another student received these comments:

'Off topic!... You have to write about one day not about what you did on the other days. Academic Advising please!' Essay no. 51

Similarly, upper intermediate students received some comments such as:

'What do you mean?..... This is not a sentence. Where is the verb?.....'

You still need to improve your writing. Keep practising every day. Practice makes perfect..... Try to improve capital letters, grammar, incomplete sentences..... AA' Essay no. 60

Another student received comments such as

'Explain more..... A lot of sentences are incomplete..... This sounds like a fact not an opinion..... AA' Essay no. 66

Another example comes from one of the essays which was loaded with all kinds of errors and it seemed that the learner was really struggling with writing the assignment. After covering the paper with ink, the instructor commented:

'Don't use 'all', use 'many' or 'a lot of'..... AA' Essay no. 69

Apart from analysing EFL writing instructors' end comments on students' essays, I analysed their text based comments on those essays based on a modified version of Ferris (2007) as I have mentioned earlier. In fact, analysis of teacher text-based comments revealed that the writing instructors of intermediate, upper intermediate and advanced levels wrote question marks on the margins of 13

essays but there were no further comments or explanation of what that question mark actually meant. For instance, one of the intermediate students wrote:

'Before the class start, we went to college.' Essay no. 25

One of the upper intermediate students wrote:

'Some of the differences are more populated and more modern.' Essay no. 61

One of the advanced students wrote:

'The line-graph illustrates the changes of type and amount of fast food eaten by Australian teenagers.' Essay no. 84

In all the cases above, the writing instructors underlined the sentence and inserted a question mark on top of the sentence with no further explanation or indication as what was erroneous in the sentence, nor there were any suggestions as how to fix the error.

Moreover, I analysed Omani EFL writing instructors' text-based comments into two forms: generic marginal comments (i.e. general comments e.g. *Good introduction*) and text-specific comments (i.e. more specific and detailed comments for a particular body paragraph, e.g. *In your opinion, why do you think that living in the village is better than living in the city?*). Table 5.15 below shows descriptive information of writing instructors' text-based comments in all the classes.

Table 5.15 Text-based comments (modified Ferris, 2007)

EFL student proficiency level	Text based comments	
	Generic	Text specific
Beginners	-	-
Intermediate	15 (20.2 %)	-
Upper intermediate	46 (62.1 %)	-
Advanced	13 (17.5 %)	-
Total	74	

As can be seen from Table 5.15 above, all the text based comments in the sample of this study were general comments. Though the highest number of text-based comments were given in response to upper intermediate students' essays, there were no text-based comments on any of the essays of beginner students.

Further, I analysed the type of writing instructors' text based comments in all the classes based on a modified version of Ferris (2007) as can be seen from Table 5.16 below.

Table 5.16 Text-based comments across classes (modified Ferris, 2007)

Text based comment	Level of EFL student language proficiency			
	Beginners	Intermediate	Upper intermediate	Advanced
Ask for information (Question)	-	2 (2.7 %)	2 (2.7 %)	4 (5.4 %)
Request	Question	-	-	1 (1.3 %)
	Statement	-	2 (2.7 %)	6 (8.1 %)
	Imperative	-	-	6 (8.1 %)
Give information	Question	-	-	6 (8.1 %)
	Statement	-	1 (1.3 %)	-
Grammar & mechanics	Imperative	-	6 (8.1 %)	7 (9.4 %)
	Question	-	-	2 (2.7%)
	Statement	-	-	4 (5.4%)
Positive statements	-	-	-	-
Evaluative expression	Positive	-	-	7 (9.4 %)
	Negative	-	-	3 (4 %)
Question marks	-	4 (5.4 %)	1 (1.3 %)	8 (10.8 %)
Hedges	-	-	1 (1.3 %)	1 (1.3 %)
Total		74		

As can be seen from Table 5.16 above, the writing instructors' text based comments in all the classes covered a wide range of comments on grammar and mechanism, evaluative expressions, question marks, and hedges.

5.5 Summary of Chapter Five

I presented in this chapter a detailed account of the analysis of two sets of data, mainly an online survey and teacher written response on a sample of 96 student essays. The analysis of the data helped me answer the three main research questions in my study regarding writing instructors' attitudes and practice on

written corrective feedback (WCF), the types of WCF they employed in response to students' written assignments and whether they considered learners' level of language proficiency in responding to students' essays. I found that the writing instructors applied unfocused WCF in addition to a number of other types of WCF. Moreover, I found that while the instructors reported in the online survey that they applied direct WCF, in practice they applied indirect WCF. Moreover, the majority of their written comments were dedicated to grammar and mechanics. Further, most of the written comments were in the form of praise and evaluative expressions. In the next chapter I will provide a critical and detailed discussion of the major findings of my research.

Chapter six: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

Based on the findings presented in the previous chapter, I will discuss those findings in relation to the Omani context and the literature review. I present in this chapter a conceptualisation of written corrective feedback along with some suggestions which can improve future pedagogy and policies at tertiary institutions in Oman. I have divided this chapter into three main sections, each discussing one of my research questions. The first section discusses 174 Omani English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instructors' attitudes on written corrective feedback (WCF) in six Colleges of Technology in Oman. I draw my findings here from the online survey, based on quantitative and qualitative data. The second section discusses the instructors' actual practice of responding to a sample of 96 students' written assignments combined with findings from the online survey. The third section discusses whether the writing instructors' written corrective feedback varies according to learners' level of writing proficiency in English. Creswell (2014) discusses in his book three main designs with regard to mixed methods: convergent parallel mixed methods, explanatory sequential mixed methods, and exploratory sequential mixed methods. I would like to remind the reader that I have applied a convergent mixed methods design in my study, meaning that I collected both datasets (i.e. responses from the online survey and teacher written corrective feedback on a sample of 96 students' documents) at the same time and prioritised both data sets but analysed them separately. However, I combined and merged findings from both instruments in discussing my research findings. This side by side approach (Creswell, 2018) helped me merge the findings from both datasets which on one level confirmed findings from both instruments and on a second level disconfirmed the findings. I

have also transformed the qualitative results into quantitative databases- an approach called data transformation (Creswell, 2018) as can be seen in Figure 6.1 below.

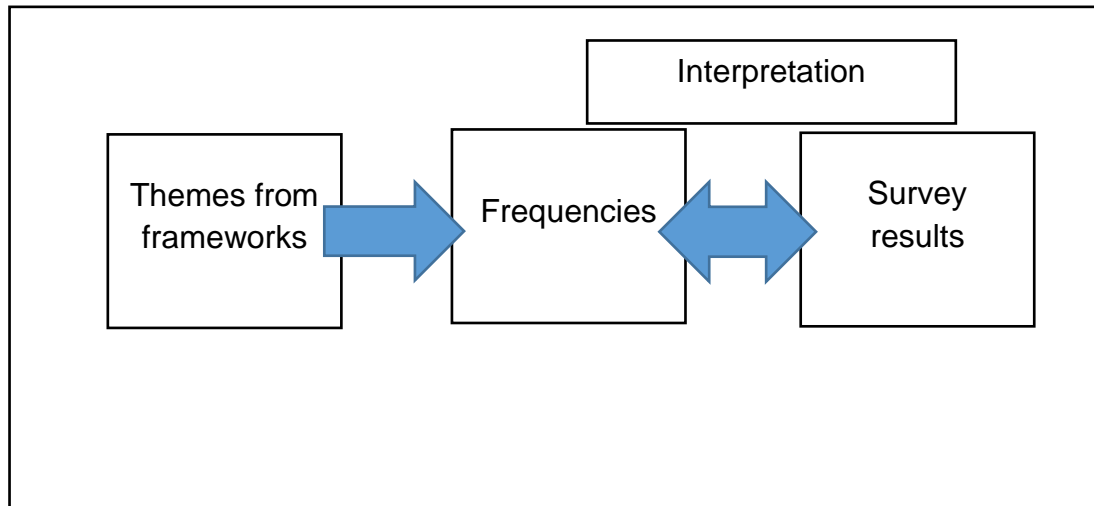


Figure 6.1 Data transformation based on Creswell (2018)

6.2 Foundation year writing instructors' attitudes on different aspects of WCF

I will discuss my findings from the online survey in this study on writing instructors' attitudes on a number of aspects with regard to written corrective feedback (WCF). These aspects are the usefulness of written corrective feedback (WCF), who is responsible for providing WCF, the most effective types of WCF, and challenges in providing WCF. It is worth pointing out that teaching practice is often guided by teacher beliefs and attitudes, which are 'personalised theories [that] lie at the heart of teaching and learning' (Lee, Leong & Song, 2017, p.61).

6.2.1 Usefulness of WCF

Findings from the online survey in my study revealed that an overwhelming majority of the writing instructors 166 (94%) felt that written corrective feedback was effective in developing learners' writing skills. Further, 165 (95%) of the sample agreed that written corrective feedback was a necessary skill for writing instructors and 154 (89%) agreed that they developed many methods of responding to students' essays over the years- which indicates that error correction led to professional development in this particular area. On the other hand and surprisingly, 36 (21%) of the instructors neither agreed nor disagreed that written corrective feedback had an impact on students' future assignments. Maggs (2014) and Tang et al. (2008) reported a similar view. There is agreement among authors that feedback is only helpful when students attend to and act upon it (Carless, 2015; Sambell et al., 2013; Taras, 2013). Carless (2009) stated that to support learning, students should use the assessor's comments to feed forward to work they will do in the future. Thus, if faculty are doubtful of whether the students incorporate the feedback, then steps need to be taken to make sure learners read and understand the comments.

Personally, I think if the number of learners who are less successful in one class is higher than the number of learners who are more successful- as the instructors reported in the open ended question, then the effect of written corrective feedback might be slow and would take the instructors a longer period of time before seeing any changes in learners' behaviour.

Now when I reflect on my past teaching pedagogy on responding to students' essays, I feel that I should had explained my written corrective feedback strategies to my students back then at the start of the term as has been

suggested by Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) so that they would not have expected nor requested to have every single error on their essays to be marked. I do believe that error correction is part of the instructor's duties. However, I feel that error correction, in particular comprehensive feedback as was the case in my context where all the errors were marked, adds more burden to the writing instructors not to mention the other administrative duties they have to do. Eventually, the instructors might become burnt out in particular if they have to mark hundreds of essays every term as the majority of the writing instructors 153 (88%) in my context had 21 to 30 students in their writing class and 144 (83%) of them had to teach 16 to 20 hours per week. I personally think that if the situation at higher education institutions in Oman continues with these numbers, then there are more chances that Omani writing instructors will quit their jobs looking for more comfortable and relaxing ones. Further, in order to make the model I will propose in my study in Chapter Seven more feasible and to enhance teacher reflection, this current situation should change so that writing instructors can have some spare time to stop and reflect on their pedagogical practices and improve them to suit the current teaching-learning context. Moreover, one of the crucial areas that need reflective practice is whether or not the writing instructor is the only person who should correct learners' errors as I will discuss next.

6.2.2 Who is responsible for providing WCF

Based on the analysis of the online survey, I found that a large percentage of the writing instructors 120 (68%) disagreed with the view that their role was to teach rather than respond to students' essays. Amerhein and Nassaji (2010) found that learners believed that error correction was the instructor's responsibility. In my opinion, such a belief might be closely inherited in writing instructors' tacit beliefs with regard to what teaching means and how best to deliver it to learners.

Similarly, I remember when I first joined my lecturing post, I thought that I had to mark all the errors on learners' essays to make everybody happy: the administration of the university I worked at, the learners and their parents. Moreover, I felt that if I did not correct learners' errors, learners might have learnt those errors and eventually turned into fossilised errors which can become difficult to unlearn because some learners might attach very strong emotions to past learning. However, I occasionally applied selective error correction by focusing on a number of errors each time I marked learners' essays, in particular with adult students because I felt that they were mature enough to edit their essays before submission. However, they asked me to correct all the errors on their essays. At the time I was not aware of Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) distinction between traditional and non traditional students and that each group has different learning styles, skills and needs. Such a difference among learners might in fact one of the key factors that should be taken into consideration by writing instructors. Hence, based on students' feedback, I went for comprehensive error correction though I might have believed in selective corrective feedback but due to some contextual factors, I had to do otherwise in practice. According to Bitchener and Ferris (2012), learner background is one of the under-researched areas.

There is evidence in the literature that L2 writers know that they need expert feedback from an authoritative figure such as the writing instructor because they know that they are not proficient English academic writers and they would be disappointed, anxious, or even resentful if writing instructors withhold correction (e.g., Ferris, 1995; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Leki, 1991). Paulus (1999) found that learners preferred teacher error correction over peer response, while Marzban

and Sarjami (2014) found that peer feedback was more effective than direct feedback. Having said that, I feel that in order to encourage Omani learners to do peer correction and promote learner-centeredness and hence take some of the burden off the writing instructors' shoulders, learners might need to be trained to do so but the writing instructor should ensure that the learners are ready in terms of their linguistic knowledge and abilities (Ellis, 2009b). As a result, it seems that error correction might remain the responsibility of the writing instructor for a while in the Omani context given the current scenario, but there might be pathways for more sustainable error correction methods that engage learners in editing and trying to perfect their essays before submission. In fact there is evidence in the literature that peer correction can be very effective for learning.

Carless (2015) states that the core function of self- and peer assessment is for students to learn to be judges of their work as well as that of others. He adds that through this process, there is a promotion of lifelong learning and that these abilities allow students to make judgments and decisions during situations they may encounter in the future. Sambell et al. (2013) state that peer correction can promote independence, personal responsibility, and critical thinking. Moreover, the competencies learnt at peer correction can provide a foundation for performing self-correction. Rawlusk (2018) argues that some studies (e.g. Chambers et al., 2014; Hassan, Fox, & Hannah, 2014) gathered views from students and found that assigning grades to their peers was a negative experience (and that students said they did not like showing their work to peers, they lacked confidence in evaluating others work, and doubts occurred as to the fairness and validity of the marks, while other researchers (e.g. Kearney, 2013) did not find objections from students when providing grades to peers. Rawlusk

adds that some studies (e.g. Hassan et al., 2014) found that students felt that self- and peer correction provided them a positive experience and they agreed that they were helpful, motivating, gave them some control over their learning and helped prepare them for future careers; while other researchers (e.g. Lladó et al., 2014; McGarr & Clifford, 2013) found that learners thought peer correction was a positive experience and facilitated learning.

6.2.3 Most effective types of WCF

I found in the online survey that an overwhelming majority of the writing instructors 169 (97%) reported discussing students' written errors orally with the whole class which might imply that the instructors found this method more effective. It could be that it was more convenient for the instructors to discuss the main and most reoccurring errors from students' essays orally in particular with large class sizes as I mentioned in the previous section. Moreover, the instructors reported that they were bombarded with other redundant administrative work at college which I assume might have made oral discussion of the errors more convenient. Further, a small portion in the sample of this study 34 (20%) reported in the online survey that they referred their students to some websites to practice the problematic grammatical structures in contextualised writing activities. It might be apparent here that there is some sort of scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978) happening in the ESL classroom and that the instructor does not give the correct answer away. According to Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), when the novice (learner) takes advantage of the assistance provided to him /her from the expert (instructor), this indicates that there is potential development. In fact, the role of the expert is to encourage the novice to take greater responsibility for the activity rather than helping the learner complete the task. By doing so, the learner becomes more autonomous. This effective assistance might imply that

assistance within the learners' zone of proximal development cannot be pre-determined. It is rather a negotiated discovery which involves an ongoing assessment of what the learner can and cannot achieve through assistance and tailoring the assistance accordingly.

Based on writing instructors' attitudes in the open ended questions in the online survey in my study, they replied that there was no one single effective type of written corrective feedback that can be applicable to all classroom situations. This finding might be in alignment with Social Culture Theory (SCT) which states that there is no single best type of written corrective feedback (WCF). Social culture theory does not view written corrective feedback as dichotomous either direct or indirect for instance, but rather views the two forms as lying at two ends of a continuum and the degree of directness depends on the students' evolving needs. In fact, the writing instructors reported that they can use more than one method of feedback and follow some guidelines in order to make that feedback effective. For instance, they suggested that they might start their written comments with criticism followed by praise or vice versa. Moreover, they suggested using another colour rather than red when responding to students' essays. The red marks can discourage the retention of previously corrected errors in grammar, lead to feelings of disappointment and intimidation in students which might hinder learning (Semke, 1984). As a result, some learners might ignore teacher feedback though the writing instructor has invested long hours in marking the essays. Moreover, Hyland and Hyland (2006) suggest that writing instructors should be careful when they provide feedback so that they do not break the good relationship with their students. In this regard, the writing instructor might personalise the written comments by addressing the students by

their names and signing their own at the end of the commentary (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005) as was the case in intermediate and upper intermediate students' essays in my study. Similarly, Ellis (2009b) provides a list of guidelines for instructors to apply when they give oral or written corrective feedback to learners. In fact, teacher educators have been understandably reluctant to prescribe or proscribe the strategies that writing instructors should use in oral corrective feedback (Ellis, 2009b) which I believe might be applicable to written corrective feedback, too. Further, Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, and Wolfersberger (2010) and Evans, Hartshorn and Tuioti (2010) provide a useful diagram for instructors to apply as a strategy for error correction in writing classes.

Writing instructors should bear on mind that students need different types of assistance (WCF) according to their level of language proficiency and that there might be different zone of proximal development for different language structures. In fact, effective grammar feedback and instruction should take into account students' first language background, their *current* English language proficiency, and their prior experience with English grammar instruction and editing strategies (Ferris, 1999). Kumaravadivelu (1994) argues that writing instructors should be free to make autonomous choices and develop, in essence, their own approach to language teaching, or what Kumaravadivelu refers to as the development of their own "principled pragmatism" (p. 30). This pragmatism might be informed by writing instructors' own learning experiences, the influences of their professional training, and their own observations of what works and what does not work for their students, as well as their own intuition. However, writing instructors might bear on mind the rules and regulations of their own institutions in order to avoid

any conflicts with the managerial personnels where they work. In fact, teacher evaluation of their teaching practice is an important aspect that might eliminate some of the challenges they face in responding to students' essays as I will discuss next.

6.2.4 Challenges of WCF

I found from the closed ended question replies in the online survey that slightly more than half of the sample 94 (54%) felt that responding to students' essays was challenging. When writing instructors were asked about their opinion in the open ended question regarding the main challenges they faced when providing written corrective feedback, most of them reported that learners had a certain attitude towards error correction, that they only cared about their scores in the writing course and were not serious about teacher feedback which I believe has neither served the process of giving written corrective feedback nor did justice to the instructors who spend long hours correcting essays beside doing other redundant administrative duties. This finding is supported by Al Bakri (2015) in the Omani context but contradicted Halimi (2008) study which reported that 63% of the students read all the comments provided by the writing instructor. Similarly, 68% of learners reported in the survey by Hamouda (2011) that they read every mark or comment by the writing instructor but that- similar to my finding, 83% of learners were only concerned about their scores. Maybe writing instructors need to be cautious when they use terms such as *not serious students* as Gue'nette suggests that 'teachers must not lose sight of the fact that second language acquisition is slow, gradual...' (2007, p. 52). Moreover, Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) state L2 acquisition is a process that demands space and time and that it is unrealistic to expect students produce perfect papers, even from the advanced students. In addition, Mahmud (2016), Al Bakri (2015), Montgomery and Baker

(2007) and AlShahrani and Storch (2014) found that some writing instructors did not seem to be aware of their own written corrective feedback practices. Hence, I suggest in my proposed model that writing instructors should be given some space to reflect on their pedagogical practices, and identify and evaluate them constantly. I will discuss this finding next in relation to a number of factors which are in fact interrelated. These might be learner factors, writing instructor factors, contextual factors and the error system of English language.

