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Original Paper

The Effect of Gender, Experience, and Training on Teachers’ Written Corrective Feedback Practices

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Abstract

This study investigated whether EFL Post-Basic education teachers’ perceptions toward teachers’ practice of written corrective feedback (WCF) varied according to three contextual variables gender, teaching experience, and in-service training on WCF. It also attempted to investigate the challenges teachers encounter when providing WCF. The quantitative data was collected from 156 EFL teachers who were teaching Post-Basic education grades (11-12). The participants were randomly selected from three governorates in Oman: Muscat, Al Batinah South, and Sharqia North. The study showed that the only variable that had an effect on teachers’ perceptions was the number of training workshops/courses received on WCF. It also revealed that teachers perceived the challenge of focusing on all types of errors (content, organisation, and language) simultaneously as the most common difficulty they were experiencing. Some suggested recommendations of the study for the Ministry of Education, EFL teachers, and further studies were finally provided.

Keywords

Written corrective feedback (WCF), gender, teaching experience, in-service training, challenge

1. Introduction

Writing is one of the most complex and challenging skills for learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) and second language (ESL). It is considered as “the last language skill to be acquired” (Nunan, 1991, p. 91). Many studies have investigated the challenges that EFL and ESL learners face in acquiring writing skills and the main reasons for the difficulties involved in learning and teaching it (Ansari, 2012; Ghabool & Kashef, 2012; Nyasimi, 2014; Javid & Umer, 2014; Shukri, 2014; Fareh, 2014; Al Badi, 2015). As effective writing requires mastery of organization of ideas, accuracy, use of

complex grammatical devices, choice of words and correct sentence structure to build meaning and formulate the progression of written expressions of ideas (Hedge, 1998), both native and non-native speakers face serious problems with these elements of writing. However, EFL and ESL writing is even more complex. EFL and ESL student writers are required to fully master the multiple writing skills needed to convey ideas and information using language that is syntactically, semantically and culturally appropriate and effective (Rass, 2015). Arabic-speaking EFL learners often face many challenges in writing, since the two languages, Arabic and English, differ in terms of their linguistic and orthographic systems, such as the direction of the writing system, and use of different alphabets. Therefore, Arab learners tend to transfer features from their first language when writing in English. Generally speaking, the most common writing problems that Arab EFL learners face are a lack of linguistic proficiency, organization problems, cohesion and coherence problems, limited vocabulary and ideas, and L1 interference (Rass, 2015; Trabelsi, 2015). In Oman, Trabelsi (2015) conducted a study to evaluate the performance of General Foundation Program students in writing and specified the main writing problems that make it difficult for them to improve their writing abilities. He found out that when students first joined the foundation program, their level of writing was so low that they expected not to be able to construct well-written pieces of writing with meaningful and grammatically correct sentences. They had serious problems with the organization of text. Many required elements of written composition were missed, such as the introduction, thesis statement, main ideas and supporting details (for example using the general-to specific strategy in presenting ideas) and conclusion. They also had problems in organizing ideas logically through using a variety of cohesive devices to show the logical sequence and relationship of ideas. In his study, Trabelsi found out that the students had poor grammatical, stylistic and lexical knowledge, which are considered to be the most common errors that underpin a lack of writing accuracy. Similar results were obtained by Al Seyabi and Tuzlukova (2014), who studied the gaps in English language teaching and learning in two contexts: post-basic schools and universities. It was found that all participants agreed that they had problems with writing such as vocabulary choice, limited ideas about the topic, coherence problems, and linguistic difficulties.

Students thus need to be provided with proper guidance and corrective feedback from their teachers in order to overcome the writing problems. Providing written corrective feedback (WCF), which is defined as a form of negative feedback that includes a response to students' errors in producing language (Ellis, 2009), is not an easy task for language teachers. However, written corrective feedback (WCF) has a positive influence on student writing as well as students' perceptions of their writing skills (Leki, 1990). Hyland (2003) notes that feedback in L2 writing facilitates the development of writing skills by adding a layer of scaffolding in order to extend a learner's abilities when writing in English. It is important to provide learners with WCF to avoid mistakes becoming fossilized or repeated in the future (Ur, 2012). The evidence from research is that students who receive written corrective feedback from their writing teachers have better writing performance compared to those who do not (for example Chandler, 2003; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008).

