

Consequences of Correction: Learner's Uptake and Perceptions through Written Corrective Feedback

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the effect of written corrective feedback (WCF) styles on high school science students' second language writing. A descriptive-correlational design explored student uptake (revision based on feedback) and perceptions on WCF, having been exposed only to the indirect and the metalinguistic WCFs. Students revised outputs in writing with both styles, and a survey assessed their perceptions. Uptake was high for both WCFs. Students' perceptions on WCF was generally positive across variables such as sex, section, and type of school graduated from. Despite exposure to only two methods, students generally preferred the direct feedback and found the red ink helpful. No significant relationship between uptake and preferences was found. The study highlights the value of WCF as a formative assessment tool of language teachers in an ESL classroom.

Keywords: error treatment, WCF, revision, preferences, uptake

INTRODUCTION

Second language learners inevitably make errors in language learning. These "language slips" they commit also indicate their level of proficiency in the target language. To produce learners, who are, in the end capable of effectively communicating at a high level in English the target language, Mariko & Mutema (2012) highlights the teacher's role is to assist the learners to work on reducing their errors.

In second language (L2) writing, errors have been the subject of a growing body of researches, whether on their nature or causes. As such, error treatment is one of the key issues faced by both teachers and researchers (Liu, 2008). Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) reported that a growing body of research has examined the effectiveness of written corrective feedback (WCF) for L2 writing. An important area that has attracted much attention is how students and teachers perceive the usefulness of written corrective feedback (WCF) (Montgomery & Baker, 2007).

As an integral part of the learning process, feedback has a generally significant impact on learning. Hattie and Timperley (2007) described it as the most powerful single moderator that enhances achievement. As a form of formative assessment, feedback is an essential part of effective learning. It helps students understand the subject being studied and gives them clear guidance on how to improve their learning. Bellon (1991) et al. stated that academic feedback is more strongly and consistently related to achievement than any other teaching behavior. This relationship is consistent regardless of grade, socioeconomic status, race, or school setting. Feedback can improve a student's confidence, self-awareness, and enthusiasm for learning.

Myles (2002) highlighted feedback to be of utmost importance to the writing process. Without individual attention and sufficient feedback to errors, improvement will not take place. With the fact that L2 writing

contains errors, teachers are expected to help learners develop strategies for self-correction and regulation. Liu (2008) however, highlighted the controversy as to whether error feedback helps L2 students improve the accuracy and overall quality of their writing (Ferris, 1999).

Several studies have been made on the role and impact of corrective feedback or error correction on second language writing. L2 researchers and practitioners have investigated the effect of written corrective feedback on prompting L2 learners' writing from different perspectives. Interestingly, over the last 18 years, the value of corrective feedback is still under debate; even more ironic, the gap between research and real-world practice continues to exist (Hsu, 2014).

This study attempted to explore the other dimensions in second language (L2) teaching and learning with regard to the provision of written corrective feedback (WCF) in learners' outputs. Likewise, students' uptake, perceptions, and preferences as results of WCF provision were investigated.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

Several theories have brought about the emergence of providing written error correction in the L2 writing classroom. In order to understand various theories of feedback, it is important to understand its history. This has transformed from a behaviorist to a cognitive perspective over time.

Behaviorism is a learning theory which considers anything an organism does as a behavior. These behaviors can be scientifically studied regardless of what happens in the mind (psychological constructs such as thoughts, feelings). As a theory, behaviorism emphasizes observable behaviors. Similarly, it contends the non-differences between publicly observable processes and the privately observable processes including thinking and feeling. Bangert-Drowns et. al., (1991) noted that behaviorists viewed feedback more as a stimulus-response process, where the purpose of feedback was to stimulate a person to repeat a correct answer. This principle served as the basis for programmed instruction (Shao, 2015).

The Cognitive perspective, on the other hand, has evolved in response to the behaviorist approach. The Cognitive theory defines learning as "a semi-permanent change in mental processes or associations." Cognitivists do not require an outward exhibition of learning but focus more on the internal processes and connections that take place during learning. A cognitive theory of learning sees second language acquisition as a conscious and reasoned thinking process, involving the deliberate use of learning strategies. Learning strategies are special ways of processing information that enhance comprehension, learning or retention of information. This explanation of language learning contrasts strongly with the behaviorist account of language learning, which sees language learning as an unconscious, automatic process.