Writing instructor The writing instructors might- unknowingly- cause learners to only care about marks. Written corrective feedback might not be useful when it lacks appropriate sequencing of instructional effective pacing, or when students are overwhelmed with so much feedback that they cannot adequately process or learn from (Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum & Wolfersberger, 2010). Further, teacher's feedback may be unclear, inaccurate, and may lack balance among form, content, and style (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990). I found in the content analysis that some errors were corrected, some correct forms were re-corrected, while some errors went unnoticed. Writing instructors should bear on mind that there is no recipe for corrective feedback and what may work for one student in one setting may not for another student in another setting (Ellis, 2009b). In my context, there were more writing instructors from other nationalities than Omani writing instructors as I have mentioned earlier. Hence, some writing instructors might consider learners as being lazy, while the same learners can be viewed as struggling learners from the point of view of Omani nationals- I am not implying that Omani writing instructors are better than other instructors. Lee, W. (1989) explains that a writing instructor who has grown up among the kind of learners he/she teaches, looks at students' errors from a different perspective than an

instructor from an English speaking country born and brought up among those who speak English as their native language. Further, it could be the case in my context that the reason why the writing instructors kept correcting the same errors for learners is their fear- which might stem from their tacit beliefs- that those errors might become fossilised if they were not corrected every time. This finding has been supported by Selinker (1983) who stated that fossilised item rules and structures remain as potential performance and keep re-occurring in learners' writing even when they have been seemingly eradicated. He adds that these fossilised errors occur when the learner is focused on learning new and difficult intellectual subject matter, or in a state of anxiety, excitement or even when totally relaxed. He adds that such errors can be caused by strategies of language communication, strategies of language learning and over generalisation, transfer of training where teachers and text books present drills with he and never with she. In fact, it is not uncommon to hear Omani students call their female lecturer as Mr. rather than Ms. Moreover, some writing instructors might not be aware of some of the difficulties that a number of their students might have (e.g. dyslexia) or learner misconceptions which remain hidden from the eyes of the writing instructor for various reasons such as not having the courage to speak up and express themselves in front of other classmates, they might want to save face value and not look less achieving students than their peers or it could be that they simply feel embarrassed to seek help and expose themselves as vulnerable students. I strongly believe that writing instructors should be aware how their students prefer to be corrected through needs analysis and asking learners about their marking preferences at the start of the term. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) recommend that writing instructors do needs analysis at the start of the term and/or during the term because language learning needs change over time.

Moreover, if writing instructors are convinced that a particular way of providing error correction is effective for their learners, they may need to tell their students the reasons for such conviction. In fact, an overwhelming majority of the sample 143 (81%) in my study agreed that writing instructors should explain the procedure of responding to students' essays so that learners do not have high expectations. I believe that by doing so, written corrective feedback would be more appealing to learners. However, it is unlikely that all the L2 writing instructors are motivated to learn, adapt and adjust their teaching pedagogy by attending to their learners' needs. Some writing instructors might be rather reluctant to try out new methods as I remember from experience in particular those who have been teaching writing for couple of years. It is not easy to make people step out of their comfort zone and start applying new teaching methods if the old methods worked well for the learners- at least from the perspective of the instructors. Future studies might investigate and find out whether the writing instructors seek alternative paths of error correction that might better serve their current cohort. Nevertheless, I found that one third of the sample 56 (32%) disagreed in the online survey that they would give positive feedback to avoid students' complaints. However, one would question what the writing instructors have done with the less happier students. Have the instructors for instance done any one to one conferences, used social media platforms to help learners express themselves and the difficulties they face in making sense of the feedback they receive? When learners are left unhappy, they might develop very strong emotions towards learning the language and the writing instructor in particular- leading to more unpleasant consequences such as raising complaints against the instructor. Further, Hyland and Hyland (2001) found that there was a clear miscommunication between the teacher and the learners because some learners

reported that they did not understand teacher's mitigated comments. It has been suggested that the writing instructors should spend some time with learners at the end of the class to discuss the comments that might not be clear to the learners and that instructors might change the mode of feedback delivery such as applying audio taped corrective feedback sent to learners electronically (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). This consolidates my study's recommendation to the writing instructors to make use of social media platforms which provide audio messaging options (e.g. WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, snap chat) as channels of feedback provision.

Contextual factors There are some contextual factors that might help develop a carefree attitude among some Omani learners. For instance, the writing instructors reported in the online survey that the pass rate at the college where I collected students' written assignments from is not high and the college is not strict in terms of attendance and performing assignments as part of the continuous assessment. As a result, it might be unlikely that students would be serious in the way they perceive learning and success. Some writing instructors reported that some learners should be at lower levels because of their general low performance in their current class. However, that was not the instructors' decision to make but rather the administration of the college. It is apparent that Colleges of Technology- like many other higher education institutions follow a top-down approach where the writing instructors have no role in the decisions made about who should stay in the same level and who should move to the next level. However, I suggest that academics should be involved in decisions related to students' performance because they almost meet students on a daily basis and are more aware of their learners' current English proficiency level and skills.

In addition, some learners might have a low tolerance for change which I know from experience. For instance, when I asked my learners to produce a second draft, they did not do it because it was not a must to hand in two drafts. I was once in the learners' shoes and I know exactly how difficult it is to generate ideas and pay attention to grammar and mechanism in writing an essay, and to be asked to re-write the same essay would be a nightmare. However, if the writing instructor opens a dialogue and is convincing enough to make the students see the benefits of re-writing an essay, learners might change their mind and attitudes towards a second draft. But the question remains is will the instructor have the time to mark a second draft?- which was another challenge the instructors reported in the open ended question in my survey. Further, in single –draft classrooms similar to my context, grammatical accuracy is highly stressed (Ferris, 1995), hence it is not surprising that students may pay little attention to instructor error correction because it might seem rather overwhelming for them.

6.3 Foundation year writing instructors' practice of WCF

In this section, I will discuss the quantitative and qualitative findings of my research on Omani writing instructors' attitudes and practice of written corrective feedback (WCF) by merging and combining results from the online survey and writing instructors' written response to students' essays.

6.3.1 Focused (selective) vs. unfocused (comprehensive) WCF

Data analysis from the online survey revealed that an absolute majority of the writing instructors 163 (94%) applied unfocused written corrective feedback (i.e. corrected all the errors) when responding to students' essays as opposed to 83 (48%) who provided focused written corrective feedback (i.e. correcting few errors). This finding was confirmed by the results of content analysis of teacher written corrective feedback on learners' essays where all the instructors provided

unfocused feedback. Further, I found that the majority of the writing instructors 163 (94%) responded to students' errors based on the type of error the learners made (e.g. content, grammar, punctuation) and 160 (92%) of them considered learners' proficiency level in English. Learner variables (e.g. age & level of language proficiency) and error types are some of the factors that writing instructors should consider in error correction (Truscott, 2001). However, there is some sort of divergence in the findings because I found from the content analysis of writing instructors' written corrective feedback on learners' essays that all the four instructors corrected students' essays in a comprehensive manner, and that their feedback did not differ according to the type of genre being used (narrative, compare and contrast and description of a line graph). Similarly, Al Shahrani and Storch (2014) found in the Saudi context that writing instructors gave comprehensive indirect error correction on grammar while learners preferred direct error correction. On the other hand, Sayyar and Zamanian (2015) in the Iranian context and Atmaca (2016) in the Turkish context found that both the writing instructors and learners preferred comprehensive error correction. Responding to learners' errors comprehensively has been in alignment with learner preference who want to see all their errors being marked and corrected (Leki, 1991; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Theoretically, however, it has been suggested (e.g. Schmidt, 1995) that focused feedback might be more effective for lower proficiency learners because it places a lighter attentional load on their processing capacity. Moreover, based on informal conversations with some writing instructors at the college where I collected the essays, the writing instructors were aware that the learners were at the Language Center and that their future teachers who will teach them in their specialised majors, will only consider the content of their assignments and will not focus on the language of

their writing since teaching English is the responsibility of the faculty at the Language Center. Pan (2010) found in a Taiwanese context that learners made progress being given unfocused teacher written corrective feedback but it did not have long lasting efficacy to later tests. Moxley (1989) explains that teachers have a passion for editing and grammar and that they might believe that learners can learn from teachers' copy editing strategy in addition to using error correction as a tool to justify the scores they give on students' writing. The reality is that learners might just copy down writing instructors' unfocused corrective feedback onto their second drafts without much thinking of it- tossing all of those long hours of marking out of the window. Even worse, the writing instructors reported in the survey that some learners only look at the mark and fold their paper away without having a glance at error correction or teacher commentary. As a result, there seems to be some danger in following unfocused error correction because if writing instructors take over the text by giving students overwhelming unfocused error correction (i. e. correcting all the errors), it might make learners feel that the essay does not belong to them, but rather to the instructor (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Further, too much feedback within a level might detract from performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Ene and Kosobucki (2016), for instance, found in the American context that some learners resented over-focus on grammar which might be one of the reasons why Omani learners did not make use of teacher written corrective feedback. Truscott and Hsu (2008) found error correction ineffective but Bitchener and Ferris (2012) claim that underlining all the learners' errors had failed to actually grasp learners' attention and may have not provided enough information for understanding, and according to Schmidt (1995) attention and understanding are pre-requisite conditions for learning. Similarly, Baleghizadeh and Dadashi (2011) claim that coloring in red ink all over the page

can produce negative affective feedback- which has been supported by Krashen's affective filter hypothesis and the Activity theory. Theoretically speaking, writing instructors should apply unfocused written corrective feedback with caution because only motivated and competent writers can make use of unfocused feedback while the rest of the students will look at it and forget it (Ferris, 2002a). Ferris (2007) advised her participants who were trainee writing instructors to read through the paper without marking anything so that they can give focused written corrective feedback. In fact, more than half of the sample 97 (56%) in my study reported that they would read the paper twice before actually responding to it. Nevertheless, all the writing instructors applied comprehensive correction. This finding contradicts Bitchener (2012) views and that focused feedback may be more effective for learners with a lower level of proficiency because it may be easier for learners to process the feedback provided while Lee, I. (2008) found that focused error correction can cause resistance in some students, particularly the weaker ones, though ironically they are the ones who need to learn the most from error correction while Shintani, Ellis, and Suzuki (2014) claim that unfocused feedback might be harmful for learners because it can result in information overload in which case feedback might not be useful. However, Bitchener and Storch (2016) argue that the number of studies that investigated unfocused written corrective feedback (WCF) is limited. Hence, my research pushes the literature and empirical studies on unfocused WCF one step further.

It is only recently that researchers (e.g., Bitchener and Knoch, 2009, 2010a, 2010b; Ellis et al., 2008, 2014; Shintani and Ellis, 2013; 2015) have started to investigate whether written corrective feedback (WCF) can effectively focus on

one or two linguistic error categories (e.g., definite and indefinite articles, regular and irregular past tense, hypothetical conditional). However, these studies concluded that focused written corrective feedback (WCF) is more valuable than unfocused WCF. Ferris (2002) adds that it is necessary to raise instructors' awareness of the harm they cause themselves and learners by correcting errors comprehensively, e.g., student frustration and teacher burnout. Moreover, there is a debate among L2 writing scholars and teachers that limiting error correction to one or two specific errors might not address learners' accuracy issues in a more comprehensive manner since learners tend to make a broad range of written errors though focused error correction can lead to language acquisition and writing development in the long term (Ferris, 2010). As a result, recent Second Language Acquisition (SLA) studies (e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Sheen, 2007) have called for the provision of direct feedback (teacher corrections or rewriting) paired with rule reminders or explanations, which may be either written (attached to students' texts) or oral (individual face to face conferences or whole-class presentations). Ferris (2010) argues that the above suggestions do not seem to be realistic because most writing instructors neither have the time nor the patience to give that much feedback in that much detail in particular if there was a broad range of errors to be dealt with. She adds that many writing instructors do not even have the linguistic expertise to attempt such a task, even if it was logistically feasible- let alone other aspects of writing to focus on (e.g. ideas, organisation)- her views might somehow contradict my theory.

Personally, I feel that focused written corrective feedback might send learners who have recently joined higher education institutions, a wrong message and make them believe that they are expert writers. Unfocused error correction, on

the other hand, might make learners believe that they need to work harder which eventually might affect their confidence level especially those learners who were high achievers at school. Thus, both types of error correction might be used interchangeably. For instance, giving unfocused error correction on form and focused error correction on content (e.g. Ashwell, 2000).

6.3.2 Direct vs. indirect WCF

I found that an absolute majority of the writing instructors 150 (86%) in the online survey in my study applied direct correction after underlining student errors. Further, a large percentage of them 135 (78%) applied direct correction after circling the errors, and 139 (79%) of them provided direct error correction after crossing out the errors. Though direct corrective feedback might be one of the quickest ways of helping learners (Erlam, Ellis & Batstons, 2013), Erkkilä (2013) found that L2 students, especially those at lower proficiency levels, feel confused by indirect commentary, which uses questions and hedges. Hyland (1998) states that hedges are culture-bound which makes them rather challenging for L2 students to grasp. However, content analysis of instructor actual practice of error correction in my study yielded a different finding. In fact, I found 2230 (50%) instances of indirect written corrective feedback as opposed to 2025 (45%) instances of direct feedback. Lee, I. (2009), and AlBakri (2015) found similar discrepancies between writing instructors' perceptions and practice. The reason why the writing instructors in my context provided more indirect error correction on students' essays could be due to the fact that direct error correction was not mandatory by the administration of the college and that the writing instructors were allowed to discuss the most frequent errors with the whole class orally as I have mentioned earlier. Moreover, I collected data which was part of informal continuous assessment of students' writing in which case the writing instructors

did not have to provide direct correction to all the errors on learners' essays, except in the case of intermediate students whose essays were written as part of a mid-term exam as I have mentioned earlier in Chapter four. Moreover, it could be that indirect written corrective feedback was more convenient for the writing instructors with large class size because in my context, the average number of students in a writing class was 21-30 students.

Second Language Acquisition studies on written corrective feedback have argued for the superiority of direct feedback, at least for a few targeted features (e.g. Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007), while L2 writing researchers (e.g. Ashwell, 2000; Ferris, 2002b, 2003, 2006; Lalande, 1982; Jamalinesari et al, 2015; Talatifard, 2016; Baleghizadeh & Dadashi, 2011) have argued for the importance of indirect feedback as a means to engage student writers in guided problem-solving and to encourage them to take more responsibility for their own progress. While some evidence shows that L2 student writers have expressed a clear preference for indirect feedback (e.g. Ferris & Roberts; 2001; Leki, 1991), other studies found that teachers and students prefer direct feedback (e.g. Black & Nanni, 2016; AlShahrani, 2014). In fact, early studies (e.g. Lalande, 1982, Semke, 1984, Robb et al, 1986) found no difference between direct and indirect feedback on students' writing accuracy, which indicates that both types might be equally effective and can be used interchangeably by writing instructors. Similarly, there is some recent evidence that shows that both types are effective (e.g. Ahmadi et al, 2012; Van Beuningen et al, 2008, 2012; Maleki & Eslami, 2013). Moreover, direct and indirect correction treatments can be more effective if they are used together in hybrid fashion (Hendrickson, 1984). Personally, I think all types of written corrective feedback

can be used in hybrid fashion so that the wide range of students' needs can be met. It might be more convenient for the writing instructor in my context to underline or circle an error without providing the correct form of the word because of the huge number of essays they have to mark every term. The writing instructor responds to almost 120 essays (100-250 word essay length) per term given the fact that on average there are around 30 students per writing class and that they have to write four types of genre, not to mention other administrative work the writing instructors have to do such as recording students' attendance electronically, writing and marking exams and other duties with regard to other courses they teach in one term. Maybe higher educational institutions in Oman should start to hire some more administrative personnels to do the administrative duties instead of the writing instructors. There might be some new posts such as teacher assistants who can take care of marking students' essays since the focus is on language only.

6.3.3 Metalinguistic error correction

Based on data analysis from the online survey, I found that an overwhelming majority of the writing instructors 163 (94%), applied error codes when responding to students' essays. This finding was partially supported by the results of the content analysis of writing instructors written corrective feedback on learners' essays. Out of a total of 4460 instances of error correction in response to 96 students' essays, I found 88 (2%) instances of error codes (e.g. *sp.* for spelling errors & *gr.* for grammar errors) being used in response to upper intermediate and advanced students' written assignments. It is worth reminding the reader that the advanced students received more error codes because the writing instructor believed that by doing so, the learners would refer back to them and ask for some clarification- an opportunity the instructor reported would seize

to have a face to face conference with the learners. Some studies (e.g. Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Robb et al., 1986) did not find any differences in learners' written accuracy with regard to coded and un-coded options while other studies (e.g. Hong, 2004; Sampson, 2012; Omar, 2014) found coded error correction to be more effective in improving learners' written accuracy. However, Al Ajmi (2015) found in the Omani context that oral metalinguistic tutorials along with written corrective feedback helped improve learner accuracy of prepositions- a finding that was supported by Masourizadeh and Abdullah (2002) and Anderson (2010). Moreover, there were 39 (1%) instances of brief grammatical descriptions in response to intermediate students' essays because it was a mid-term test and it was apparent that the writing instructor was very much concerned about clarifying some of the grammatical points which might had not been quite clear to the students. Further, the students in my context were asked to keep exam paper in their portfolios so that they can prepare for future exams later in the term.

6.3.4 Teacher-learner conference

In my context, I found that an overwhelming majority of the writing instructors 146 (84%) conducted individual teacher-student conferences and a large percentage 131 (75%) of them conducted group conferences. Teacher- learner conferences have been found effective (e.g. Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Khansir & Hozhabri, 2014; Atati & Alipour, 2012) because they provide immediate corrective feedback, though they require some spare time form the instructor. Erlam et al (2013) found that guided feedback and having individual conferences with learners where they are provided with metalinguistic explanation and only gave the correct form away as a last resort, helped learners self-correct their own errors. Moreover, the Activity theory asserts that learning is mediated through all the parties involved (i.e. learner and teacher). Further, according to Vygotsky's

(1978) zone of proximal development, meaning should be constructed through a dialogue between the learner and the teacher. Compared with this growing but far from conclusive body of research on the written feedback strategies of writing instructors, virtually no research has investigated the effect of feedback strategies, such as teacher–student conferences (Bitchener et al, 2005). My study in this sense has contributed to the body of literature on teacher-learner conferences. On the other hand, this finding was partially supported by the content analysis of teacher written corrective feedback on learners' essays in my study which revealed that only two intermediate students and three upper intermediate students out of a total of 96 students, were actually asked to meet with their instructor for conferencing which might have been either conducted individually or in a group depending on the issues to be discussed and the contextual factors of conferencing such as the aim of the conference, writing instructors' time, and level of learners' English language proficiency. The instructors left side notes on the essays with an abbreviation of *AA*, an abbreviation well known among writing instructors and learners at the Language Center which referred to Academic Advising- another term for conferencing. Based on the content analysis, I found that there were a number of reasons the writing instructor asked intermediate students for a conference such as if their writing was below the benchmark total number of words- which was 150 words, the essay needed more details, did not answer the question or the essay was off topic. As for the upper intermediate students, their essays had loads of grammar and mechanism errors, missing verbs, and lack of supporting details. It might be obvious that linguistic accuracy and mechanism received more attention from the writing instructors given the fact that the data were collected from the Language Center which aims to prepare learners for their specialisations by equipping them

with all the tools that they need which will enable them to produce grammatically accurate texts in English.