However, several factors could influence practitioners' views on practicing effective WCF and many challenges might be faced while providing corrective feedback on students' writings. Although many studies have investigated the teachers' perceptions on WCF, few studies have examined whether different contextual variables influence the use of corrective feedback to respond to students' written errors, such as gender and teaching and learning experiences. There are also few studies that shed some light on the difficulties that teachers might encounter when providing WCF.

1.1 Purpose of the Study

This study has two main objectives. First, it aims to investigate the variation in teachers' perceptions towards WCF practices according to three contextual variables, gender, teaching experience, and in-service training on WCF. Second, it examines the challenges teachers face when providing WCF on students' writing, as perceived by teachers.

1.2 Research Questions

This study seeks to answer two main research questions:

1. Do the perceptions of EFL Post-Basic education teachers vary according to gender, teaching experience, and in-service training received on WCF?
2. What are the challenges of providing WCF as perceived by EFL Post-Basic education teachers?

1.3 Significance of the Study

A list of common difficulties that EFL teachers might face when providing WCF will hopefully be provided to the Ministry of Education in particular and other EFL practitioners in general in order to find the best solutions to overcome them. This study may add to the literature on this topic, especially in the Omani school context.

2. Review of the Literature

Teachers' perceptions and practices are influenced by a myriad of factors that should be considered when critically studying and reviewing the issue of written corrective feedback. The following section discusses these factors.

2.1 The Factors Affecting WCF

In light of the fact that WCF is a complex process, and according to the argument by Ellis (2009) that "there is no corrective feedback recipe" (p. 106), the practice of giving WCF can be influenced by many factors. Based on the literature review, these factors are divided into three groups: learner, teacher, and situational factors.

It is well known that the learner is central to the process of providing WCF. The learner-internal and external factors play a role in developing the process of internalizing the WCF received and increasing students' ability to acquire and produce L2. The internal factors are divided into two types: cognitive and affective factors. The factors that might hinder the cognitive processes when providing WCF are mainly related to the limited capacity of the learner's working memory as well as his or her readiness and aptitude to learn the second language. Bitchener and Storch (2016) note that learners with a high

level of L2 proficiency, along with a higher level of language learning readiness and aptitude, are more likely to attend to the WCF received and notice the gap between the input (students' written text) and the output (teachers' comments and corrective feedback). The affective variables, or motivational factors, refer to the learners' goals and beliefs. Students might be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to learn the L2. It has been noted that the students' well-established goals have a positive effect on their motivation and desire to learn a new language, which in turn helps them derive great benefit from the WCF provided. Additionally, students need to believe in the importance of receiving WCF and be aware of the significance of different WCF types, amounts, sources, and types of errors to focus on. For example, ignorance about a certain correction provided by teachers may be due to the students' beliefs that the correction of some errors in a particular type of WCF is not helpful. In other words, students' beliefs with regard to WCF underlie their responses to their teachers' written feedback (Bitchener & Storch, 2016).