For the cognitivists, feedback is more than just a stimulus-response process. Proponents of the cognitive perspective, view feedback as a process that assists learners by providing them just enough information to self-control and self-regulate their own learning (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991). Cognitivism started to view the learner as an active participant of the learning process. The learning process is an interaction between a learner and the environment. It stressed the importance of feedback as a crucial component of a successful learning process in this environment (Bangert-Drowns et al., 1991).

The role of the learner in the learning process sets the main delineation between the behaviorist and the cognitive approaches to feedback provision. The proponents of behaviorist theory view learners as passive receivers of feedback, whereas proponents of the cognitive perspective view learners as active participants in the learning process.

With the established and relevant theories in second language learning, and the recommendations of the related previous research undertakings on error treatment through WCF; the present study attempted to find

out the perceptions and the preferences of the high school students on the provision of written corrective feedback. Furthermore, the effect of the corrective feedback styles on the uptake of students in second language (L2) writing was ascertained.

INPUT PROCESS OUTPUT

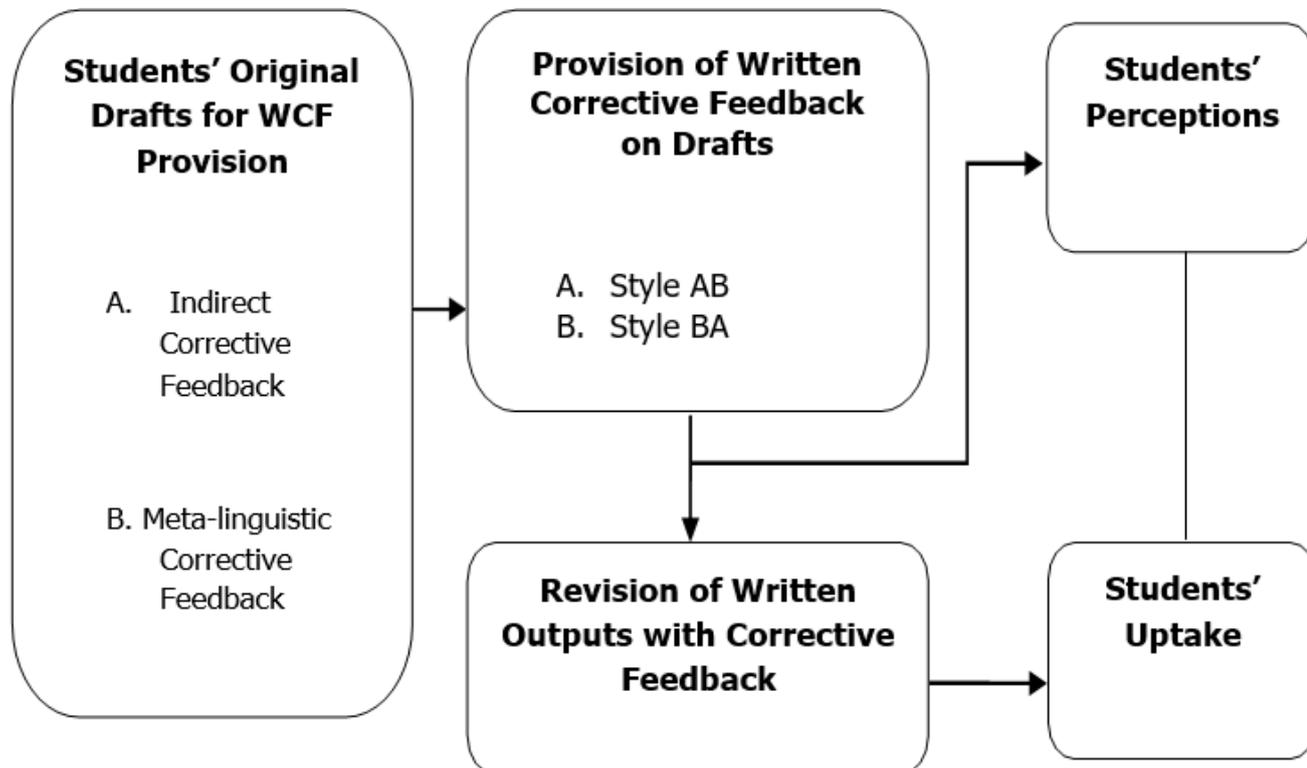


Figure 1. Relationship among the written corrective feedback styles used by teachers, students' perceptions and uptake.