Although Academic Advising can provide scaffolding and extra help for learners, the college should provide a safe space for learners to discuss any issues with the instructor away from the eyes of the students who might be judgmental to one another. However, in my context, the writing instructors do not have private offices but rather share an office with other writing instructors as well- an aspect that might intimidate some learners in particular those who cannot speak English well. As a result, some students might not respond to their instructors' request to meet them privately. Instead, the writing instructors might spare some time at the end of the class to discuss any issues related to the written feedback (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005)- but it is important that the administration of the college permits and allocates some time for the instructors for such conduct which I will highlight in my proposed model. Moreover, the writing instructors should have a clear plan of the logistics of conducting conferences as when, how and where to have those meetings, the aim or topic of the conference, and the dynamics of the dialogue (e.g. writing instructor being less directive and let the learner get engaged) prior to the meeting.

Having said that, one of the drawbacks of conferences might be the fact that learners bring with them diverse cultures that might affect the way they conference and the way their teachers respond to them (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990). It is a common practice in the Omani culture that when an older person speaks, young people do not say anything but listen and obey what they are told to do as part of being courteous. Hence, first year students at college might feel

intimidated when they are asked to meet the writing instructor privately, let alone the limited skills they have in speaking English with an expert. As a result, I suggest that contextual and culture specific factors should be taken into consideration when conferences are applied.

6.3.5 Instructor focus of WCF

I found that an absolute majority of the writing instructors in the sample of my study 171 (99%) in the online survey focused on cohesion, 171 (98%) focused on coherence, punctuation, clarity of the content and use of the right vocabulary, and organisation, 170 (98%) of them focused on grammar, 169 (97%) of them focused on spelling and 167 (96%) of them focused on word choice. It is rather apparent that the writing instructors felt that all aspects of writing are of similar importance and that they would respond to all the above mentioned aspects fairly equally. These findings were partially supported by the results of content analysis of teacher written corrective feedback on a sample of students' essays. For instance, I found that 28 (28%) of writing instructors' end comments and 19 (26%) of their marginal comments focused on fixing grammar, spelling and mechanism errors. It was only the teacher of intermediates students who responded to students' ideas a few times. Similarly, Lucero et al (2018), Furneaux et al (2007) and Montgomery and Baker (2007) found that writing instructors' error correction focused on grammar and mechanism. In fact, throughout my career, I noticed that Omani learners studying English struggled with verb formation (e.g., errors in verb tense, passive constructions, modal constructions, etc), subject-verb agreement, mechanism, spelling, prepositions, verb-less sentences, pronouns, articles, nouns (e.g. countable/uncountable), plural formation, finding the right word that fits the topic of the essay and simply constructing a sentence correctly and meaningfully. Since written corrective feedback by definition is grammar

correction (Truscott, 1996; 2007), the findings in my study in this regard might not be surprising because the sample of the students and writing instructors were selected from the Language Center (LC) where language accuracy is prioritised over content and communication of ideas. Another reason for writing instructors' focus on grammar and mechanical errors could be because learners use digital tools to spell check or look up the meaning of a word as I recall from experience. However, technology can be misleading sometimes and might not always help L2 learners. Collocation, preposition and choosing the exact word that fits grammatically and contextually into the essay are some of the areas that need scaffolding and the intervention and assistance of an expert (Vygotsky, 1978). Further, L2 student papers contain excessive grammatical and lexical inaccuracies by the standards of English-speaking academic readers (Ferris, 2002a) which urges instructors to correct all the errors. The writing instructors in my context might be consciously or subconsciously responding to students' preferences as research has proven that L2 learners prefer lots of comments (e.g., Leki, 2006), in particular on grammar and mechanism (e.g., Cohen, 1987). It was obvious to me from the content analysis that the instructors noticed a relatively large range of errors (e.g. grammar, spelling, mechanics, content) in learners' writing but because they should cover a rather large number of elements on the writing course outline, they tend to overlook those errors and carry on teaching and covering the rest of the syllabus without revisiting those grammatical points or providing more practice on grammatical rules. Ideally speaking, L2 writing instructors can maximise the efficacy of written corrective feedback by investigating and analysing students' needs at the start of the term based on individual student situations rather than making assumptions about the whole class in general- a procedure that might need the cooperation of the college's

authority. Further, there seems to be some kind of pressure on the writing instructors to assess learners on a continuous basis due to the macro contextual factors demanded by the community at large (e.g. satisfying learners & their parents) and local higher education policies (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Consequently, there is a gap between written corrective feedback follow up techniques and the new writing assignment that needs to be completed and assessed to complete the writing cycle of the course.

6.3.6 Written commentary

Before I start discussing this section, I would like to give the reader an overarching view of the essays I analysed along with teachers' written error correction and commentary. For instance, I found that upper intermediate students seemed to struggle in writing because they had to write a rather difficult genre making comparisons and contrasts between villages and cities. It is difficult to write a comparison and contrast essay in a first language let alone in a foreign language no matter how much feedback L2 learners might receive. Further, it should be noted that it is very difficult, to train students to use structures such as those being used for the purposes of writing comparisons and contrasts because such structures might impose threats to students' writing abilities and their self-confidence as L2 learners. Further, I noticed that intermediate students received the highest number of error correction and teacher commentary because the essays they produced were in response to a mid term exam and they had no access to dictionaries nor they could ask the writing instructor or other classmates for extra help and support. It is important to mention that I found that some of the errors went unnoticed by some writing instructors while some writing instructors corrected sentences which were grammatically perfect- Ferris (2006), Lee, I. (2004) and Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) reported that teacher error correction is

inconsistent and inaccurate. Such inconsistency in my context could be due to the fact that the writing instructors were tired and the fact that writing instructors were bombarded with a lot of administrative duties in addition to dealing with large numbers of students per writing class in a limited time span over the term.

Analysis of the data from the online survey in my study revealed that an absolute majority of the sample 165 (95%) wrote comments on students' essays. This finding was consolidated by the content analysis of teacher written corrective feedback on learners' essays where I found that out of the 194 comments in all the four classes, half of those comments 100 (51%) were end comments and 74 (39%) were marginal comments. Further, there was a small proportion of 20 (10%) comments which were a combination of end and marginal comments. Some writing instructors prefer to write the general comments at the beginning of the composition, probably with the intention that students focus their attention on those comments from the beginning (Ferris, 2007). Ferris adds that when the writing instructor provides marginal comments, it shows that they are interested readers who are conversing with the learner. Further, an absolute majority of the writing instructors 142 (82%) reported in the survey that they wrote imperatives, while a large percentage of the sample 119 (68%) wrote complete sentences and 106 (61%) wrote comments in the form of questions. This finding was supported by the content analysis of teacher written corrective feedback where I found that the instructors wrote imperatives (e.g. 12 end comments & six marginal comments) as they requested more details to support the ideas in an essay. Further, I found that there were 13 (18%) question marks as marginal comments on learners' essays without any questions or any sort of information as what the error was. Nurmukhamedov and Kim (2010) found in a Japanese context that

imperatives led to substantial change in learners' written accuracy and recommend that writing instructors use a variety of comment types according to the students' background. In my opinion, inserting question marks between sentences might be inadequate because it neither guides the learner nor informs them of the error. Rather, question marks make learners more confused and they might end up ignoring the written commentary all together. I suggest that writing instructors should be cautious when constructing questions. It may not have been clear to some of the student writers how to respond to these sorts of comments, because question marks do not explicitly ask or tell the student to do something. Min (2013) found that students are frustrated with teacher written feedback when it is illegible, cryptic (e.g. single-word questions) and confusing (e.g. unclear questions). Further, Moxley (1989) suggested that writing instructors should avoid using abstract language because students are not professional copy-editors. There is an obvious need for more fuller comments if writing instructors want their feedback to be taken seriously by their learners. While imperatives and complete sentences might give learners some sort of direction and guidance as how to fix the error and improve their writing next time, questions might produce more confusion. Moreover, questions might require more clarification and face to face interaction with the learner so that they can understand the problem and figure out ways of solving it- otherwise questions might be mere waste of time and effort. Hence, it seems essential that writing instructors should evaluate their own questioning strategies, asking themselves whether the question itself is really necessary, whether it will improve the written assignment and whether providing the feedback in another form would be more effective. I believe that reflecting constantly on their own practice helps writing instructors refine their

pedagogical methods- something I believe should be part of the writing instruction teaching agenda.

Further, I found from the online survey that an absolute majority of the writing instructors 163 (93%) wrote comments in the form of evaluative expressions. This finding was supported by the content analysis of instructors' written corrective feedback on learner essays which revealed that slightly more than half of the writing instructors' end-comments 51 (51%) were positive evaluative expressions (e.g. *Excellent*) as opposed to ten (14%) positive evaluative expressions as marginal comments. Further, there were four (4%) negative end comments (e.g. *Too short*) as opposed to three (4%) negative marginal comments. It could be that one of the causes behind writing evaluative expressions in my context was due to large class size. However, Grami (2004) found in the Saudi context that learners neither liked insincere praise nor plain criticism. I personally believe that instead of writing negative comments, instructors can ask the learner to fix the problem (e.g. ask to provide more ideas, provide some examples). Further, due to practical time constraints, most instructors offer only perfunctory comments such as "well-written", "poorly organised", or "awkward wording" on the majority of student papers (Pan, 2010, p.58). However, he questions whether such comments help L2 writers in any significant way- other than a confidence boost as I think. Further, such stock positive evaluative comments, can be interpreted by developing writers to mean, 'Leave this part alone, I like it' or 'Your text is complete' (McGarrell & Verbeem, 2007, p.233-234). Hyland and Hyland (2001) add that praise can reinforce appropriate language behaviour, foster rapport and foster students' self-esteem while Hattie, and Timperley (2007) claim that praise

might have little if any effect on learner accuracy because it carries little information about learners' performance.

Further, an absolute majority of the writing instructors 167 (95%) reported in the online survey that they praised their students' essays. This finding was supported by content analysis of instructors' written commentary on learners' essays as I found some comments (e.g. *drawing a star for the learner, this is a great improvement, this has to be the best writing you have ever done*). Hyland and Hyland (2001) found that praise was the most frequently employed function in the feedback of two instructors in response to six L2 students' writing, but that it was used to soften criticism and suggestions rather than simply respond to good work. However, the authors caution instructors that at early stages of the L2 writing process, premature praise may actually confuse students and discourage revisions. The authors also found that by combining patterns of praise–criticism, criticism–suggestion, and praise–criticism–suggestion, and through use of hedges, question forms, and personal attribution, the writing instructors in their study sought to enhance their relationship with learners, minimise the threat of judgement, and mitigate the full force of their criticisms and suggestions.

Reformulation I found that reformulation was among the least used types of written corrective feedback by the writing instructors in my study since less than half of the sample 78 (45%) reported in the online survey that they actually re-wrote some of the students' sentences to make them sound more meaningful. This finding was further consolidated by the content analysis of teacher written corrective feedback on a sample of essays where I found 79 (2%) instances of reformulation in the entire corpus. Ferris (2010) argues that some writing

instructors might not embrace reformulation as a pedagogical technique because it puts writing instructors' words into students' mouths (or pens or word processors) and that it might be anti-ethical as it might underestimate learners' confidence and motivation to express their own ideas. In fact, I found that the majority of reformulation instances (50) were in response to intermediate students' sentences and (24) instances were used in response to upper intermediate students' errors. It could be that those two instructors in particular believed in the efficacy of reformulation along with other teacher-related factors (e.g. past learning and teaching experiences, tacit beliefs). This finding was supported by Qi and Lapkin (2001) who stated that early studies (e.g. Cohen, 1982, Cohen, 1983a, Cohen, 1983b) found that learners at intermediate levels and above seem to benefit from reformulation and that L2 writers benefited from it in such aspects as vocabulary, syntax, and paragraphing, as well as cohesion. It is worthy to mention that evidence on the efficacy of reformulation is inconclusive as Qi and Lapkin (2001) found that learners with higher levels of L2 proficiency might be more accepting to reformulation while Sachs and Polio (2007) found error correction to be more helpful in the short term than reformulation. Further, Santos, Lopez-Serrano, and Manchon (2010) found that direct error correction was more effective than reformulation when they applied both types to ESL Spanish school students' stories.

Based on the quantitative and qualitative findings in my study, I can safely claim that written corrective feedback and teacher commentary was useful in improving learners' writing in my study in particular with regard to beginners and advanced students. Hence, my finding contradicts with Truscott (1996; 2007) views that written corrective feedback is harmful to the learner. My claim is based on the

fact that Beginners had fewer errors because they benefited from practicing writing on a similar topic earlier in the term as their writing instructor reported. Thus, they were familiar with the format and genre (*describing countries*) in which they produced the essays I examined in my research. Further, the advanced students seemed to be more confident and had a better mastery over the language because they had been prepared and trained in their previous terms as how to write accurately.

6.4 Summary of Chapter Six

In summary, the current chapter provided a deeper understanding of written corrective feedback (WCF) in higher education institutions in the Omani context. The chapter aimed at providing a clearer picture of writing instructors' attitudes and practice with regard to written corrective feedback. I discussed the fact that the writing instructors perceived written response as useful and that error correction was the responsibility of the writing instructor. Moreover, I discussed the issue of providing effective error correction to learners and the challenges that instructors faced in feedback provision. Further, I discussed the reasons behind instructors' focus on grammar, spelling and mechanism and the fact that most of the written commentary was evaluative expressions and praise as opposed to reformulation. The coming chapter is a presentation of my recommendations to future researchers, policy makers and practitioners in alignment with the findings of my study.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This chapter is intended to present a brief summary of the findings which provide answers to the three main research questions investigated in the current study. This chapter also provides a discussion of some of the significant implications for practitioners and policy makers to improve written corrective feedback (WCF) practices in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Oman. Moreover, it provides recommendations to future researchers and concludes with limitations of the study.

7.2 Key findings of the study

Written corrective feedback (WCF) is one of the most controversial areas in the field of L2 teaching and learning. The body of literature and empirical studies have resulted in inconclusive and rather mixed findings. My study which aimed at investigating Omani EFL writing instructors' attitudes on written corrective feedback, the types of written corrective feedback that they provided in response to learners' essays, and whether instructors' written response varied according to learners' level of English proficiency, has come up with a number of fascinating findings.

First, with regard to my first research question on writing instructors' attitudes of written corrective feedback, I found that Omani English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instructors reported in the online survey that written corrective feedback was interesting, useful, was an important skill for the writing instructors to master and that it had an impact on learners' written accuracy and on the development of their methods of error correction as writing instructors. Further,

they did not believe that there was one single method of written corrective feedback that can be considered as effective but that instructors should follow some guidelines to make written feedback effective (WCF). Moreover, they believed that some factors such as learners' attitudes towards written corrective feedback, time constraint and workload made responding to learners' written assignments rather challenging. Further, almost all the instructors reported that they applied comprehensive (i.e. correcting all errors on an essay) and direct (i.e. providing the correct form of the word for the learner) WCF. Moreover, they applied a number of other methods of written corrective feedback in particular oral discussion of the most common errors found in students' essays with the whole class, teacher-learner conferences and following the marking rubrics provided by the institution they worked at. On the other hand, the instructors reported that they rarely applied reformulation, emails and WhatsApp as methods of written response. Moreover, they reported that they focused on a number of writing aspects when they responded to students' essays such as coherence, punctuation, cohesion, clarity of the content, use of the right vocabulary that fits the context of the writing task, organisation, grammar, spelling and word choice.

My second research question investigated the types of written corrective feedback (WCF) Omani English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instructors applied when they actually responded to students' written assignments. Based on the content analysis of instructors' written corrective feedback on a sample of 96 essays, I found that the instructors gave comprehensive written corrective feedback (i.e. correcting all the errors) and indirect written corrective feedback (i.e. indicating that the learner made an error by e.g. underlining/circling/crossing out the error without providing the correct answer). This finding is not in alignment

with what they reported in the online survey that they applied direct written corrective feedback. Moreover, most of the written commentary done by the instructors was in the form of evaluative expressions and focused on fixing errors related to spelling, grammar and mechanisms. It could be that the writing instructors need to strike a balance between local (e.g. spelling) and global (e.g. content) errors in their written response to students' essays. One way to achieve such balance can be through reflective journals and think aloud protocols.

My third research question investigated whether the writing instructors' written corrective feedback (WCF) varied based on learners' current level of English. Though the instructors reported in the online survey that they responded to learners' errors based on their current level of English language, content analysis of students' essays revealed that the instructors provided comprehensive (i.e. correcting all the errors) and indirect written corrective feedback (i.e. indicating that an error has been made but without providing the correct answer) to all the learners regardless of learners' level of proficiency in English. However, I found from the content analysis that the instructors tended to use error codes (e.g. sp. to flag out errors in spelling) to respond to upper intermediate and advanced students' written assignments while they applied direct written corrective feedback (i.e. providing the correct form of the word) to beginners and intermediate students more frequently.

7.3 My theory of sustainable WCF

Based on reading the literature on written corrective feedback and based on the findings of my study and my own critical evaluation of the problems being raised by the Omani English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instructors in my study, I developed my own theory of sustainable written corrective feedback. I

would like to mention that some aspects of the model (e.g. teacher tacit beliefs, student characteristics) will need further exploration and development which would usefully form the basis of future work. In my study, I asked a sample of 174 Omani EFL writing instructors at tertiary institutions about the methods they used in responding to learners' written assignments. However, I now realise that I should have asked them about their tacit beliefs in order to better understand their choice of certain methods over others when they responded to learners' written assignments. Moreover, I think that it is important to investigate learners' characteristics because they might justify teachers' written corrective feedback practice- an area that might be addressed by future researchers.

I can safely assume based on the findings of my study that some Omani English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instructors at higher education institutions might have different views regarding the current practice of written corrective feedback. Consequently, I came up with my own model to eliminate any challenges Omani writing instructors might face (Figure 7.1 below).