It has been noted that teachers' WCF practices vary. This variation may be for several reasons, such as teachers' beliefs and goals, their teaching and learning experience, and their learners' level of proficiency. As mentioned above, teachers' beliefs may affect their actual practices. In addition to teachers' beliefs, the goals, either pedagogical or personal, that teachers are willing to achieve could play an influential role in teachers' decisions about the WCF provided (Hyland, 2011; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Leki, 1990). Leki (1990) has argued that teachers' beliefs and goals are generally shaped by their learning and teaching experiences (cited in Bitchener & Storch, 2016). In a major advance in 2015, Norouzian investigated the effect of the teaching experience on teachers' responses to students' writing errors. The study examined 15 EFL teachers (nine male and six female) teaching at the University of Tehran. The researcher found that the experienced teachers were more inclined to use a selective approach when providing WCF and used more precise and explicit correction than less experienced teachers. This finding showed that teaching experience might affect the process of providing feedback to students. In addition, Lee (2008) identified one of the factors affecting teachers' practices with respect to WCF, which is the lack of training. Thus, this factor could affect the development of teachers' professional knowledge and learning experience, which in turn could influence their pedagogical practices regarding WCF. In a study by Hyland and Hyland (2006), the researchers used think aloud protocol data and concluded that the decisions made by teachers regarding WCF practices were based on their own pedagogical goals as well as their students' level of L2 proficiency. Teachers thus need to consider not only what type and amount of WCF they should provide, but also to whom they provide these types. Consideration of the level of the learners and their writing needs is also a main factor influencing teachers' practices when providing effective WCF. This may help teachers to opt for the appropriate type of WCF (direct or indirect), the amount of WCF (focused or unfocused), the type of errors to focus on, the type of writing task, and the number of submitted drafts for each learner.

Bitchener and Storch (2016) state that, “Teachers’ feedback practices may also be influenced by the sociocultural and personal dimensions of the context” (p. 112). These dimensions are represented through the relationship between teachers and students as well as the stakeholders’ expectations of teachers’ WCF practices. The researchers note that a strong relationship between teachers and students may make students have a positive attitude toward teachers’ WCF. Consequently, students will be more likely to attend to teacher’s WCF practices regarding on what errors they provide feedback on, and how they give feedback. In addition, Lee (2008) notes that teachers might seek to satisfy the expectations imposed by parents, students, and administrators regarding their ways of providing error correction. In a study of 26 secondary school teachers in Hong Kong, Lee (2008) concluded that teachers’ WCF practices were influenced by the school authorities, as the participants said in the interviews that they were expected to provide comprehensive feedback and to focus mainly on linguistic errors, while ignoring other aspects of writing. Furthermore, teachers might follow a certain practice of providing WCF in order to meet the expectations of students and their parents, especially if the educational system is driven by testing students through exams. Furthermore, if students’ expectations are not satisfied, the students might become less motivated to make use of the written CF received.

As a result of these factors, Goldstein (2006) asserted that researchers investigating teachers’ WCF should try to control these variables, as they may interfere with the validity of the results. It is worth noting that these factors are overlapping and all have an impact on the process of providing students with effective WCF.

2.2 The Challenges of Providing WCF

Research into WCF has discussed in considerable depth the obstacles encountered when providing corrective feedback on students’ writing errors. Most studies found that the major difficulty that teachers usually face regarding providing WCF is that it is time-consuming (Al-Said, 1996; Lee, 2003; Hamouda, 2011; Al Shamsi, 2013; Al Bakri, 2015). The teacher participants in Lee (2003) were asked an open-ended question about the concerns or problems they faced when giving WCF. Besides the constraint of the large amount of time required, the participants stated that the error codes used could be a problematic for both teachers and students. Low achievers may find it difficult to use these codes to correct their own errors and the excessive use of such codes may cause confusion for students. Moreover, teachers might be challenged to categorize the errors based on the marking code system. Another difficulty regarding the provision of WCF, as reported by the teacher participants, is the poor level of students’ L2 proficiency. This difficulty is also asserted by Al-Said’s (1996) study of 31 teachers at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU). The EFL teachers reported that “students’ limited background knowledge and their low ability in English” were the main difficulties when providing responses to students’ writing (p. 107). As students with a low level of English proficiency may also make too many errors, teachers need to provide appropriate type of WCF for them. Furthermore, teachers may find it difficult to provide WCF based on students’ proficiency level and their writing needs, particularly in large classes. The constraint of large classes with a high number of students is