The Input Process Output (IPO) paradigm was utilized in this study and it provides the general structure and guide for the direction of the study. The model is viewed as a series of boxes (processing elements) connected by inputs and outputs. Flow charts and Process diagram are often used to represent the process. The aim to solve the problem by using processing elements is addressed. This paradigm entailed the review of three features included in the study: the written corrective styles; the revision of drafts; and the effects of the feedback on students' perceptions, preferences, and uptake. Figure 1 shows the paradigm of the study using the IPO Model.

This study sought to find out the perceptions and uptake of students on the varied written corrective feedback styles used by teachers. Specifically, this sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the students' perceptions on corrective feedback when taken as a whole and when classified according to sex; section; and type of elementary school graduated from?
2. What are the preferred corrective feedback styles of the students as reflected in their perceptions, when taken as a whole and when classified according to sex; section; and type of elementary school graduated from?
3. What is the extent of students' uptake with corrective feedback when taken as a whole and when classified according to sex; section; and type of elementary school graduated from?
4. Is there is a significant difference in students' perceptions on written corrective feedback when classified according to sex; section; type of elementary school graduated from?

5. Is there a significant difference in the extent of uptake when classified according to sex; section; type of elementary school graduated from?
6. Is there a significant relationship between student’s perceptions and uptake?

METHODOLOGY

The descriptive-correlational method was adopted to achieve the purpose of the study. The design was employed as the study will correlate the variables, namely learners’ uptake and perceptions.

The data for students’ uptake (use of corrections in the revision of the first draft) were gathered after the participants have revised the six original texts that had been provided with the two written corrective feedbacks.

The survey method using a researcher-made questionnaire was implemented to gather data for the respondents’ perceptions and preferences. This survey was done after the participants’ revision of their outputs.

The participant-respondents of this study consisted of Grade 9 students in the two heterogeneous sections of the Special Science Class of the first provincial high school in Iloilo City, Philippines. A total of 61 students, 30 (49.2%) from Grade 9 – Gold and 31 (50.8%) from Grade 9 – Silver comprised the population.

Purposive sampling was employed in the selection of the participant–respondents. For this study, the sample has been chosen because the learners take the subject Technical Writing as part of their curriculum.

Considering ethical matters, approval of the principal and the special program head was sought. The subject teacher handling the two sections was also requested for the consent. The procedures aligned with the data gathering for the study were explained to the students so that they can give their assent. All measures were implemented upon meeting the ethical requisites.

A researcher-made questionnaire, duly validated by a panel of high school language teachers and college professors was utilized to find out the participant-respondents perceptions on and preferences of the written corrective feedback (WCF) styles provided to correct their compositions in English. The statements in the questionnaire were coded as to the themes in order to guide the researcher in the analysis.

For data collection, six written outputs of the subjects in their English Class were analyzed for the experiment. The first three outputs of Section Gold were provided with indirect written corrective feedback, while the first three outputs of Section Silver were provided with meta-linguistic written corrective feedback. The fourth to sixth outputs of Section Gold were provided with meta-linguistic written corrective feedback. On the other hand, the fourth to sixth outputs of Section Silver were provided with indirect written corrective feedback. The implementation of the two WCF styles for this study is simplified in Figure 2.

SECTION	DRAFTS					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
GOLD	<i>Indirect Written Corrective Feedback</i>			Meta-linguistic Corrective Feedback		
SILVER	Meta-linguistic Corrective Feedback			<i>Indirect Written Corrective Feedback</i>		

Figure 2. Summary of Schedule for WCF Implementation for the Participant-Respondents’ Original Texts.

All drafts or outputs of the participant-respondents were required of revision to check if corrections were understood and properly applied. The data for uptake is the mean of the raw scores from the six revised

written outputs.

The survey method was adopted to collect data for the purpose of finding out the relationship between participants’ perceptions on WCF. Their preferences were also inferred from the statements of perceptions in the survey. The uptake of the participants was correlated with their preference as implied in their perceptions. The survey was conducted after the collection of data in the WCF implementation and students’ revision had been completed.

The processing, computation, and analysis of data in this study were made with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). *Frequency counts, percentage analyses, mean, and the standard deviation* were used for descriptive analysis. For the inferential analysis, the *Mann-Whitney U Test* and the *Spearman-rho test* were used. The significance of the differences was set at 0.05 level; also, the significance of the relationship was at 0.05 level.