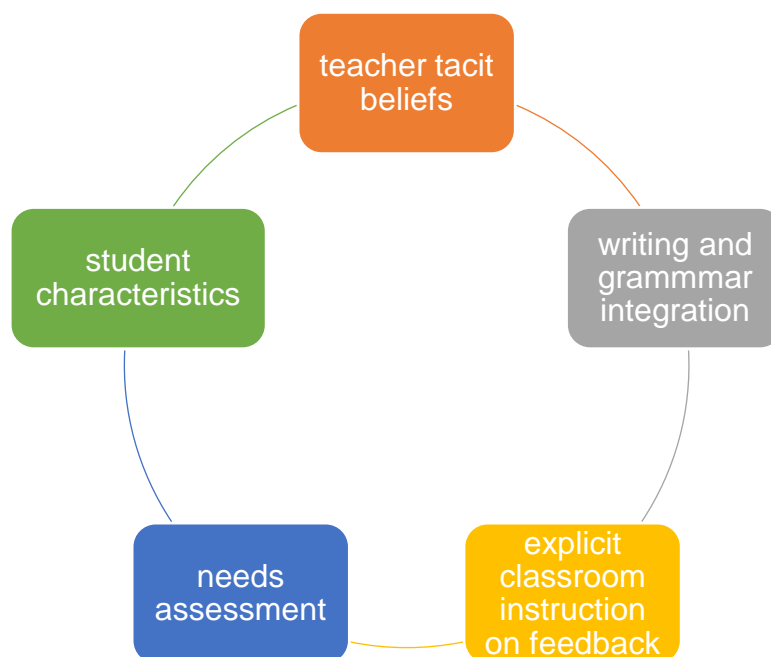


Figure 7.1 Model of sustainable written corrective feedback

My theory is based on the notion that every action by a human being is derived by some beliefs, some of which might be hidden in the form of tacit beliefs. These tacit beliefs might not be brought to the surface by certain methods of data collection such as closed ended surveys. Rather, they can be articulated through reflective techniques that can help researchers dig deeper into instructors' justification of the written corrective feedback methods they currently use and/or any other methods they would like to use if they had the time and freedom to do so. My belief is supported by Hyland and Hyland (2001) who discuss that the ways instructors judge writing and define their role when giving feedback are influenced by their belief systems.

I would like to remind the reader of the current practice of L2 writing and feeding back in my context (Refer to Figure 2.1) where the writing instructor starts the class with a writing prompt, followed by an oral discussion and learners produce their essays. They receive their essays being corrected followed by a new topic or genre being started. The cycle goes on throughout the term leaving no room for conferencing neither inside the classroom or during writing instructors' office hours, nor revisiting the previously taught topic that learners seemed to struggle most with or learning strategies that might help learners deal with similar situations in future assignments. The way the writing session is carried out currently might seem less professional- I am not criticising the hard work of Omani instructors but I am describing the situation through my own critical perspective. As a result, it might be obvious that there is a loop in the feedback practice and that there is one last step missing in Omani writing instructors' practice before they start a new writing topic and in some cases it could be the start of a new genre with all its requirements and linguistic and cognitive demands. I believe that Omani English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing instructors should stop

and pause and provide more teaching wherever the need arises. But due to time constraint and large class size, Omani instructors might carry on teaching without having the time to reflect and amend their practice. Black and William, reviewed 578 publications relating to the role of assessment in learning and concluded that classroom assessment

“typically encourages superficial and rote learning, concentrating on recall of isolated details, usually items of knowledge which pupils soon forget . . . teachers do not generally review the assessment questions that they use and do not discuss them critically with peers, so there is little reflection on what is being assessed” (1998, p. 17).

Hattie and Timperley (2007) add that instructors too often see assessment feedback as making statements about students, not about their teaching. What mostly concerns me as an academic is the absence of any class time dedicated to explaining and justifying the scores and the written corrective feedback nor revisiting and teaching again some of the problematic grammatical areas that arise from the students' essays. How about teacher-learner conferences as follow up methods after the assignments are being marked? Out of 96 students who participated in my study, only five students were asked to meet the writing instructor. This gap in writing instructors' assessment practice might need to be addressed by the college's administration. For instance, it might reduce the workload and all the unnecessary administrative duties that the writing instructors have to do. It might also start recruiting teacher assistants who can take care of the administrative duties in order to allow some space for the writing instructors to mark written assignments with more cautious. I believe that through teacher-learner conferencing, the writing instructor can discuss the learners' writing

problems on a more individual level where the learner's awareness is directed into more effective learning and writing strategies. Further, the writing instructor can take advantage of those sessions to help those students who need special care and attention with their writing skills and strategies. The questions that might need to be addressed are whether or not the Omani writing instructors have considered students who might be dyslexic or are adults and are struggling to cope with the demands of the writing course. Are the writing instructors aware that such students might be suffering on their own and that they might be labelled as lazy or weak students? I believe that having a needs assessment test at the start of the term can help identify such cases and provide learners with the necessary help and support they need during the term- Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) provide a checklist for assessing learners' strengths, style and preferences in a writing course. It is rather rare that a teacher is blessed with a class of equal proficiency level and ability for learning (Long, 1983)- which means that mixed ability classrooms should be taken into consideration and different standards of performance should be accepted and accommodated. Further, teacher-learner conferences available at college can be useful sources for the writing instructor because such sessions can be inspiring and reflective of teachers' current teaching practices which might need amendment in particular if they do not work well with the current cohort that they teach. If Omani writing instructors continue responding to students' essays the way they do currently (i.e. correcting all errors on essays), they would definitely continue complaining that students repeat the same errors that have been corrected previously- which means that the writing instructors might be contributing to the dilemma they reported in the survey of my study and would blame learners that they do not make use of teacher written corrective feedback. As a result, it seems that

whether writing instructors are aware or not- they are the ones who are making their own feedback practices ineffective and a total waste of time. I would like to point out that I am not promoting Truscott's notion (1996, 2007) to abandon error correction altogether but that maybe Omani writing instructors should start applying selective feedback methods (i.e. correcting few errors) rather than applying comprehensive indirect error correction (i.e. marking and correcting all the errors) on learners' essays and doing that for eternity while complaining that learners do not take learning seriously- which is clearly a vicious circle.

The current L2 writing and written response situation in the Omani context can be summarised as follows: "give students more information, more tasks, and more expectations" (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p.90). It is important to flag out that I am not placing any blame on the writing instructors for not investing more effort after returning students' essays back as currently they are confined to a time frame where they have to cover the agenda on the course outline, prepare and mark exams and do other administrative duties at college. Personally, I believe that guidance and teacher-learner dialogue form an important part of the instructional process. Teacher-learner dialogue which is a process that was first coined by Mulliner and Tucker (2017), "engages students more meaningfully in the assessment and feedback process and facilitates the development of student self-regulation" (Chong, 2018, p.267). In this process there is a closer relationship between the teacher and the learners' needs, and that students should take ownership of their learning by transferring the feedback they receive into learning resources that would benefit their learning. Ideally speaking, Omani writing instructors can take learners' errors as information about what is and what is not understood and to reflect on their own current assessment practice so that the current scenario changes in the Omani context and learners become more self-

regulated. Self-regulation has been defined by Carless as “an active, constructive process whereby learners set goals for their learning and then attempt to monitor, regulate, and control their cognition” (2011, p. 396). I think that written corrective feedback should be dialogic so that it can take students’ feedback, worries and questions into consideration as a bridge to close the gap between giving feedback and introducing another writing genre. Hyland and Hyland (2001), for instance, found that students vary considerably in what they want from their writing instructors in terms of the form of feedback. According to them, while some students valued positive comments very highly, others simply discounted them as merely mitigation devices. Further, Hyland and Hyland (2015) found that written corrective feedback was more effective when teachers had a thorough understanding of learners’ background and beliefs- which Omani writing instructors should consider when responding to learners’ written assignments. Moreover, I suggest that Omani writing instructors start gearing their efforts towards sustainable feedback- which according to Carless the term refers to “enhancing the student role to generate, interpret and engage with feedback; and developing congruence between guidance and feedback by orchestrating teaching and learning environments in which productive dialogue arises from core module learning activities” (2011, p. 397). In this regard, writing instructors might need to ask their learners about their learning preferences through needs analysis at the start of the term so that they can tailor their feedback strategies according to learners’ needs, learners’ learning styles and learning strategies. It is worthy to mention that in second language writing, each instructor may feel more comfortable with a specific way of giving written corrective feedback according to their beliefs about how languages are learnt and taught, and their students, likewise, have their own preferred way of being assisted in learning to

write (Tran, 2013). To this end, I believe that taking into consideration learner characteristics and integrating writing and grammar in one blended course might lead to sustainable written corrective feedback.

7.3.1 Theoretical framework of my model

The main motivation of my proposed model is my belief that the components in my proposed model can have an impact on the practice and research of written corrective feedback in order to achieve sustainable feedback- which according to Carless, Salter, Yang, and Lam (2011) have not been widely reported in the literature. It has been argued that feedback is sometimes based too much on what the teacher wants to say, rather than on students' needs and interests (Carless, 2016). Personally, I am not certain how the current practice of written corrective feedback might help L2 learners move forward in the Omani English as a foreign Language (EFL) context if writing instructors cover the essays in red and write on them solo evaluative expressions (e.g. Good, Excellent) leaving no room for any follow up techniques (e.g. conferencing, revisiting past grammatical areas) to ensure the efficacy of their error correction practice, nor taking into consideration learners' needs that can be addressed by many techniques and not specifically through comprehension error correction (i.e. correcting all the errors).

On a broader and macro level, my model is based on socio-cultural theories by Vygotsky and the Activity Theory which urge taking the main elements of education including the teacher, the learner and the learning environment into consideration. Further, it is based on Interactionist views and that there are some internal and external learner factors that can affect the extent to which learners in fact pay attention to written corrective feedback. Moreover, it is based on the theories of Error Analysis (EA) which according to Corder (1983) can be used to

determine what a learner still needs to be taught. Corder's (1983) paper discusses his views on the significance of learners' errors. He claims that by paying attention to learners' errors, teachers can better understand learners' needs and stop assuming that only teachers know what to learn and when to learn it. Corder adds that errors can be significant in three ways: they tell the teacher how far the student has come and what they still need to learn, they give researchers evidence of how language is learnt (i.e. strategies and procedures used) and they are a device the learner uses to test hypotheses of the language they are learning. He proceeds to say that educators might allow learners' innate strategies dictate pedagogy, determine syllabus, and adapt themselves to learners' needs. Hence, if Omani writing instructors can find out the sources of errors in their students' writing, they might improve their practice of written corrective feedback by prioritising certain errors in their written response to students' essays. More specifically and on a micro level, my proposed model is based on two previous works in the literature of written corrective feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Carless, 2016). My model is partially based on Hattie and Timperley's (2007) model which appeared in their paper entitled *The power of feedback*. According to them, effective feedback should answer three major questions asked by a teacher and/or by a student. These questions are: *Where am I going? (i.e. What are the goals?)*, *How am I going? (i.e. What progress is being made toward the goal?)*, and *Where to next? (i.e. What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?)*. For the purpose of my own theory, I am interested in the last question in their model which is 'Where to next?' or in their so called *feed-forward* question and what the student can do better in the next task. They claim that in order to achieve that, learners should be given some guidance through certain channels such as learner-teacher conference, and

needs assessment tests so that they can meet the writing instructor's expectations and promote learner self-regulation. Third my model is based on Carless (2016) discussion on dialogic feedback which can feed back into future assignments. (Refer to section 3.4.1 for more details). Based on the above discussion, comes the importance of considering my model in the Omani context. My model can be the base for future decisions on written corrective feedback executed by Omani policy makers, syllabus designers, assessment committees and writing instructors as well as future researchers. Having said that, I am aware that some of these suggestions in my proposed model might not be applicable to the current Omani educational scenario due to some constraints such as large class size and time constraint as well as other policy-related issues. I conclude my discussion by referring to Pring (2004) who states that research should focus on the quality of learning, the manner in which it takes place, how it transforms the learner, and the relationship between the teacher and the learner.

7.3.2 How my model works

My model has five component: teacher tacit beliefs, writing and grammar integration, explicit classroom instruction on written corrective feedback, student characteristics and needs assessment. Throughout my thesis, I suggested the importance of integrating writing and grammar in one blended course rather than teaching them separately. Moreover, in order to find out instructors' preference of certain methods of written corrective feedback, researchers need to investigate teachers' tacit beliefs- which is an area that is beyond the scope of the current thesis but can provide valuable insight for future researchers.

The ability to write well in academic settings can be a crucial factor for student success in postsecondary education and beyond. However, rather than teaching Omani learners about cohesion, coherence, topic and concluding sentences, organisation and thesis statements, the different conventions with regard to the spelling of words in British English versus American English- though they might be important aspects of a good academic writing, Omani writing instructors should teach learners how to write grammatically correct and meaningful essays at tertiary institutions. Once learners can somehow master grammar, they can be then introduced to more sophisticated aspects of the language. Currently, some Omani students might not take instructors' error correction and commentary into consideration. Hence, if written corrective feedback is not used to be acted upon, then I am afraid to say that the current practice of written corrective feedback in the Omani context might be merely a waste of time and effort. Moreover, Omani instructors might need to change their response techniques and include follow up methods in order to make an impact in learners' writing experience. The expectation is that writing instructors should give explicit classroom instruction on how to revise a written assignment and take instructors' suggestions and commentary on board (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Further, Omani writing instructors can get information and feedback on certain issues such as the content of the writing course, teacher pedagogy and assessment methods. Such information can help instructors provide meaningful and effective written corrective feedback. Moreover, I think that writing instruction and assessment should be tightly linked to syllabus design, lesson planning, task and assignment development and feedback processes. Further, student characteristics (e.g. age, motivation, past learning experiences) should be taken into consideration when responding to students' written assignments. Ferris and

Hedgcock (2005) state that students' L1 and L2 literacy skills can provide the basic information about their learning styles and study habits. Further, the authors make a distinction between the needs and skills of traditional students (i.e. fresh graduates from schools) and non-traditional students (i.e. returning students who have joined the work force right after school for personal and family reasons). Such factors can have a direct impact on learners' motivation, participation, confidence, and level of performance in the writing classroom as I have discussed in Chapter Three. In order to take learner factors into account, writing instructors can use deductive needs assessment tools (e.g. attitude tests and surveys) designed for gathering information (Berwick, 1989). These tests and surveys help investigate the needs felt by the learners and needs ascribed to them by the administration of the programme or the college. The data analysis from these surveys can be used to organise workshops for writing instructors and to amend writing assessment strategies and techniques to suit the needs of the learners and the goals of the institution. Moreover, needs assessment can be used as a tool by syllabus designers when designing the course activities, too, because it consists of "procedures for identifying and validating needs and establishing priorities among them" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005, p. 73).

7.3.3 Who can benefit from my model in the Omani context

Based on my reading in the literature review, there seem to be theoretical disagreements and conflicting research findings concerning written corrective feedback as well as a wide gap among research, theory, and real-world practice. From a theoretical or research perspective, there are ongoing disagreements about methodology, terminology, and interpretation of results while real-world writing instructors struggle to help their students write more effectively, and, in many cases, students fail to meet practical goals because of their lack of progress

in producing more linguistically accurate texts. My model will not solve all the problems and controversies in the area of written corrective feedback, but it attempts to bridge the gap between theory and practice.

Let me provide the reader with some more details as how my model can be used to serve L2 writing practitioners, higher education institutions and future researchers. First, I believe that my model can be used as a tool to improve current L2 writing pedagogy. For instance, teacher-learner interaction through follow up methods such as needs assessment at the start of the term and learner-teacher individual conferencing after marking the written assignment can detect any lack of knowledge in learners' language. In such cases, instructors can provide learners with more instruction rather than give them more feedback which might be overwhelming to the learner. Further, writing instructors can devise activities and questions that can provide them with information about the effectiveness of their own teaching so that they can find out what to do next by reflecting on their own practice. Further, if writing instructors are asked to edit essays for grammatical errors, then it would be more convenient that they are the ones who teach both the writing as well as the grammar course for the same cohort so that learners can make connections between the two courses. Such integration between the two courses can build on students' schemata and facilitate the writing output. The skill acquisition theory promotes that making connections between previous and new knowledge which can be accessed by memory retrieval and the cognitive skills and knowledge can in fact promote learner autonomy. From my own experience, I used to question what grammatical points the students had covered so far in their grammar class so that I can introduce the new writing topic to my students in the writing course- though I had

a course outline provided by the university where I worked, but for various reasons, some of my colleagues might have been at different teaching points. Hence, may be it is time that higher education institutions in Oman consider merging and integrating grammar and writing into one course. Personally, I believe that because grammar is taught in isolation, learners might not make any sense of it and do not apply the rules they learn there when they write their essays, because to them, writing and grammar are two separate courses and it might have not been brought to their awareness that both courses complement each other. Further, writing instructors should explain their methods of written corrective feedback to learners to eliminate any high expectations from learners and to help them understand the instructors' intentions for responding in a certain manner. Further, I believe that in-service training programmes can help Omani writing instructors develop effective response strategies if their current ones do not seem to have any impact on learners' written accuracy. Further, I recommend incorporating written corrective feedback strategies into undergraduate programmes at universities in Oman before instructors start theorising their own practices in the field- which might be rather difficult to replace in in-service-training programmes. However, unless the Omani writing instructors who are in the field unlearn their old methods which do not work for the current situation, be reflective on their teaching practice, and listen to the needs of their students, there might be no hope in training the instructors at first place. Here, I emphasise the importance of teacher reflection so that Omani writing instructors can assess, evaluate, and adjust their current written response practice according to the current needs of their learners.

Second, my model can serve policy makers and the administration body at higher education institutions in Oman. For instance, they can run needs assessment tests at the start of the term to find out learners' needs and preferences for all types of learners (e.g. young vs. adult). Taking that into consideration, I suggest that course coordinators design marking rubrics and course outlines for young learners and another set for adult learners in order to accommodate the needs of each group of students rather than assuming that all students are similar in terms of their characteristics (e.g. learning needs and pace, goals, motivation level, learning styles, background knowledge, writing skills). Further, the completion of different types of writing tasks and genres require different writing skills and knowledge (Yoon, 2018). From experience, my students found narratives more achievable than other genres because they do not require high intellectual thinking and the only challenge they faced was dealing with irregular past tense verbs while argumentative and compare and contrast essays were the most difficult ones because of the linguistic and cognitive demands of such essays. As a result, I believe that using the same rubric to assess all genre types might not be wise in particular given the fact that there are mixed ability students in each writing class. It is worthy to mention that the construct of writing proficiency involves three components (Yoon, 2018). These are the linguistic knowledge (e.g. sentence formation, lexis usage, mechanics), discourse knowledge (e.g. content, organisation, style) and socio-cultural knowledge (e.g. goals, intentions). Hence, a scoring rubric should reflect these components so that the essay scores represent the different components of the writing proficiency. I recommend that Omani course coordinators at the Foundation Programme at tertiary institutions include all the three above mentioned components in the rubrics of assessing

learners' written assignments but that the weighting can be different according to each genre as well as learner factors (i.e. young learners vs. adults).

Third, because my study focused on Omani writing instructors' attitudes and feelings rather than their beliefs, I recommend that future researchers investigate Omani writing instructors' tacit beliefs on areas such as: How should a new language be learnt? How writing instructors give written corrective feedback to learners' written assignments? Who can take the decision as what to teach in terms of writing genre? Should all errors be corrected every time? Which errors should be corrected and how? What is more important for first year Foundation Programme students: content or form? Moreover, I think that tacit beliefs can be best assessed through journal writing, and think aloud protocols where writing instructors can actually verbalise their practice and justify the reason why they apply certain methods of error correction over others- which can be then used as analysis base for tracing instructors' thought processes leading to their tacit beliefs. Qi and Lapkin (2001) state that researchers (e.g., Cohen, 2000, Leow, 1997) have proposed the use of think-aloud protocols as a useful source of information about cognitive processes in L2 research. In fact, the majority of studies have investigated written corrective feedback as a tool of assessment of learning. However, very few (e.g. Ene & Kosobucki, 2016; AISahrani & Storch, 2014; Lee, I., 2004) looked at written corrective feedback as a highly contextualised process and that it was subjective, personal and interpretive. Some studies used interviews (e.g. Carless, 2006), open ended surveys (e.g. Careless, 2006; Straub, 1997), and stimulated recall and lesson observations (e.g. Hyland & Hyland, 2001). By doing that, people's feelings, thoughts and experiences were brought to the foreground. I hope that future researchers

investigate those above mentioned areas and enrich the literature of written corrective feedback.

In the next section, I will present my study's contribution to knowledge and its main implications.

7.4 Key contribution to knowledge

My study has contributed theoretically to the major body of knowledge on written corrective feedback (WCF). I added to the wider body of knowledge that written corrective feedback is useful, and that Omani writing instructors respond to students' written errors according to learners' level of English proficiency. Further, I provided a modified version of Ferris (2007) framework for written commentary as a form of WCF. Further, my study has contributed to the notion of scaffolding developed by Vygotsky (1978) where Omani writing instructors negotiated meaning and grammatical rules by discussing the errors orally with their students. Further, I can claim that while one type of written corrective feedback (WCF) can benefit less advanced students, another type of written corrective feedback (WCF) might benefit more advanced learners. This was evident in the fact that the instructors applied error codes for upper intermediate and advanced students while they applied direct written corrective feedback (WCF) to beginners and intermediate students. Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990); Leki (1991); Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994); Ferris (1995); Truscott (1996) and Guénette (2007) have all agreed that learners expect their writing instructors to mark their errors. The controversial issue is how to maximise the usefulness of written corrective feedback. As a result, I proposed a model for sustainable written corrective feedback.

7.5 Main implications of the study

My study- like many other studies has resulted in contributing to research and practice in the area of written corrective feedback. One of the main implications of my research is that in order to improve the current practices of teacher written response, policy makers at higher education institutions should include practitioners in decision making in particular with regard to student pass rates. In fact, Omani writing instructors at Colleges of Technology reported that they did not have a say in the decisions made at their colleges regarding which students should stay in the same level for one more term and which students should move to the next level. Hence, I think that instructors' views should be taken into consideration and their voice should be heard. By doing so, the writing instructors might not have to spend the rest of their lives correcting errors on students' written assignments due to the fact that the learners were misplaced and did not have the necessary knowledge and skills to be in a higher-level class. In other words, students should be ready for the challenges they will face in a particular level rather than allowing them to move to the next level while they lack essential skills to write accurately in their current level. I am aware that decision making is top-down in the Omani context. However, for the benefit of our community, policies should be changed and a more bottom-up approach should be embraced because the current top down policies by the dean's office and the head of the Language Center at Colleges of Technology might not help the current L2 writing situation in the Omani context. Though they might be academics, they might not have the knowledge and expertise of teaching English as a foreign language which requires attention to many elements of the English language and being knowledgeable about L2 teaching and learning.

7.6 Recommendations of the study

My study has come up with a number of recommendations for policy makers, practitioners (i.e. writing instructors) and future researchers. I will address each in the next section.

7.6.1 Policy makers

This section focuses on presenting the main recommendations of the study at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Oman in particular at Colleges of Technology. I believe that writing instructors should be given some sort of freedom as to what types of written response they prefer and feel are more suitable for a certain class based on instructor-learner factors. Further, I recommend that the number of teaching hours should be reduced so that Omani writing instructors can have some space to examine students' second drafts since an overwhelming majority of 144 (83%) writing instructors out of a total of 174 in my context had to teach 16-20 hours per week. Hence, I believe there is no hope in asking learners produce a second draft if that draft will not get assessed or acted upon due to teacher over workload. According to Moxley (1989), no matter how grounded in theory and research, overloaded teachers can be very tired and find it difficult to respond to more than one draft. He pictures teachers' work in the most beautiful example by saying "in some way, we are like the weary miner who has been digging in the same cave for as long as we can remember." (1989, p.8). Moreover, allowing instructors to breathe from redundant administrative duties can encourage them to reflect on their pedagogy which is in alignment with Lee, I. (2009) who recommends teacher self inquiry of written corrective feedback practice. Moreover, I suggest that teacher preparation programmes at undergraduate degrees raise future Omani writing instructors' awareness towards the fact that currently learners seek scores rather than learn from their

errors and eventually those instructors might change the future reality of the learning culture among young Omanis. In addition, I believe that policy makers should address the question of what tools learners need to enable them produce reports in their specialisations. Maybe heads of all departments at college meet, discuss and come up with a list of potential text types (e.g. writing emails, making project proposals) they expect learners at the Language Centre should produce in order to better prepare them for their majors. Further, I found that very few instructors in my study reported in the online survey that they used social media platforms (e.g. WhatsApp) as means of delivering written corrective feedback. I strongly believe that policy makers should encourage the use of such platforms, otherwise we as a nation might be left behind because we are living in the era of technology. Hence, I am strongly in favour of creating writing blogs, closed groups on Facebook, or other social media platforms so that learners can have a safe space to talk to their writing instructor and classmates about issues of their concern with regard to writing and error correction. I personally do not see any harm if the medium of communication in those platforms was in students' native language (i.e. Arabic) so that they can express their feelings, attitudes and concerns without fearing that they would be judged of how good or otherwise their language was.

Moreover, I suggest that bodies of assessment should be involved in the process of achieving sustainable written corrective feedback. Personally, I believe that policy makers from the Ministry of Higher Education and from the Ministry of Education should hold meetings with the assessment bodies from both parties to come up with pathways of collaboration and provide a stronger foundation to make written corrective feedback more effective for learners by introducing

writing essays to school students from early stages. Further, I recommend that the body of assessment at higher education institutions, for example, make use of the main categories for essay correction (e.g. response to prompt or writing assignment, content, organisation, language and mechanics) being discussed in Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) book. They can add the right scale and weighting of the marks in accordance with learners' factors, and the colleges' criteria and benchmarks as well as the aims and objectives of the foundation programme. Moreover, the number of writing genres per term should be reduced too along with the number of words that students should write in each level which currently ranges from 100-250 words per essay. Currently, students at Colleges of Technology produce 100 words at the beginner stage and 250 words by the time they join advanced level which means that the focus is on the quantity rather than quality of writing. I suggest that students should be encouraged and taught how to write correctly grammatical and meaningful essays rather than constricting them to a number of words they might not be able to produce in real life situations. By doing so, writing instructors might find some spare time to reflect on their practices and learners might not feel that they are hitting a wall. In addition, higher educational institutions in Oman might start to hire some more administrative personnel to do the administrative duties instead of the writing instructors and they might provide some new posts such as writing instructor assistants who can take care of marking students' essays since the focus is on language only.

7.6.2 Practitioners

This section focuses on presenting the main recommendations for L2 writing instructors in the Omani context. For instance, according to the theories of Error Analysis, understanding the sources of learners' errors might make writing instructors more tolerant with students' errors as being part of the learning

journey. Further, writing instructors should be able to implement other pathways of responding to students' essays such as selective written corrective feedback, online blogs and using more social media platforms to give written corrective feedback in a more interactive way than the traditional mono-mode of written corrective feedback. Moreover, they should avoid providing direct correction on all error types when responding to learners' errors because it may deprive their students of valuable opportunities to self-correct their own errors. Further, I recommend that the writing instructors use all methods of written corrective feedback interchangeably rather than focus on comprehensive error correction as their main method of written response. Moreover, there is an obvious need for fuller comments rather than writing single words (e.g. *Excellent*) or simply inserting a question mark with no further information as what is the error or how to fix it.

7.6.3 Further research

My study's findings have paved the path for a number of recommendations for future researchers investigating written corrective feedback. For instance, I suggest that future research should investigate the intentions behind writing instructors' use of unfocused written corrective feedback and the way learners perceive this type of corrective feedback. Moreover, future research can examine whether L2 students react differently to teacher error correction according to their age (e.g. young vs. adults). Further, more studies can examine the interactional effect of written corrective feedback through conferencing, and other technology-based modes of follow up techniques that aim to communicate teacher error correction to learners. Further, more studies can examine reformulation as it has been found to be an under-researched area in the literature and was among one of the least applied types of written corrective feedback in the cohort of my

research along with the use of social media platforms. Moreover, there is a gap in the literature with regard to grading and feedback practices of writing instructors at tertiary level. In addition, I recommend that future research investigates written corrective feedback by zooming in and out from a top-down to a bottom up perspective according to the components in the hierarchy of the Activity theory; i.e. examining the rules and regulations at higher education institutions and ending up with the learners and lectures. Further, I believe that we need more studies that target learner attitudes and factors to find out why learners use or do not use teacher feedback in future written assignments. Moreover, the writing instructors in my study have raised the issue that some learners repeat the same errors that have been corrected before, but I question whether or not the instructors actively look for better solutions and new teaching methods to address that issue. Thus, I suggest that future studies should further develop my model and investigate learners' tacit beliefs and the reasons behind learners' attitude and behaviour towards error correction and find out whether or not the writing instructors seek alternative paths to solve the problem.

7.7 Limitations of the study

My study- like many studies, has its limitations. For instance, it depended on an online survey platform namely Qualtrics to collect some of my data- though it helped me reach a wider sample in my study from all over the Sultanate of Oman. Online surveys have their strengths and weaknesses as has been discussed earlier. Moreover, all the instructors applied comprehensive (unfocused) written corrective feedback where they corrected all the errors on students' essays when they responded to students' essays despite the fact that they were not obliged to do so by the administration of the college. Hence, I was not able to examine any other types of written corrective feedback which might have enriched my

research. Further, my research has a number of delimitations. One of its main delimitations is that sampling was convenient due to time constraints and because I had to solve access issues with a number of colleges in my home country not to mention I was an outsider. Hence, getting the paper work done took longer than it was expected. For feasibility reasons, I decided to design an online survey so that I could cover all seven governorates in my country but at the end only six branches agreed to participate in my research. Moreover, I depended on voluntary participation at only six colleges, but I think that the sample was large enough to make some generalisations about the population. Further, collecting data from academics and learners at college level in six governorates in Oman was another delimitation of this study. In addition, I did not include learners' voice who were the authors of the essays. Hence, we do not know how they perceived written corrective feedback or what they did with the written corrective feedback they received from their writing instructors. However, learner perceptions of teacher written response have been somehow investigated in the literature and empirical studies. Moreover, being a pragmatist has its limitations, too. I followed a mixed method design in my study in collecting and analysing the data which have resulted in conflicting and or unequal results and that one of the approaches was more dominant than the other due to the number of participants in each method (i.e. the online survey over students' documents). However, I believe that the mixed method design gave more strength to my study than to be considered as a delimitation. In addition, I applied triangulation and used different tools to gather the data in my current study to overcome the issue of bias or weakness of one method over another and to make use of the strengths of each method. Moreover, this study was only limited to teacher written corrective feedback from 96 student essays. As a result, it might be possible to

generalise the results on a similar population to that of the sample in my study but not to a bigger population than the one in my current study. In addition, using thematic analysis in analysing writing instructors' attitudes in the open ended questions of the survey and in analysing students' documents was another limitation. Further, thematic analysis is time consuming and it is not straightforward, which means I had to go back and forth with the data and the findings.

Moreover, there was a divergence in the findings of my study as the sample reported applying direct written corrective feedback (WCF) in the online survey while the documents analysis revealed an opposing finding- which is one of the limitations of pragmatism. I acknowledge that this divergence is a limitation because I did not apply any follow up steps with some of the participants if not all of them. However, if I had more time, I would have interviewed some participants and asked them the reasons behind the divergence between their answers in the online survey and their actual practice of written corrective feedback.

7.8 Personal reflection on my PhD Journey

What a journey? Before walking through the woodland of written corrective feedback (WCF), I had a pre-conception- or rather a misconception that it was a user-friendly and approachable area of investigation. How wrong I was! The more I read, the more lost I felt. I later realised that it was one of the most complicated areas of research. Today, I feel that my research is just a drop in the ocean or a little star in the vast sky of written corrective feedback (WCF). I had some misconceptions that I would be able to solve the world by carrying out my research. However, written corrective feedback (WCF) is one of the puzzles that needs more studies to be carried out so that we can reach more conclusive results. But I am happy that I investigated writing instructors' feelings and

attitudes. The more certain you feel, the more uncertain you become. Generalising the findings of a study is one of the things that I had to unlearn and relearn and that not all studies should be applicable to the broader population, though in theory they should do so that a broader audience can make use of the findings in similar contexts. Nevertheless, I can still celebrate the findings of my study since I made a contribution to knowledge. Letting go of all the things I cannot control is another lesson I learnt in the hard way. I used to be over-controlling of almost all the situations around me. However, I came to the conclusion that seeking perfection is a fantasy and might only exist in dreams and cartoons. The real world where we live cannot be perfect except the Divine and the Creator of the Universe- anything else is simply imperfect. Today I surrender my power to the Divine power and I am grateful for this opportunity because it made me a better person spiritually and mentally.

As I am submitting my thesis, I would like to draw the readers' attention to the fact that a new era has just begun in Oman on the 11th of January 2020. His Majesty Sultan Hytham bin Tareq Al Saeed, has become the successor of Sultan Qaboos bin Saeed. This is called the new era in Oman. We as Omanis believe that Oman will witness great changes and a brighter future since His Majesty Hytham will follow the footsteps of the legend and late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Saeed who will never be forgotten by his people for dedicating 50 years of his life to his nation. His Majesty Hytham bin Tareq Al Saeed concluded his speech on the day he became the ruler of Oman by saying:

“Dear loyal people of Oman,

The elevation of Oman to the level of your aspirations and expectations in all fields will be the theme of the next stage, with the will of Allah. We will keep our eyes fixed on the supreme interest of our country, furnishing all means of support and empowerment to that effect.” [Oman Observer, 2020].

Omanis are very grateful for the hard work the late Sultan of Oman, His Majesty Qaboos bin Saeed had put in building Oman. They are also expecting that His Majesty Haytham bin Tareq Al Saeed will continue on the same legacy and bring dramatic changes to Oman. In August 2020, His Majesty Haytham bin Tareq Al Saeed issued 28 Royal decrees including reducing the number of ministries from 26 to 19. His Majesty’s focus is on the economy of Oman and empowering young experienced Omanis to take prestigious positions in the new government. His Majesty’s changes are in alignment with Vision Oman 2040. Omanis are very much happy with these changes and eager to see what the future holds for them under the leadership of the wise Sultan Haytham bin Tareq Al Saeed with his son Sayyid Theyazin bin Haytham Al-Saeed the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth Affairs beside him.

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Appendices

Appendix (1) Related studies from literature review

Efficacy of WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Han and Hyland (2015) China	4 EFL students	multiple-case study	WCF more effective when teachers have a thorough understanding of learners' background & beliefs
Fazio (2001) France	5 th grade students in four classes	Journals; observations; semi structured interviews	WCF was effective
Paulus (1999)	11 ESL university students	3 drafts (843 revisions); teacher & peer WCF; student think-aloud-protocols	Teacher WCF prioritized by learners.
Bijami, Pandian & Singh (2016) Iran	400 ESL university students	Mixed methods: Writing tasks, surveys, semi structured interviews	WCF was effective
Al Ajmi (2015) Oman	50 EFL college students	Experiment: essays; survey	WCF was effective

Teacher perceptions and attitudes of WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Lee, I. (2009) Hong Kong	26 EFL teachers; 174 students	174 essays; semi-structured teacher interviews	Mismatch teacher perceptions & attitudes & practice
Jones & Tang (2017) Japan	57 EFL teachers	Online survey	Teachers prefer indirect WCF
Ko (2010) Korea	153 college instructors of ESL & KFL	Online survey	Major differences between two groups regarding aspects, location, focus of WCF, WCF type, number of drafts, 7 follow-up methods
Bailey & Garner (2010)	48 university staff & faculty	Semi structured interviews	Teachers have varied perceptions & attitudes about WCF, and uncertain about its efficacy.
Evans, Hartshorn & Tuitoi (2010b) USA	1053 ESL university teachers from 69 countries	Online Survey	Teachers believe WCF effective pedagogically
Gul, Tharani, Lakhani, Rizvi & Ali (2016) Pakistan	150 university ESL teachers	Survey; two focus groups	Teachers prefer direct CF

Ghani & Ahmad (2016) Pakistan	107 ESL teachers	Survey	Teachers valued Comprehensive direct & indirect WCF on grammar & mechanics.
Rajab, Khan & Elyas (2016) Saudi Arabia	184 EFL teachers	Online survey; semi structured interviews	WCF was effective.
Sajjadi, Khabbazi & Sajjadi (2015) Iran	105 EFL teachers in 29 cities	Survey	Teachers value & practice WCF

Teacher vs. learner perceptions on WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Al Khatib (2015) Saudi Arabia	10 EFL teachers; 30 students	Student and teacher semi structured interviews; Observations; Teacher think aloud protocols.	Teachers valued form & organisation. They applied direct unfocused WCF. Students valued teachers' WCF but did not understand some comments.
Sayyar and Zamanian (2015) Iran	24 EFL teachers; 54 learners	Survey	Teachers and learners prefer comprehensive WCF.
Atmaca (2016) Turkey	34 EFL teachers ; 34 learners	Survey	Teachers & learners favour comprehensive WCF
Hamouda (2011) Saudi Arabia	20 EFL instructors; 200 students	Survey	Discrepancies among teachers vs. learners. Teachers & learners value CF
Amerhein and Nassaji (2010) Canada	31 ESL teachers; 33 students	Survey	Teachers preferred comprehensive; selective form ; content WCF. Students believe WCF is teacher's responsibility
Halimi (2008) Indonesia	95 EFL teachers & 167 students.	Survey	Mismatch teachers & students preferences; teachers not sure which draft to respond to.