RESULTS

The findings of the present investigation were:

- Students generally have positive perceptions of WCF and view teachers as the most reliable source of feedback. Friends or peers are also considered feedback sources inasmuch as they can do self-revision.
- Students expect teachers to correct all kinds of errors that may committed in their compositions.
- Direct WCF (correction with the provided answer) is generally preferred by the students, but they can also process indirect and metalinguistic feedback (underlining errors or providing clues).
- Students value the importance of revising their drafts with the corrections provided. This is congruent to the highly perceived statement expressing WCF provision as an aid in revisions for a better output as by the respondents.
- Students perceive WCF as helpful for improving writing accuracy, avoiding mistakes, and learning English.
- Students have the impression of an assessment with the WCF provision. They feel being cared for when corrections are provided in their compositions.
- Red ink remains the preferred color for marking corrections, despite student acceptance of other colors.
- Students agree to the inclusion of comments in the provision of corrections. This is attributed to their confirmation that modifications in the intended meaning was influenced by the corrections. Consequently, this supports their view that teacher clarification needs to be integrated in the WCF provision.
- All participants showed high uptake of WCF, regardless of gender, section, or previous school.

Table 1 presents the summary of the statements under the coded theme in the survey questionnaire.

Table 1. Perceptions of Respondents on WCF when taken as an entire group

Statement	SD	Mean	Description
<p><i>Source of Feedback</i></p> <p>Teachers are the most reliable source of corrections for my errors in English compositions.</p>	.50	3.43	Moderately Perceived

<i>Extent of Correction</i>			
Teachers should correct all kinds of errors I may commit in my compositions.	.66	3.36	Moderately Perceived
<i>Manner of Error Correction</i>			
I like my teacher to underline or encircle my error and provide the correct form.	.72	3.41	Moderately Perceived
<i>Need for Revision of Draft with WCF</i>			
Revising my first draft with corrections is important.	.48	3.66	Highly Perceived
<i>Perceived Benefits of WCF</i>			
The corrections in my composition can help me make revisions for a better output.	.47	3.75	Highly Perceived
The corrections in my composition can help me achieve grammatical accuracy.	.48	3.64	Highly Perceived
The corrections in my composition can help me avoid making the same mistakes.	.54	3.54	Highly Perceived
The corrections in my composition help me learn the English language better.	.51	3.66	Highly Perceived
<i>Affective Facets of WCF Provision</i>			
I feel I am being assessed when I see the marks in my composition.	.69	2.89	Moderately Perceived
I feel cared for when I get corrections from my teacher.	.50	3.31	Moderately Perceived
<i>Ink Color for WCF Provision</i>			
I prefer the red ink for my teacher's correction on my errors.	.67	3.39	Moderately Perceived
<i>Other Impact WCF Provision</i>			
Teacher's comments should go with corrections.	.50	3.53	Highly Perceived

Descriptive Rating: 3.51 – 4.00 Highly Perceived; 2.51 – 3.50 Moderately Perceived; 1.51 – 2.50 Less Perceived; 1.00 – 1.50 Least Perceived

- No significant differences were noted in the perceptions of the students on WCF when taken as a whole and classified according to gender, section, or previous school.
- No significant differences were noted in the uptake scores of the students with WCF when taken as a whole and classified according to gender or previous school. On the other hand, a significant difference was observed in the uptake scores when the respondents are classified according to section.

- There is no significant relationship between students' uptake of feedback (revision based on WCF) and their overall perceptions.

DISCUSSION

The results of the present study affirm the study conducted by Voric (2008) suggesting a general approval of teacher feedback for errors. Peer feedback is also valued because it enhances a sense of audience, raises learner's awareness of their own weaknesses and strengths, encourages collaborative learning, and fosters ownership of text (Tsui & Ng, 2002). Independent revision of drafts as approved by the participant-respondents may be attributed to the findings of Paulus (1999) where students can make surface-level revisions on their own; in contrast to the meaning-level orientated feedback teachers and peers.

Moreover, the positive perceptions of the respondents towards the provision of written corrective feedback supports the cognitive interactionist theories such as the interaction hypothesis (Long, 1996) and the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 2001), proposing that error correction assists language acquisition by helping learners to establish form- meaning mappings.

The results of the present study are also supported by the study of Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) where the students considered it "most useful for teachers to provide WCF on as many errors as possible." Another point or view is presented by the findings of Corpuz (2011) where teachers perceive WCF as disadvantageous because students might not understand the feedback, were supported in the results of this study.