Grami (2004) Saudi Arabia	One EFL teacher; 36 students	Student & teacher Semi structured interviews; student survey	Teachers & learners prefer marginal comments. Students did not like insincere praise nor plain criticism
Rummel (2014) Laos & Kuwaiti	Five EFL school teachers; 72 learners	Experiment; students Surveys; students & teachers Semi structured interviews; essays	Teachers preferred indirect WCF but students preferred direct WCF. Indirect groups showed improved accuracy. Laos & Kuwaiti students had different perceptions on effective CF
Arndt (1993) Hong Kong	75 EFL students; 8 teachers	Survey	students & teachers agreed that global WCF should be provided before local WCF; teacher vs. student discrepancies
Cohen & Cavalcanti (1990)	Three EFL teachers and nine students	Teacher & student semi structured interviews; essays with teacher commentary	Consistency teacher & student opinions

Teacher perceptions & attitudes & practice of WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Mahmud (2016) Malaysia	54 ESL teachers; 8 students at a school	Sequential mixed method; Teacher survey & semi structured interview, 48 essays	Teachers mostly used direct, indirect, unfocused WCF and used least e-feedback, reformulation and no WCF
Rajagopal thesis (2015) Malaysia	One EFL teacher; 58 students	Essays; teacher survey	Teacher used direct, unfocused & error codes; Mismatch teacher beliefs & practices
Al Bakri (2015) Oman	6 EFL teachers; 18 students	Exploratory case study; teacher semi-structured interviews; essays	Mismatch teacher perceptions & attitudes & practice
Min (2013) USA	Researcher/ teacher; 18 university English major students	A journal; a log; written comments on student essays; peer review training sessions; teacher-student conferences	Teacher perceptions & attitudes & practice matched. Teacher comments focused on clarifying writer's intentions, identifying & explaining problems, making suggestions

Teacher & learner perceptions & teacher practice of WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Ene & Kosobucki (2016) USA	Case study: One female ESL Saudi student.	Case study: 48 essays, paragraphs & reading responses. Semi structured Interview with student after completion of foundation program	Student preferred direct WCF at low level & indirect WCF at higher levels; detailed supplemental comments. Institutional requirement of form-focused WCF & rubrics discourage teacher written comments
Alshahrani & Storch (2014) Saudi Arabia	3 EFL teachers; 45 students	Student essays; teacher semi structured interviews; student survey	Mismatch teacher beliefs & practice. Teachers gave comprehensive indirect WCF on mechanics which was not in accord with their beliefs; Students prefer direct CF on grammar.
Lee, I. (2004) Hong Kong	206 teachers at universities & secondary schools; 320 school students	Teacher & student survey & follow-up interviews	Teachers prefer direct, & coded WCF; only half of teacher corrections were accurate; teachers not aware of long-term significance of WCF.

Teacher practice of WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Lucero, Fernández & Montanero (2018) Spain	41 school teachers; 393 students	Stories graded on a rubric; teacher commentary	Direct WCF of spelling & grammar errors
Hamlaoui & Fellahi (2017) Algeria	10 EFL university students; one teacher	40 essays	Grammatical accuracy improved after conferencing
Karbalaei & Karimian (2014) Iran	58 EFL students	232 first draft essays	WCF was effective; teacher mainly wrote grammar & mechanics comments
Best (2012)	Teacher is the researcher. 18 ESL university students	18 essays (1 st & final drafts)	Teacher comments focused on grammar and content
Montgomery & Baker (2007) USA	15 writing teachers & 98 university students	Teacher survey; 6 essays from student portfolios	Students perceived receiving more WCF than teachers perceived giving; teachers not completely aware of amount of WCF they give on first and later drafts; teachers provided more WCF on local grammar & mechanics

Furneaux, Paran & Fairfax (2007) Japan	110 EFL teachers; One Japanese student	One essay all the teachers marked	Teacher correction was unfocused; grammar commentary & correction
Ashwell (2000) Japan	50 EFL university students	Experiment	Unfocused WCF on form; focused WCF on content.
Ferris (1997) USA	47 advanced university ESL students; One teacher	110 essays	Teacher commentary was effective
Lunsford & Lunsford (2008) USA	First year university students	877 essays	Teachers marked 40 % of errors; errors varied (wrong word, grammar, spelling, mechanics)
Leng (2014) Malaysia	15 ESL students	Essays; 2 semi structured interviews	WCF was effective. Students received positive and negative WCF
Amirghasse mi, Azabdaftari & Saeidi (2013) Iran	115 EFL university students	quasi- experiment (direct, indirect, guided WCF)	WCF was effective
Bitchener Young, & Cameron (2005) New Zealand	53 ESOL learners	Experiment: Direct CF; conference	Both types effective

Ferris (2006) USA	92 ESL students; 3 teachers	Essays, survey & semi structured interviews	Teachers used direct, indirect, coded WCF on grammar, word choice, punctuation, spelling , content
Shirzad, Nejadansari & Shirzad (2015) Iran	90 EFL learners	Quasi- experimental: direct WCF; guided error- correction; student self error correction	Guided error- correction most effective
Santos, Lopez- Serrano, Manchon (2010) Spain	8 EFL school students	Experiment: direct WCF; reformulation; semi structured interviews	Direct WCF more effective
Marzban & Sarjami (2014) Iran	60 EFL learners	Experiment: peer feedback, direct WCF; Surveys ; observations	Peer WCF most effective
Khansir & Hozhabri (2014) Iran	38 EFL students	Experiment: direct, indirect, conferences.	Direct WCF most effective
Atai & Alipour (2012) Iran	48 EFL students	Experiment: coded WCF, conferencing	Both types effective
Robb, Ross & Shortreed (1986) Japan	134 students	Experiment	WCF not effective

Teacher motivations behind WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Ferris, Pezone, Tade & Tinti (1997) USA	One teacher; 47 ESL students	247 essays from 47 students (3 drafts each)	Teacher changed commentary methods; factors: genre & student proficiency level
Hyland & Hyland (2006) New Zealand	31 ESL international students	Student texts; teacher & student interviews; teacher think aloud protocols	Teachers used praise & mitigation to capture social harmony
Lee, Leong & Song (2017) Singapore	9 ESL university teachers	Focus groups; semi-structured interviews	Contextual constraints created tension between ideal and actual practice of WCF
Spivey (2014) USA	5 ESL university teachers	Semi structured interviews	Previous learning experience, personal preference, stage of writing (which draft), focus of essay, student proficiency level, student needs, teacher workload

Focused vs. unfocused WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Sadeghpour, Shabani & Behnam (2019) Iran	30 EFL university learners	Quasi-experimental	Focused WCF more effective
Pashazade and Marefat (2010) Iran	22 EFL learners	Experiment	Focused WCF more effective
Sheen, Wright & Moldawa (2009) USA	80 ESL students and five native English speaking teachers	quasi-experimental; Survey	Focused WCF more effective
Ellis, Sheen, Murakami & Takashima (2008) Japan	49 ESL Japanese students	Experiment	No difference
Araghi & Sahebkhair (2014) Iran	120 Iranian EFL learners	Experiment	Focused WCF more effective
Farrokhi & Sattarpour (2012) Iran	60 university EFL learners	Quasi-Experimental	Focused WCF more effective
Frear & Chiu (2015) Taiwan	42 English major students	Experiment	No difference

Focused indirect WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Ferris (1995a) USA	30 ESL learners	Teacher commentary	WCF was effective
Ferris (1997) USA	47 ESL students, one teacher, 110 essays	Teacher commentary	WCF was effective

Unfocused WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
<u>McCord (2012)</u> USA	One ESL student	Case study; Student survey	WCF was effective
Pan (2010) Taiwan	3 EFL university students	Essays; Direct comprehensive WCF; Teacher-student conference	CF was effective except test conditions; Students did not fully make use of the feedback and conference due to lack of exposure to English.
Fazilatfar, Fallah, Hamavandi, & Rostamian (2014) Iran	30 EFL advanced University students	Quasi-experiment: (unfocused CF) and a control group (feedback on quality and organization of content)	unfocused feedback stops learners from trying more complex features in their new pieces of writing

Direct WCF / WCF effective

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Sarie (2013) Indonesia	3 ESL students	Case study; observation	WCF effective
Afraz & Ghaemi (2012) Iran	30 intermediate ESL learners	Quasi - experiment	WCF effective
Lalande (1982) USA	60 FL German students	Direct WCF & guided learning	WCF effective

Direct WCF / WCF not effective

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Kepner (1991)	60 Spanish learners in USA	Experiment	WCF not effective
Polio, Fleck, & Leder (1998) USA	65 college ESL students	Experiment	WCF not effective
Sheppard (1992)	26 ESL college students	Experiment; Student essays	WCF not effective

Indirect WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Poorebrahim (2017) Iran	20 EFL students	Student essays; Experiment	WCF effective
Luke and Billy (2016) Indonesia	20 ESL students	Student essays on Facebook closed group	WCF effective
Park, Song & Shin (2015) Korea	40 EFL students	Journal entries	WCF effective
Truscott and Hsu (2008) Taiwan	47 EFL university learners	Experiment	WCF effective
Chandler (2000) USA	30 ESL learners	Experiment	WCF effective
Fathman & Walley (1990) USA	72 ESL intermediate students	Experiment	WCF effective

Direct vs. indirect WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Jamalinesari , Rahimi, Gowhary & Azizifar (2015) Iran	20 EFL students	Essays as homework	Indirect WCF more effective
Al Harrasi (2019) Oman	78 school students	Experiment	Both effective
Ahmadi, Maftoon & Mehrdad (2012) Iran	60 EFL university students	Experiment	Both effective
Talatifard (2016) Iran	60 EFL learners'	Experiment	Indirect WCF more effective
Baleghizadeh & Dadashi (2011) Iran	44 school students	Experiment	Indirect WCF more effective
Jokara & Soyooof (2014) Iran	2 EFL students	Student texts	Direct WCF more effective
Hashemnezhad & Mohammadreja d (2012) Iran	80 EFL students	Quasi Experiment	Direct WCF more effective
Black & Nanni (2016) Thailand	21 school teachers; 361 students	Survey	Indirect WCF more effective. Learners prefer direct WCF

Van Beuningen, Jong & Kuiken (2008; 2012)	62 school students	Experiment	Both types effective
Maleki & Eslami (2013) Iran	90 EFL students	Experiment	Both types effective but indirect WCF was long lasting
Eslami (2014) Iran	60 EFL learners	Experiment	Indirect WCF more effective
Chandler (2003) USA	31 international students	Experiment	Both types effective
Chandler (2003) USA	36 ESL students	Experiment; student survey & self report	Direct WCF more effective

Coded vs. Uncoded WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Hong (2004) USA	119 ESL university students	Experiment; student survey	Coded WCF more effective
Sampson (2012)	10 EFL university learners	Experimental; student essays & Semi structured interviews	Coded WCF more effective
Wagner and Wolf (2016) USA	40 ESL students	Experiment	No difference
Buckingham and Aktug- Ekinci (2017) Turkey	32 EFL Turkish university students	Essays; think aloud protocols; Semi structured interviews	Coded WCF more effective
Omar (2014) Libya	10 EFL students at secondary school; one teacher	Experiment; Student survey & Semi structured interview	Coded WCF more effective
Muth'im & Latief (2014) Indonesia	120 EFL learners	Experiment	No difference
Aliakbari & Toni (2009) Iran	60 EFL students	Quasi- experimental	Coded WCF more effective

Direct vs. coded WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Storch & Wigglesworth (2010) Australia	8 ESL students	Case study	No difference
Semke (1984) USA	141 German ESL students	Experiment	No difference
Tang & Liu (2018) Chinese	56 EFL learners	Experiment	Coded WCF alone can increase learner accuracy
Tootkaboni & Khatib (2014) Iran	67 female school students	Experiment	Direct WCF effective in short term; coded more effective in long term
Özbakiş (2013) Turkish	20 ESL university students	Student survey/ student think aloud protocols/ stimulated recalls	No difference
Erel & Bulut (2008) Turkey	37 EFL university students; 12 teachers	Experiment; Content analysis of 830 first drafts	No difference
Ahmadi-Azad (2014) Iran	54 EFL Iranian students	Experiment	No difference

Indirect vs. coded WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Modirkhamene, Soleimani & Sadeghi (2017) Iran	66 EFL learners	Experiment	No difference
Ji (2015) Chinese	31 university EFL learners	Experiment; student survey	No difference
Greenslade & Félix-Brasdefer (2006) Spanish	19 EFL university students	Experiment; student survey	Coded WCF more effective
Ferris & Roberts (2001) USA	72 ESL students	Experiment	No difference

Metalinguistic (grammar explanation) WCF

Author	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Mansourizadeh & Abdullah (2002) Malaysia	47 ESL undergraduate students	Experiment	WCF effective
Anderson (2010) Canada	39 ESL international university students	Experiment; Student- survey & semi structured interviews; essays	WCF effective

Direct vs. Metalinguistic WCF

Study	Subjects	Dependent measures	Results
Suzuki, Nassaji & Sato (2019) Japan	88 EFL university students	Experiment (direct, indirect, metalinguistic)	All types effective
Khoshsima & Jahani (2013) Iran	44 EFL university students	Experiment	Both types effective
Jiang & Xiao (2014) China	92 EFL students'	Experiment	Both types effective
Diab (2015) Lebanon	57 EFL students	Quasi-experiment	Both types effective
Frantzen (1995) USA	67 ESL university students	Experiment	Both types effective
Bitchener and Knoch (2008) New Zealand	144 ESL university students	Experiment	Both types effective
Bitchener (2008) New Zealand	75 ESL students	Experiment	Both types effective
Bitchener & Knoch (2010a) New Zealand	52 ESL university students	Experiment	Both types effective

Bitchener & Knoch (2010b) New Zealand	39 ESL university students	Experiment	Both types effective
Stefanou and Revesz (2015) Cyprus	89 EFL school students	Experiment	Direct WCF more effective
Sanavi & Nemati (2014) Iran	186 EFL students	Quasi-experiment	Both types effective
Sheen (2006) USA	177 ESL students	Experiment	Both types effective
Shintani, Ellis, & Suzuki (2014) Japan	171 ESL university learners	Experiment; Student survey & semi structured interviews	Direct WCF more effective
Shintani and Ellis (2013) USA	49 ESL students	Experiment; Student survey & semi structured interviews	Metalinguistic WCF more effective
Elola, Mikulski & Buckner (2017)	90 university students in Spanish course; 3 teachers	Experiment	Both types effective
Rezazadeh, Tavakoli & Rasekh (2015) Iran	94 EFL university students	Experiment	Both types effective

Appendix (2) My study's online survey

Start of Block: info- sheet

Intro A Questionnaire on Teachers' Attitudes and Practice on Written Corrective Feedback in Writing in English Dear Colleagues, This questionnaire aims to find out English language (EFL/ESL) teachers' actual practice and perceptions on written corrective feedback (teacher comments and corrections on student essays) in the writing class. For this purpose, as English teachers, your valuable opinions will greatly contribute to my research. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. Your answers and identity will be kept confidential. Your participation is voluntary. **There will be a £25 Amazon voucher draw and I will contact the winner to send him/her the voucher.**

This questionnaire consists of four parts: Part I: Your practice of written corrective feedback in class Part II: Your attitudes towards giving written corrective feedback Part III: Some demographic information Part IV: Your views I would like to thank you for your valuable contribution to this research. Please contact me (ra365@exeter.ac.uk) or my project supervisor Dr. Esmaeel Abdollahzadeh (E.Abdollahzadeh@exeter.ac.uk) if you have any questions or concerns about how we will use your information from this survey.

Kind Regards Ms. Ramla AlZadjali PhD candidate University of Exeter



Draw I would like to be included in the draw for a prize.

Yes (1)

No (2)

Email If you selected yes above, please write your email address below.

Page Break

End of Block: info- sheet

Start of Block: consent



Consent *I have read the information above and I am willing to take part in the study.*

Yes (1)

No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If I have read the information above and I am willing to take part in the study. = No

Page Break

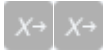
End of Block: consent

Start of Block: Part I: How do you mark students' essays?

Part 1 Part I / How do you mark your students' essays?

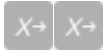
The following statements assess your actual practice of giving written feedback to student essays. Please read each statement below and click on the right option for you from the options provided.

Page Break



Q1 I correct all the errors on the students' essays.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q2 I correct few errors on the students' essays.

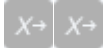
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q3

I underline the error on the students' essays without correcting it for the students.

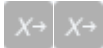
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q4

I underline the error on the students' essays and correct it for the students.

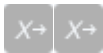
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q5

I circle the error on the students' essays without providing the correct answer for the students.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q6

I circle the error on the students' essays and provide the correct answer for the students.

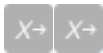
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q7

I cross out a wrong word or expression on the students' essays without providing the correct word for the students.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q8

I cross out a wrong word on the students' essays and write the correct word for the students.

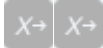
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q9

I provide a clue (e.g., *I write tense for verb tense errors*) on the students' essays.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q10 I write comments on the students' essays.

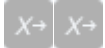
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q11

I re-write the whole sentence to make the language seem as native-like as possible.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q12 I give a mark on the students' essays.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q13 I focus on the clarity of the content of the students' essays.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



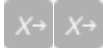
Q14 I focus on the organization of the students' essays.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q15 I focus on students' use of the right vocabulary related to the topic of the essay when I mark their essays.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



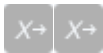
Q16 I focus on grammar when I mark students' essays.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q17 I focus on spelling when I mark students' essays.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q18 I focus on wrong words when I mark students' essays.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q19 I focus on punctuation when I mark students' essays.

- Always (5) (5)
- Usually (4) (4)
- Sometimes (3) (3)
- Rarely (2) (2)
- Never (1) (1)

X→ X→

Q20

I focus on the connection of sentences in students' essays (cohesion).

- Always (5) (5)
- Usually (4) (4)
- Sometimes (3) (3)
- Rarely (2) (2)
- Never (1) (1)

X→ X→

Q21

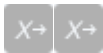
I focus on the overall logical development of the ideas in students' essays (coherence).

- Always (5) (5)
- Usually (4) (4)
- Sometimes (3) (3)
- Rarely (2) (2)
- Never (1) (1)

X→ X→

Q22 I praise the students when I mark their essays.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



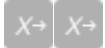
Q23 I write imperatives (a command to ask students do something) when I mark students' essays. (e.g., *Check your spelling please.*)

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



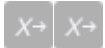
**Q24 I write questions when I mark students' essays.
(e.g., Is this the correct verb?)**

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



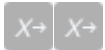
**Q25 I write complete sentences when I mark students' essays.
(e.g., I think you should provide more details here.)**

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



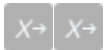
**Q26 I write symbols when I mark students' essays.
(e.g., sp. = *spelling*).**

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



**Q27 I write evaluative expressions when I mark students' essays.
(e.g., *Good / Excellent / Well done*).**

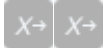
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q28

I use a rubric/ checklist provided by my department in marking students' essays.

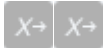
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q29

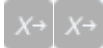
I discuss the rubric/checklist with the whole class orally.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q30 I discuss the rubric/checklist with the whole class by making handouts for all the students.

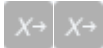
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q31

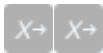
I discuss orally major problems of writing with the whole class after marking their essays.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q32 I ask students to correct each others' essays in class based on a rubric/checklist.

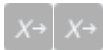
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q33

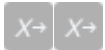
I use private teacher-student dialogue (conferencing) to discuss my written feedback with each student.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q34 I give group-conference after I return the essays to the students with my written feedback on them.

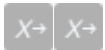
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q35

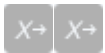
I send an email to each student with my written feedback on their essays.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



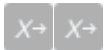
Q36 I chat with students individually about their essays on WhatsApp.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q37 I give all my students names of websites which provide free writing activities in English.

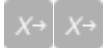
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q38

I give written feedback on students' essays based on students' level of English.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q39

I give written feedback on students' essays based on the type of error they make (e.g., content, grammar, punctuation).

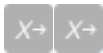
- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q40

I give written feedback on students' essays based on the administrative expectations by the head of the department at my college.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-



Q41 I give positive written feedback on students' essays to avoid their complaints.

- Always (5) (5)
 - Usually (4) (4)
 - Sometimes (3) (3)
 - Rarely (2) (2)
 - Never (1) (1)
-

Page Break

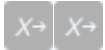
End of Block: Part I: How do you mark students' essays?

Start of Block: Part II: Your attitudes towards responding to student writing

Part 2 **Part II/ How do you feel towards responding to student essays?**

The following statements assess your attitudes towards responding to student essays. Please click on the right option for you.

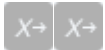
Page Break



Q42

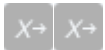
I feel providing written feedback on students' essays is an interesting experience.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



Q43 I feel giving written feedback on students' essays is challenging.

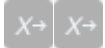
- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



Q44

I feel giving written feedback on students' essays is a necessary skill for all writing teachers.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



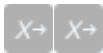
Q45 I feel frustrated and/or resentful when I mark students' essays.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



Q46 I would rather do anything else than mark students' essays.

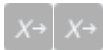
- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



Q47

I feel that providing written feedback on student essays helps my students to improve their writing.

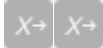
- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



Q48

I feel that I have developed a number of methods for giving written feedback over time.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



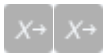
Q49 I think students need enough time to process the written feedback teachers give to them.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



Q50 I think teachers should provide positive feedback on students' essays.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



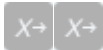
Q51 I think that students are responsible for editing their essays before submitting them to the teacher for marking.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



Q52 I think teachers should explain to all students the procedure for giving feedback so that students do not have high expectations from their teachers.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



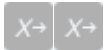
Q53 I think it is difficult to mark students' essays because students make too many errors.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



Q54 I think marking essays is difficult because of the administrative duties I have in addition to teaching.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



Q55 I think marking essays is difficult because of the heavy timetable I have at college.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



Q56 I think my role is to teach students to write accurately rather than mark student essays.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-



Q57 I think my students consider my written feedback on their essays.

- Strongly Agree (5) (5)
 - Agree (4) (4)
 - Neutral (3) (3)
 - Disagree (2) (2)
 - Strongly Disagree (1) (1)
-

Page Break

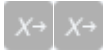
End of Block: Part II: Your attitudes towards responding to student writing

Start of Block: Demographic Information

Part 3 **Part III/ Demographic Information**

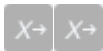
The following questions aim to collect some demographic information about the respondents.

Page Break



Q58 Where is your institution located?

- Muscat (1)
 - Ibri (2)
 - Salalah (3)
 - Nizwa (4)
 - Al Musana (5)
 - Shinas (6)
 - Ibra (7)
 - Other, please specify (8) _____
-



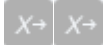
Q59 I am

- Male (1)
 - Female (2)
-



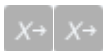
Q60 What is your first/native language?

- Arabic (1)
- English (2)
- Other, please specify (3) _____



Q61 My highest level of education is

- Diploma (1)
- Bachelor (BA) (2)
- Master of Arts (MA) (3)
- Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D) (4)
- Other. Specify please (5) _____



Q62 I have been teaching at university/college level for

- Less than 1 year (1)
- 1-5 years (2)
- 6-10 years (3)
- 11-15 years (4)
- 16-20 years (5)
- Over 20 years (6)



Q63 The number of hours I teach per week is

- Less than 15 hours (1)
 - 15-18 hours (2)
 - 19-22 hours (3)
 - Over 22 hours (4)
-



Q64 The number of students I have in each writing class is

- Less than 20 students (1)
 - 20-30 students (2)
 - 31-41 students (3)
 - 42-52 students (4)
-



Q65 How many times do you read a student's essay before responding to it?

- Once (1)
 - Twice (2)
 - Three times (3)
 - More than 3 times (4)
-



Q66 Have you ever received any formal training on responding to students' essays? (You can select more than one option)

(1)

I had some training as part of a course at university (Undergraduate/ Masters).

(2)

I had some training as part of pre-service or in-service training for a current or former job.

I had some training at a professional conference. (3)

Other training/induction: (please specify here) (4)

I did not have any sort of training. (5)

Page Break

End of Block: Demographic Information

Start of Block: Your Views

Part 4 Part IV: Your Views

Can you **answer** the last two questions in the survey please?

Page Break

Q67 Can you make a list of 3-5 best methods of good practice on giving written corrective feedback on student essays?

Q68 Can you make a list of 3-5 most important challenges that you currently face when feeding back on student essays?

End of Block: Your Views

Appendix (3) Codes from open ended Q1 on effective types of WCF

Item	Code
Type of feedback	
1	Direct
2	Indirect
3	Underline/circle and correct
4	Underline and error codes
5	Comprehensive / Unfocused
6	Selective / Focused/ minimize errors/ limit scope of comments/ specific evaluation (e.g. good introduction) Identifying the repeated errors
7	combine error correction and comments
8	electronic
9	metalinguistic
10	rubrics
11	Comments / advice / suggestions / ways of improvement
12	error codes
13	self correct
14	self edit

15	peer response
16	evaluative comments / give a mark
Oral and written feedback	
17	Oral CF with whole class/ worksheet/ projector / Comparing similar mistakes by different students to give more ideas / a scanned essay
18	Individual conference/ AA / advice /
19	Group conference
20	Tutorials / remedial
21	Writing questions / Asking questions
Direction of feedback	
22	Positive/ Motivating/ Be polite/ Use good adjectives/ Appreciate good points/ use smileys / Praise / empathy / applaud good work / show interest / Prizes and awards / show empathy / do not demotivate / do not discourage / avoid bias / have a positive attitude
23	Start with positive comments first and then negative comments
24	Negative / firm and strict
25	Positive and Negative (Constructive criticism)
Focus of feedback	

26	Focus on content
27	Focus on form / fossilized errors
28	Focus on form and meaning
29	Focus on the writing skills taught recently
Feedback factors	
30	student level / ability
31	Feedback should be Short / to the point easy to understand/ user-friendly/ simplified words / Clear
32	Read the essay more than once before responding to it.
33	Try not to look at the names of students when correcting the paper to avoid bias.
34	Teachers should not compare students to their own knowledge.
Feedback delivery	
35	Immediate and timely
36	Delayed
37	set a specific task focus before writing (spelling, punctuation, use of connectors, topic sentences etc) Discuss with them your focus of correction in the essay
38	Points to improve should be mentioned at the end of the valuation

39	Make students understand that teacher's red ink marks on the script is not to point out errors but to highlight places that require improvement.
40	Address the student by name while commenting to create the effect of face to face feedback.
41	Return the test with comments at the beginning of the class.
42	Use bullet numbers- don't make a short paragraph in giving the summary of the feedback
Other techniques	
43	Different color of pen
44	Mark all the papers
45	Multiple drafts
46	Follow ups
47	Quality over quantity
48	Error correction activities / games
49	Group correction
50	Error logs
51	Portfolios
52	Never put a question mark without giving a hint what was it all about.

53	Pointing out the process.
54	Examining the assumptions and consequences of each of these marking strategies
55	You may mark the essay with the student sitting with you and watching you do it.
56	Use a variety of techniques
57	Helping the student understand and experience that writing is a process where ideas develop and improve with each rewrite.
58	Using students errors for lesson planning
59	Q&A after assessment
60	only mark the specific task focus
61	Share a marking rubrics with the students
62	Provide a model or example
63	Focus on mechanics (punctuation, organization)
64	Share the error codes / symbols with the students
65	Opportunities / Homework on different topics.
66	Group- writing
67	Monitor and intervene during the writing if required

68	explain the corrections
69	state the negative comments, and then conclude by a very positive
70	Focus on vocabulary

Appendix (4) Codes from open ended Q1 on main challenges of WCF

Item	Code
Students' Language proficiency	
1	Students don't understand error codes
2	Students don't use teacher feedback
3	Students don't understand teacher feedback
4	Students who are good in speaking, are weak in writing.
5	Low achievers/ slow learners make more errors.
6	Mismatch student level and writing level (words and syntax)
7	Whole class is of low level students
8	Students lack basic English (correct spelling, sentence structure, punctuation)
9	direct translation from Arabic/ Google translate
10	Students mis-interpret the question and write a totally different essay which is irrelevant to the question asked.
11	Many errors in the structure of the sentences, content, grammar, spelling
12	Students lack creativity and ideas.
13	Students repeat the same previously corrected errors

Student behavior	
14	Students don't notice feedback
15	Students reject feedback.
16	Students do not know teacher feedback and they do not ask about it.
17	Some errors become habits/ fossilized
18	Student hand-writing is difficult to read.
19	Students don't practice writing
20	Plagiarism
21	Students don't read outside the classroom
22	Students insist on having the essay written on board for them though they get a model essay as an exemplar.
23	Students compare their comments with other students' comments.
24	Students do not attend AA
25	Students are inconsistent with deadlines and re-writes.
26	Students memorize essays written for them by previous teachers in previous courses.
27	Students' attention is distracted. They focus on how to make the best out of the scholarship, are addicted to their cell phones, socializing.

Feedback requires hard work	
28	Making students write a second draft
29	Helping students unlearn their mistakes.
30	Feedback requires a lot of effort (using the right technique with the right level of student proficiency).
31	students' low command of writing and making meaningful sentences
32	It makes me feel bored and tired to read same stuff over and over again.
Time	
33	Time consuming
34	Too many errors
35	Too many assignments / papers / topics
36	Large class number
37	Other duties (preparing lessons, invigilation, marking exams, academic advising, writing tutorials, remedial classes, redundant record keeping, College Website editor, Communication Team Leader, and Skill Leader)
38	Heavy timetables
39	Follow ups

40	Making use of innovative methods of giving feedback
41	Feedback can't be given immediately
42	Taking students from product approach to process approach is difficult.
Student attitudes	
43	Students believe it is the teachers' responsibility to correct all errors every time.
44	Students don't show any interest/ don't care about learning / don't take my feedback into consideration / lack a serious attitude towards learning writing and feedback
45	Students believe their writing is correct.
46	Students care about marks only.
47	Students do not self correct their essays.
48	Students cannot self correct their essays.
49	Students believe that writing is difficult and that they will not write.
50	Students believe that they do not need writing
51	Students get upset and complain because they believe that teacher marking is not fair.
52	Students are exam oriented.

53	Students believe they can pass at college without working hard and that teachers are supposed to make them pass.
Tough Decision	
54	What to focus on? Focus on content or grammar? How to fix such issues? What to teach, when and how much?
55	How to deliver feedback in a positive manner.
Emotional factors	
56	Sensitive students
57	Students are over-confident, happy with their level (Student complacency).
58	Over-correction makes students demotivated / less confident.
59	Students are not happy to see red marks on their paper.
Cant control	
60	Many students in upper level courses who should not be in upper level courses.
61	Intensive courses that students cannot cope with.
62	Discrepancy between college syllabi and American course books used.
63	Lack of uniformity in marking guide/rubrics

64	Prescribed rubric by the college. Some items in the rubric does not apply to the essays assigned to the students.
65	Missing to underline some errors.
66	Writing and feedback are complex skills. It needs a special place on the curriculum
67	Students did not master grammar in L 1.
68	The college doesn't tell teachers enough about the exams and quizzes so that they know what to focus on.
69	Being knowledgeable as a teacher especially when students write statistics.
70	No feedback from students on teacher feedback.
71	Teachers worry of not being fair enough when marking student paper
72	Students want their teachers ignore the mistakes and give them good marks.
73	Absence of portfolios from college system undermines students' voice as writers. Hence, they cannot see or experience their own development.
Gender	
74	Boys are carefree

75	Boys avoid writing and believe they can pass without answering the writing section in exams.
Extra challenges	
76	Repeated spelling and grammar
77	Limited vocabulary
78	Make them learn / memorize spelling for the words that the student made error.
79	It's very challenging to comprehend what they write
80	Many of them write compound complex sentences without a single verb or contradicting
81	A lot of students will have problem in every second or third word
82	Students have difficulty in retaining/using points that have been raised in essays.
83	Sometimes, the entire sentence construction is wrong
84	The question is as to whether point out the mistake/mark the mistake or re-write it correctly.
85	Students don't like negative comments.
86	Students are bothered about the marks rather than developing their writing skill.
87	Students argue that their writing is correct

88	Students lack interest /intrinsic learning/motivation
89	It is very difficult to change a wrong expression learnt by students at a very early stage of education
90	Some student's writings will not be legible enough
91	nature and ability of students.
92	Students' behaviour towards writing homework is very careless and casual
93	students do not know my feedback and they do not come to discuss
94	Students ignore mistakes and
95	Students don't want/ try to improve
96	Sometimes to give feedback about one rule you need to explain previous important rules
97	Some of them are lazy to learn from their mistakes
98	correcting papers at home and giving them feedback is not always working
99	Students do not want to see the corrections
100	almost all the students believe that they are excellent
101	I have to teach what they are supposed to learn from school.

102	help them build up a good rapport with me to have confidence and trust
103	Exam rubrics are very flexible which make the pass rate higher
104	In Exams, different ways of marking by different teachers make the students confused as they don't know which one is correct. It becomes a challenge when students question me about my marking & grading.
105	Most of the times, punctuation & capitalization is ignored in marking for unknown reasons.
106	using the same phrases that they learned from the past
107	cannot fully explain their ideas
108	The students using the rules they practice in class and actually applying them on an essay.
109	It can be very frustrating to go over basic grammar and sentence structure rules in class, see them understand and then in an exam, they make the same exact mistake.
110	In some cases, the writing is so bad, I almost feel as if I'm writing the essay when correcting their mistakes and giving feedback.
112	Students are not happy with their marks,
113	not having competent peers in the class to correct other's work
114	students of mixed ability

115	Mixed ability
116	Comprehension levels of the students
117	I have no challenges
118	standard RUBRIC for the WR corrections is not readily available - teacher must do his/her own RUBRIC which is not systematic,
119	students are not properly informed/taught about the symbols/rubrics for WR corrections.
120	No editing of work prior to submission of the essays.
121	Trying to understand spelling mistakes
122	Students take some time to be trained on how to reflect on their writing, which means improvement can be a bit slow
123	Students sometimes ask why there are so many red lines in their paper?
124	too structured writing curriculum
125	lack of students knowledge because of lack interest of reading
126	Student's sometimes write their essay where coherence is almost missing. The teacher is left to connect the pieces together to understand what is written.
127	Organisation is another challenge
128	Weak supporting details/ argumentation.

129	Spelling errors.
130	students use double verbs or verb-less sentences. that affects the overall understanding of the sentence.
131	Lack of student's capacity to engage with or learn from feedback
132	Train students to give feedback to each other.
133	"Comment rather than correct"
134	35. Keep them in suspense.
135	Feedback Note-taking
136	Writing run-on sentences to make their essays good.
137	Native grammar interference in English grammar.
138	Evaluations of student work.
139	Convincing Students about their marks after marking
140	Unresponsive students
141	Not learning even after the feed back
142	No habit of pre writing
143	The students feeling that you have not marked the paper fairly
144	rubric is too general.
145	time constraints
146	Time constraint

147	Rechecking the second draft when it is available
148	Run on
149	Lack of cohesion
150	Using the suitable technique for each students according to his/her level.
151	Always improvements in the same areas
152	Most of the students do not read your written feedback
153	Student do not read
154	Students become less confident.
155	They are not interested in the Writing subject.
156	students do not understand it in the same way as teachers want them to .
157	Students need to reflect on it in order to be effective.
158	To make them read and write and speak (all are correlated) to make their brain grasp the actual propensity of knowledge, is important, I believe.
159	to follow a set instruction for the colleges of technology is the usual course of teaching here in Oman. But there should be autonomy to the teachers as it is conceived for Higher Education system worldwide.

160	makes me feel tired and bored
161	lack of group activities
162	Sometimes unable to write comments or give feedback especially individual feedback
163	they don't learn and use new vocabulary...what they learned in the class....they keep using the same old ones words and sentencesin their mind.
164	lack of well written teaching materials
165	they believe that working on improving spelling is meant for kids only
166	Poor use of grammar.
167	Focus on all writing aspects
168	L 1 interference
169	Students dont believe in self-correction
170	Leading students to realize their fossilized errors to make them work on them
171	Managing time for conferencing as more students want you to give them more personal consultations
172	I feel like I'm wasting my time at times.

173	some students just copy the writing questions and add some uncompleted sentences
174	they do not seem to value their own ideas or have much confidence in their ability as writers
175	require a lot of remedial work on their part to improve their grammar and spelling.
176	confusing introduction and conclusion.