In this study, the participant-respondents most preferred that "a teacher would underline or encircle a student's error and provide the correct form" (direct corrective feedback). In contrast, the study of Shen et al (2016) found that the respondents preferred most the instructor "locating the error and also indicating the type of error" (metalinguistic corrective feedback). Despite the difference, the participant-respondents still have a positive perception of corrective feedback regardless of the strategy. Furthermore an assumption on the level of the independence of the learners may be considered; that the more advanced the students, the less they required explicit feedback on their grammatical errors.

The positive perceptions of the respondents towards the provision of written corrective feedback supports the cognitive interactionist theories such as the interaction hypothesis (Long, 1991) and the noticing hypothesis (Schmidt, 1994), proposing that error correction assists language acquisition by helping learners to establish form-meaning mappings. Furthermore, the importance of WCF as perceived by teachers such as; improvement of writing accuracy, promotion of independent learning, and encouragement of students for more reading are supported by the aforementioned results.

The respondents' performance as affected by WCF can be linked to the Self Determination Theory (SDT) as one of the main trends in L2 motivational research. Developed by Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan in the mid-1980s, the SDT indicates there are two basic types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic. The awareness of the participant-respondents that their first drafts are compared with their revised written outputs, they value of both the intrinsic and extrinsic motivators may come at play.

CONCLUSION

In view of the findings of the study, the following conclusions are drawn:

- Written corrective feedback remains as a valued strategy in facilitating one of the macro-skills in second language learning. As a long-standing practice in language classrooms, the provision of WCF

is expected to be integrated consistently.

- Students generally manifest a positive view of written corrective feedback as a strategy to enhance their writing skills. Relative to this is their view of the teachers as a reliable source of WCF.
- As regards the extent of error correction, WCF provision is valued for all types of error (universal) rather than on specific or limited ones (focused).
- The common types of WCF styles employed by teachers are acceptable. However, direct corrective feedback is preferred due to the ease of utilization compared to the indirect and the metalinguistic corrective feedbacks.
- The use of the red ink as a marker focusing attention to target errors for correction remains valued. As may be established by habit, the red ink for teachers' corrections is still preferred by students despite their acceptance of other ink colors such as green or violet.
- Students perceive the positive impact of WCF provision on their writing. They perceive the revising their drafts with the corrections as an important part of the practice; hence, revision is a necessity. They value the gain towards improvement and efficacy and see WCF as a tool to make revisions for a better output, achieve grammatical accuracy, avoid the same mistakes, and learn the English language better.
- Some of the corrections may be difficult to understand. Students believe that teacher's comments should go with corrections. Necessary adjustments are also needed since some corrections changed the intended meaning in the student's writings and some of the corrections needed teacher clarification.
- WCF is a tool that facilitates improvement student's writing, especially in their grammatical control. The provision of WCF to the drafts of the students may facilitated a positive yield for their uptake. WCF strategies to improve their outputs are also deemed feasible to utilize.
- The learners' processing of the WCF manifesting uptake does not bear any significance to their opinions and personal beliefs.

IMPLICATIONS

The results of the study have led to certain implications for theory and practice in relation to written corrective feedback its effects on uptake, and the perceptions of the students on teacher practices of WCF provision.

Teachers are still considered the most reliable source of corrective feedback in students' written outputs. As such, they are expected to continue WCF provision as part of the formative practices in second language classrooms. Their being persons of ability, comprehension, and experience allow them to bridge the gaps that students may commit along their use of L2 in specific purposes. Furthermore, despite the growing theories for language learning, the earlier theories highlighting behavior formation still provide a stable foundation in L2 teaching practices. With the results gleaned from the data, educators should maintain and be consistent with practices that facilitate habit formation, and eventually fossilize the positive attributes leading to learning.

Aside from behavior formation or modification, students have to be exposed to activities that lead them to fill the gaps under the teacher's guidance. While required to revise their drafts, they were exposed to utilize two WCF strategies by making use of indirect feedback. Consequently, considering the very high uptake, it can be said that the scaffolding of corrections has facilitated at least a semi-permanent change in mental processes or associations of the learners. The conscious and reasoned thinking process, involving the deliberate use of learning strategies by the learners has facilitated the maximum effectiveness of the intervention.

Students who take responsibility of their own progress benefit from WCF as an intervention. As implied in

the results, students' uptake considering their response to the indirect and metalinguistic performance in revising their drafts writing can be attributed to how they have processed the WCF provided.

The major role of teachers in the classroom as a guide and facilitator is crucial.

Teachers should provide opportunities where students are made to accomplish things with minimum supervision. The capacity of the students as an active participant in the teaching-learning process needs to be addressed. Furthermore, the perceptions of the students, independent from their uptake scores suggest that some practices may become effective when students are involved in some aspect of decision-making. Negotiations and compromise between the students and the teacher is be deemed crucial more often.

Considering the underlying theories for WCF provision in classroom situations could yield significant outputs from the students because they are provided support, encouragement, and knowledge that would enhance their writing skills. Furthermore, the constant assistance for queries and other clarifications would prepare them for complex writing tasks.

As regards practice, the most essential pedagogical implication of this study is that teachers must give corrective feedback. Corrective feedback has been found an effective process in enhancing the writing performance of the students. The overall mean uptake score of the participants indicates that the provision of written corrective feedback has facilitated the learner's better revision of their drafts. While language orientation and anticipated language competency may be considerable factors, evidence of the effectiveness of corrective feedback on uptake is significant.

With the number of research studies advocating the facilitative role and effectiveness of corrective feedback, the WCF provision remains to be a tool to enhance L2 learning. Students and teachers benefit from the practice because they can work together for the success of the writing tasks.

It can also be implied that corrective feedback may be more effective when other factors are considered. Students must be required to revise their drafts with WCF in order for them to immediately recognize of their errors. Given justifiable time to digest and understand the feedback given to them by revising their outputs is also to be considered. With this system, students must be ready and have sufficient time to study the corrections and incorporate them on other written entries.

While students might have a preference on the kind of feedback or the strategy of WCF provision, it can be helpful to have an agreement as to how the WCF will be provided, depending on the output required. Moreover, teachers may also identify and discuss the specific skills to be improved in students' written outputs so that appropriate feedback be incorporated.

While teachers assess the student's ability to make use of WCF, it would be significant for the learner to the how he/she progresses in the process by comparing drafts and revised outputs. This will further facilitate the learner's skill to grow and take responsibility of his/her own progress.

Furthermore, WCF provision will have its optimum result not just in one skill but in other language related if teacher-student dialogs are made. Expressing what they expect with regard to feedback, and giving them reasons why feedback is provided, students may become more receptive to different types of feedback. This may also reduce the negative affective impact of corrective feedback.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the light of the preceding findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are advanced:

Students. They have to be trained to continuously improve their writing skills in order for them to cope with academic and social demands. Their exposure to and performance of various writing tasks will facilitate the honing of the required sub-skills. They must have the knowledge of the writing process and the relative preparations to be ensured of their progress in the discipline.

Teachers. They should use corrective feedback to help students develop their written competence, with the goal of developing students' writing skills. Understanding that errors are inevitably part of l2 learning and progress, teachers should continue to provide negative evidence to students written outputs. They must conduct teacher-student dialog to give way to some misconceptions and queries of the learners. Furthermore, an observation and analysis of the learners' background should be considered in the light of WCF style used.

English department heads. They may use the results of the study to revise or enhance language programs with the integration of WCF as a constant in the writing classroom. While students are now viewed as active participants of the learning process, the primordial role of the teachers as the source of knowledge remains. They can also initiate teacher conferences on the trends for WCF practices for updates or revalidation.

School administrators. They need to ensure that sufficient time and resources are provided for language programs in order to enrich instructions. They may enjoin teachers to

effectively develop students' skills in writing by employing corrective feedback on students' written outputs. While, they to see to it that facilities and resources make up an environment that nurtures learning, master or senior language teachers may be required to come up with action researches in line with WCF provision in writing.

Curriculum planners in English. They may also consider WCF provision in the SHS writing classrooms. While writing competencies have been identified, necessity of the strategy as an intervention may be deemed vital. Trainings on WCF can also be facilitated in line with the designing of writing courses.

Policymakers and supervisors. They need to create and promote strong language programs that give focus on writing and other important learning skills. They may provide trainings for language teachers on the use of corrective feedback and other strategies and techniques to address issues and difficulties in students' written tasks.

Future researchers. They may consider conducting studies that focus on the use of

WCF on improving students' written outputs. It is also recommended that the present study be replicated using a large sample size and longer period of intervention time to help increase the validity and reliability of this research. Also, related studies such as the integration of teacher conferences in the provision of WCF may be undertaken.

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