Code book from the two open ended questions

Delivery	
Emotions	Language
empathy during individual conference	feedback should be easy to understand
Use some good adjectives to make comments on students essays	ensure that the corrections are 100% readable and understandable by the learners.
Selective Cf so that you do not demotivate students	Use simplified words to make it user-friendly to the students
The written feed back given should be short, to the point and simple because too many words and long feed back discourage students	
Do not make any harsh comments.(e.g., Good for nothing , use your brain). Write positive comments. Write rewarding regards when students rewrite after correcting their mistakes.	
Guidelines	
General Guidelines	Specific Guidelines
students to write the second and third drafts of their essays	The positive feedback should also be specific, e.g. Good thesis statement /

	well organized paragraph, rather than too general.
marking 1 & 2nd/final drafts of students	set a specific task focus before writing (spelling, punctuation, use of connectors, topic sentences etc) only mark the specific task focus
Never put a question mark without giving a hint what was it all about	Show the students the development of their work, for example, if their spelling, grammar etc are improving.
write a comment. After that, you need to follow up that point in the coming essays to make sure that you complete the process.	Activities devised to help students practice & improve these features, e.g. activities to improve idea generation, reduction of common spelling/grammar mistakes.
The first thing to do is to make students understand that Teacher's red ink marks on the script is not to point out errors but to highlight places that require improvement. The comments and instructions written by a teacher should make the student feel that the teacher is genuinely interested in the student's improvement.	Realistic positive feedback and constructive criticism. By this I mean teachers should not give only positive feedback, e.g. 'very well done', without helping students become aware of the areas in which they need to improve. I have come across some students who have an inflated idea of their writing abilities due to having received only positive feedback, and they therefore

<p>Address the student by name while giving a suggestion, comment or instruction to create the effect of face to face feedback.</p>	<p>don't put any effort into improving their writing. The positive feedback should also be specific, e.g. Good thesis statement / well organized paragraph, rather than too general.</p>
<p>prizes and rewards sometimes to further inspire them. for example, 'The Best Essay for the Week Award.'</p>	
<p>Giving students enough opportunities to write on similar themes is another good practice as this makes them use the vocabulary, grammar, etc. related to the theme again and again so that they can see their own development.</p>	
<p>Provide a model or example .</p>	
<p>Giving more practice on different topics. Homework on different topics. Group-writing</p>	
<p>group correction by self discovery method.</p>	
<p>Monitor and intervene during the writing if required</p>	

<p>Mark all the papers</p>	
<p>different colors of the pen to mark errors –</p> <p>add some examples and exercises to train correct ways in writing</p>	
<p>always provide the actual output of the student and provide the necessary feedback using the bullet numbers -</p> <p>don't make a short paragraph in giving the summary of the feedback</p>	
<p>(. However, I believe that these students are young adult learners who are in these colleges to achieve a goal within a short time span given - 2 to 3 months, so that they need to know their mistakes if they are serious in improving themselves in these particular areas.)</p> <p>Here, the challenge is to help them build up a good rapport with me to have confidence and trust. Make them believe in their teachers (my opinion)</p>	
<p>Time</p>	

correcting the entire essay . Trying to understand spelling mistakes is a challenge	
Too structured curriculum	
Follow up of feedback	
Trying to understand spelling mistakes (for who: teacher or students?)	
Cannot control	
Level of student	Rubrics
students' errors because they have been promoted to a level above their abilities and so have	Exam rubrics are very flexible which make the pass rate higher. Quality writing cannot be achieved this way. This is a challenge too in creating a quality student. In Exams, different ways of marking by different teachers make the students confused as they don't know which one is correct. It becomes a challenge when students question me about my marking & grading.
Mismatch between the student production level lexis wise and syntax wise , and the expected level	standard RUBRIC for the WR corrections is not readily available - teacher must do his/her own RUBRIC

	which is not systematic, hence, not systemic
students background regarding writing	students are not properly informed/taught about the symbols/rubrics for WR corrections.
	the rubric is too general. marking may sometimes lack uniformity since you leave the concept of quantification
	Due to the large number of writing outcomes within a semester, there is not always time to do second or third drafts of a piece of writing, which is essential to the process, meaning that students do not get the full benefit of the feedback.
Impact on student and teachers	
student	teachers
Putting too many corrections on an essay may dishearten them to love writing/ demoralizing students	It can be very frustrating to go over basic grammar and sentence structure rules in class, see them understand and then in an exam, they make the same exact mistake

A few of them hate seeing more red colour (corrections) on their paper	Boring going over same stuff over and over again
There is a suggestion that teachers should not use red pens to correct mistakes and should not point out all the mistakes as this may affect the students psychologically	Correcting essay papers can be an arduous task with the demands of the department and nature and ability of students.
Students are not happy with their marks, they always think we are giving less marks, so they make a long face and even complain.	It can be very frustrating to go over basic grammar and sentence structure rules in class, see them understand and then in an exam, they make the same exact mistake.
Sometimes some students are sensitive and they don't like the touch of the red pointer used for the correction on their essays.	missing to underline some errors
Making feedback a positive experience for students is challenging as some students are very sensitive.	Most of the times, punctuation & capitalization is ignored in marking for unknown reasons! To make this issue clear, there should be proper uniformity in marking essays.
Marking requires hard work from teachers	
Training students	How to change student perceptions

Make them learn spelling for word they have made an error on	getting the second draft is the most challenging task in my view
students do not understand marking symbols that we use at my college	It is very difficult to change a wrong expression learnt by students at a very early stage of education (habits). Link to student perceptions
Train students to give feedback to each other	Making them understand their mistakes Helping them unlearn their baggage. Learn the target language to use it meaningfully
	Even if we take so much effort in correcting their work , Some students don't even bother to check what the teacher has written. (student perceptions and behavior)
	memorized phrases, fossilized errors 3. using the same phrases that they learned from the past
	Memorized sentences
All aspects of writing	
Sentence structure	Student ability

<p>Many of them write compound complex sentences without a single verb or contradicting their ideas in the same sentence. It would just be rubbish without any sense and I would have no clues how to fix such issues for example what to teach, when and how much? This is why giving feed back is such a difficult challenge.</p>	<p>the students have limited vocabulary words</p>
<p>Sometimes, the entire sentence construction is wrong and then the question is as to whether point out the mistake/mark the mistake or re-write it correctly.</p>	<p>cannot fully explain their ideas</p>
<p>In some cases, the writing is so bad, I almost feel as if I'm writing the essay when correcting their mistakes and giving feedback. It's not uncommon to come across an essay which is almost unreadable.</p>	<p>Weak supporting details/ argumentation</p>
<p>A lot of students will have problem in every second or third word and it would be a very demoralizing task to help the learners to learn and improve</p>	<p>Meaning sometimes is lost</p>

students use double verbs or verb-less sentences. that affects the overall understanding of the sentence	Sometimes to give feedback about one rule you need to explain previous important rules which takes a lot of
Student behaviour/ practice	
No habit of pre writing. Not learning even after the feed back	
Students don't take any notice of it.	
They do not want to look or see their mistake or if they see then quickly they go through it. They need to remember and practice it .	
Poor handwriting	
students do not read feedback /students do not understand feedback	
Students do not use feedback . Students seem to repeat the same errors in the next writing practice.	
students tend to look for models to follow but not to creatively invent their own constructions	
It appears many students do not read enough outside the class and this is	

reflective in their writing. Reading helps to create content, learn sentence structure and helps with spelling. Based on student feedback, most students rarely read outside of class and this is reflective in their writing	
Too much dependent on google translation	
Student language proficiency	
A student good at speaking commits some common errors in his/her essay.	
Low achievers make a lot of mistakes	
Most of them are not aware of the very basics of English language like grammar & even capitalization & punctuation. My first writing lesson is capitalization & punctuation :) The challenge is, I have to teach what they are supposed to learn from school.	
not having competent peers in the class to correct other's work. Mother Tongue influence (L1)	

students translate their ideas from Arabic to English, which is wrong and do not lead to the correct meaning	
Native grammar interference in English grammar. E.g. the boy came. (sentence structure is different in Arabic) Sometimes the student misinterprets the question and writes a totally different essay which is irrelevant to the question asked.	
Student perceptions	
Misconception	Motivation
students believe its my job to correct them every time, so they do not even make an effort	Students lack interest /intrinsic learning.
Students are bothered about the marks rather than developing their writing skill.	students sometimes do not feel that they need to learn writing in English
Students argue that their writing is correct	Unresponsive students .. Lack of interest
It is very common that almost all the students believe that they are excellent so they are not willing to accept the feedback. (In fact, some of them say , '	Students don't take the corrections seriously. Sometimes they just receive it, fold it away without much thought.

<p>Teacher, I am excellent ! ') Being over confident is an obstacle. It becomes a challenge for me to make my students realize that they have to accept their language level and try to improve where necessary</p>	
<p>The students are provided with model essays, but they insist us to write the essay or written task on the board since they think that is easy to get more ideas and they argue with the teachers.</p>	<p>Students' behaviour towards writing homework is very careless and casual which makes a teachers' job difficult</p>
<p>Students sometimes ask why there are so many red lines in their paper?</p>	<p>Some of them are lazy to learn from their mistakes</p>
<p>Convincing Students about their marks after marking</p>	<p>not all students come and clarify about their mistakes</p>

Appendix (5) Nvivo 12 codes and themes

effective methods of WCF (Nvivo 12).nvp - Nvivo 12 Plus

Name	Files	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
delivery of feedback		0	0 26/03/2018 17:42	RS	11/04/2018 19:16	RS
direction of feedback positive negative		0	0 26/03/2018 17:41	RS	11/04/2018 19:16	RS
factors of feedback		0	0 26/03/2018 17:42	RS	11/04/2018 19:16	RS
focus of feedback		0	0 26/03/2018 17:42	RS	11/04/2018 19:16	RS
other techniques		0	0 26/03/2018 17:43	RS	11/04/2018 19:16	RS
themes from the survey		0	0 27/03/2018 11:36	RS	27/03/2018 11:36	RS
types of WCF		0	0 26/03/2018 17:40	RS	11/04/2018 19:16	RS

challenges (Nvivo 12) (2).nvp - Nvivo 12 Plus

Name	Files	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
cant control		1	14 26/03/2018 15:17	RS	27/03/2018 15:29	RS
emotional factors		1	11 26/03/2018 15:16	RS	27/03/2018 15:29	RS
extra challenge		0	0 26/03/2018 15:17	RS	26/03/2018 15:17	RS
feedback requires hard work		1	13 26/03/2018 15:14	RS	27/03/2018 15:29	RS
gender		1	1 26/03/2018 15:17	RS	27/03/2018 14:04	RS
problems in all aspects of writing		1	25 26/03/2018 15:24	RS	27/03/2018 15:29	RS
student behaviour		1	48 26/03/2018 15:11	RS	27/03/2018 15:29	RS
student language proficiency		1	23 26/03/2018 15:12	RS	27/03/2018 15:29	RS
student perceptions or attitudes		1	45 26/03/2018 15:16	RS	27/03/2018 15:29	RS
themes of challenges		0	0 27/03/2018 15:38	RS	27/03/2018 15:38	RS
time		1	42 26/03/2018 15:15	RS	27/03/2018 15:29	RS
tough decision		1	8 26/03/2018 15:16	RS	27/03/2018 15:29	RS

methods of effective feedback (NVivo 12) (2) (Recovered).nvp - NVivo 12 Plus

Word Frequency Query

Word Frequency Query Results

Search in: Files & External

Display words: 1000 most frequent

With minimum length: 3

Grouping:

- Exact matches (e.g. "talk")
- With stemmed words (e.g. "talking")
- With synonyms (e.g. "speak")
- With specializations (e.g. "whisper")
- With generalizations (e.g. "communicate")

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
positive	8	17	6.80
codes	5	11	4.40
direct	6	9	3.60
individual	10	8	3.20
peer	4	8	3.20
self	4	6	2.40
which	5	6	2.40
conference	10	5	2.00
edit	4	4	1.60
praise	6	4	1.60
rubric	6	4	1.60
selective	9	4	1.60
underline	9	4	1.60
comments	8	3	1.20
constructive	12	3	1.20
connect	7	3	1.20
error	5	3	1.20
focused	7	3	1.20
group	5	3	1.20
indirect	8	3	1.20
crit	4	3	1.20
questions	9	3	1.20
symbols	7	3	1.20
writing	7	3	1.20
conferences	11	2	0.80
connect	7	2	0.80
connection	10	2	0.80

challenges (NVivo 12) (2).nvp - NVivo 12 Plus

Word Frequency Query

Word Frequency Query Results

Search in: Files & External

Display words: 1000 most frequent

With minimum length: 3

Grouping:

- Exact matches (e.g. "talk")
- With stemmed words (e.g. "talking")
- With synonyms (e.g. "speak")
- With specializations (e.g. "whisper")
- With generalizations (e.g. "communicate")

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)
students	8	154	7.88
feedback	8	46	2.35
mistakes	8	43	2.20
time	4	43	2.20
writing	7	36	1.84
errors	6	30	1.53
essay	5	27	1.38
sometimes	9	22	1.13
student	7	22	1.13
many	4	21	1.07
lack	4	20	1.02
essays	6	18	0.92
male	4	18	0.92
number	6	18	0.92
class	5	16	0.82
grammar	7	16	0.82
spelling	8	16	0.82
understand	10	16	0.82
writes	5	16	0.82
vocabulary	10	14	0.72
even	4	13	0.66
focus	5	13	0.66
connecting	10	12	0.61
learn	5	12	0.61
marks	5	12	0.61
connectors	11	11	0.56
level	5	11	0.56

methods of effective feedback (Nvivo 12) (2).mp - Nvivo 12 Plus

File Home Import Create Explore Share Node Tools

Zoom Annotations Quick Coding See Also Links Relationships Coding Stages Highlight Code Undo from This Node Spread Coding Auto Code New Annotations Word Cloud Explore Diagram Query This Node Find

Quick Access: Files, Memos, Nodes, Data, Codes, Cases, Notes, Search, Maps, Output

Nodes

Name	Files	References
delivery of WCF	1	22
direction of WCF	1	9
factors of WCF	1	4
focus of WCF	1	17
other techniques	1	70
types of WCF	1	124

Types of WCF

References

Reference 1 - 0.02% Coverage

1	praise, selective...	22	6			
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Reference 2 - 0.03% Coverage

1	praise, selective...	22	6			
---	----------------------	----	---	--	--	--

Reference 3 - 0.02% Coverage

2	Direct,	1				
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Reference 4 - 0.01% Coverage

3	Identifying the repeated errors and choosing the most important to deal with immediately and highlighting them, students to write the second and third drafts of their essays, oral CF discussion with whole class, self-correct	6	35	45	17	13
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Reference 5 - 0.04% Coverage

3	Identifying the repeated errors and choosing the most important to deal	6	35	45	17	13
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challenges (Nvivo 12) (2).mp - Nvivo 12 Plus

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Quick Access: Files, Memos, Nodes, Data, Codes, Cases, Notes, Search, Maps, Output

Nodes

Name	Files	References
cant control	1	14
emotional factors	1	11
extra challenges	0	0
feedback requires hard work	1	13
gender	1	1
challenges teachers fac	1	25
problems in all aspects of writing	1	25
student behaviour	1	48
student language proficiency	1	23
student perceptions or attitudes	1	45
themes of challenges	0	0
time	1	42
tough decision	1	8

minicopy of challenges

1	Students don't take any notice of it. Limited time to do it
2	Deciding which errors to focus on.
3	A student good at speaking commits some common errors: his/her essay. Make them learn spelling for word they have an error on
4	Students just don't care about learning from their errors, getting the second draft is the most challenging task in my They keep repeating silly nonfunctional errors, spelling mistakes even the words that they could find from the question after multiple notifications.. 3. Many of them just don't write legibly especially boys. It's very challenging to comprehend what they write.
5	4. Many of them write compound complex sentences with single verb or contradicting their ideas in the same sentence would just be rubbish without any sense and I would have clues how to fix such issues for example what to teach, what how much? This is why giving feedback is such a difficult challenge. 5. A lot of students will have problem in every or third word and it would be a very demoralizing task for the learners to learn and improve.
6	students do not read feedback / students understand the
7	Poor handwriting. Students use translators
8	student do not use my corrections into consideration, so they making the same errors 2. students believe its my job to correct them every time, so they do not even make an effort 3. st

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challenges (NVivo 12) (2) - nvivo 12 Plus

File Home Import Create Explore Share

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tough decision	1	8

might result in **demoralizing** the students. Sometimes, the entire sentence construction is wrong and then the question is as to whether point out the mistake/mark the mistake or re-write it correctly. With **4 writing courses** and around **100 students**, making each student write individually in every class and providing individual feedback is a herculean mission. **90% of the students don't bother to even go through the feedback thoroughly and makes the same mistakes repeatedly.**

participant 9
Students don't like negative comments. 2. If the teacher ask them to write again the essay they are reluctant to do it (**drafts**). 3. Some students don't bother to correct their errors (**total dependence on teacher**). 4. Students are bothered about the marks rather than developing their writing skill. Students argue that their writing is correct and students lack interest /intrinsic learning.

participant 10
It is very difficult to change a wrong expression learnt by students at a very early stage of education (**habits**). Some student's writings will not be legible enough and that consumes a lot of **time** to mark.

participant 11
Finding the right words to give positive feedback

participant 12
This takes time to mark to correct each work. Mistakes were in each

Code At Enter mode name (CTRL-Q)

23 items

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challenges (NVivo 12) (2) - nvivo 12 Plus

File Home Import Create Explore Share Node Tools

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student perceptions or attitudes

problems in all aspects of writing

fastest challenges - 5 25 references coded (6.13% Coverage)

Reference 1 - 0.09% Coverage

spelling mistakes

Reference 2 - 0.42% Coverage

ny of them write compound complex sentences without a single verb or contradicting

Reference 3 - 0.34% Coverage

A lot of students will have problem in every second or third word

Reference 4 - 0.27% Coverage

Sometimes, the entire sentence construction is wrong

Reference 5 - 0.17% Coverage

cannot fully explain their ideas

Reference 6 - 0.24% Coverage

when the students have limited vocabulary words

Reference 7 - 0.67% Coverage

In some cases, the writing is so bad, I almost feel as if I'm writing the essay when correcting their mistakes and giving feedback.

Reference 8 - 0.14% Coverage

Poor spelling and grammar 4.

Reference 9 - 0.16% Coverage

ack of vocabulary with students

Code At Enter mode name (CTRL-Q)

23 items Files: 1 References: 25 Unfiltered

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Appendix (6) Categories and themes of most effective methods of WCF

	Categories	Themes	Definition of themes	Examples of quotes
1	<p>Delivery of written corrective feedback: Empathy Avoid discouragement Avoid strong language</p>	<p>Taking care of students' psychological wellbeing is a main responsibility for teachers</p>	<p>The teachers take care of students' emotional and psychological wellbeing by the methods they apply in communicating with learners about their essays.</p>	<p>Students should not be discouraged for the mistakes they make in their essays.</p> <p>Be polite in your remarks even if you're going to point out some errors/deficiencies on students essays.</p>
2	<p>Guidelines for teachers</p>	<p>Teacher values direct their strategies of responding to student essays</p>	<p>Teachers provide a list of strategies and rules of thumb for responding to student essays.</p>	<p>If paper is bad, start with a positive, then give constructive criticism. If the paper is good, begin with constructive criticism then end on the positives.</p>

Appendix (7) categories and themes of main challenges of WCF


	Categories	Themes	Definition of themes	Examples of quotes
1	Exam Rubrics	Administrative decisions beyond teachers' control	The rules and regulations at the institute allow students to move to a higher within the Foundation Department.	Exam rubrics are very flexible which make the pass rate higher.
2	Impact on teachers	Emotional Impact of written corrective feedback on teachers	The emotional impact of responding to student essays can have on teachers due to the fact that students are carefree.	Students don't care at all about the feedback given to their essays, so I feel like I'm wasting my time at times. Repeated errors are done by students despite the meticulous effort you have given in correcting their papers.
3	Marking requires hard work from teachers	Training students to improve their learning skills	Teachers take the responsibility of training students certain skills to help them make use of the feedback they receive.	Improving their penmanship.
		How to help students unlearn their baggage	Students have acquired some beliefs about learning which hinders them from learning.	Helping students overcome the 'writing burden' they feel to make them see writing as a skill they can really master.
		Overconfidence deprives learners from making	Students hold the belief that their current level of	

		progress in writing	proficiency is rather excellent.	
4	Writing aspects	Wrongly constructed sentences leads to more writing problems	Student errors can stem from lack of knowledge of simple grammar on how to construct correct sentences.	Many errors in the structure of the sentences .
		Students have limited vocabulary repertoire	Students seem to have very limited lexical repertoire which leads to communication breakdown in writing essays.	Communication (vocabulary) barriers.
5	Student behaviour/ practice	Student do not take responsibility of their learning	Students do not invest enough effort in making use of the teachers' written corrective feedback.	student do not use my corrections into consideration

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CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL

Title of Project: Practices and perceptions of Omani teachers on written corrective feedback in foundation programs

Researcher(s) name: Remia Sumer Ali AL Zedjeli


Supervisor(s) name: Esmeeel Abdolrhazdeh
Gabriela Meier

This project has been approved for the period

From: 25/11/2017
To: 28/02/2019

Ethics Committee approval reference:

D/17/18/16

Signature:  Date: 22/11/2017
(Professor Dongbo Zheng, Graduate School of Education Ethics Officer)