considered as another challenging aspect that English teachers face when providing WCF. Consequently, teachers will be required to provide feedback on a very large number of papers. This difficulty was also raised by EFL teachers who participated in Hamouda's (2011) study. Teachers might thus fail to provide inclusive WCF on students' errors. Al Shamsi (2013) asked 200 grade 4-8 English teachers in United Arab Emirates to complete a semi-structured questionnaire about the challenges they might encounter regarding error correction. Importantly, they identified the challenge of students' limited ability to understand teachers' comments written in English. In addition, 83% of the teacher participants involved in Salteh and Sadeghi (2015) mentioned that students pay less attention to the teachers' comments and focus on the total mark they received in the writing task regardless of the WCF provided by the teachers. The students' disinterest in the WCF provided may affect teachers' feelings and their motivation to provide the correction. This argument is clarified in Al Bakri (2015), who explained that teachers felt disappointed when their efforts were not appreciated by their students. The ongoing process of providing students with WCF could also make teachers feel bored and stressed. However, few teachers with a mean of 2.27 stated that responding to students' writing is boring (Al Shamsi, 2013). Hence, other than these difficulties related to teachers and students, some obstacles are encountered because of the policies and authorities imposed by educational institutions, such as heavy workload imposed by school duties and the obligation to follow and complete the syllabus.

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

As the aim of the present study was to explore whether teachers' perceptions with regard to WCF vary in terms of three demographic variables: gender, teaching experience and training workshops and to examine the challenges encountered by teachers when providing WCF on students' writing, it was considered appropriate to use descriptive research design. The quantitative data of this study was obtained from the questionnaires.

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of the present study includes all English language teachers (both male and female) who are teaching Post-Basic grades (11-12) in public schools in three governorates in Oman (Muscat, Al-Batinah South, and Sharqia North) during the academic year 2017/2018. These particular governorates were chosen because they are fairly representative of the cultural and educational diversity in Oman. Based on the statistics given by the Ministry of Education (MOE), there are about 541 grade 11-12 EFL teachers in these three governorates (258 males and 283 females).

About 30% of the teacher population was randomly selected from these three regions. Therefore, about 156 grade-11-12 EFL teachers participated in this study. The sample included 46 male teachers (29.5%) and 110 female teachers (70.5%). Seventy-one participants were from Muscat (16 males and 55 females). There were 55 from Al-Batinah South (21 males and 34 females) and 30 teachers were from

Sharqia North (9 males and 21 females).

With regard to their level of education, the number of the teachers who had a Bachelor's degree was 139 (89.1%) and there were 17 participants who had Master's degree (10.9%). The sample included 62 teachers currently teaching Grade 11 (39.74%), 47 teachers of Grade 12 (30.13%), and 47 teaching both Grades 11 and 12. According to the length of teaching experience, the teacher participants replied as follows: 1-5 years: 23, 14.7%, 6-10 years: 57, 36.5%, 11-15: 40, 25.6%, and 15+: 36, 23.1%. Therefore, the highest percentage of participants had between six and 10 years of teaching experience, while novice teachers with one to five years of teaching experience accounted for the lowest percentage of participants. In addition, the respondents were selected based on the number of training workshops on WCF they had received. Table 1 shows the distribution of teachers in each group.

Table 1. Distribution of Teachers Based on In-service Training Workshops on WCF (N = 156)

Groups	N	%
No training	72	46.2
1 training workshop/course	35	22.4
2 training workshops/courses	16	10.3
More than 2 training workshops/courses	33	21.2
Total	156	100%

The data presented in Table 1 show that 72 of the respondents had not attended any training workshops on WCF (46.2%). There were 35 teachers who had attended one training workshop only (22.4%). The total number of the teachers who had received two training workshops was 16 which indicates 10.3 percent of the sample of EFL teacher participants. There were 33 teachers who had received more than two training workshops on WCF (21.2%).

3.3 Research Instrument

The instruments used to collect the research data were a 5-point Likert scale online-questionnaires administered using Google Forms. In fact, the researcher chose distributing the questionnaires electronically for the purpose of collecting data in a short period of time from a large number of randomly selected Post-Basic EFL teachers across the various selected regions in the Sultanate about their perceptions on issues related to WCF.

In this study, the questionnaires were used to answer these two research questions. The researcher developed the questionnaires items from the literature and similar questionnaires used by other researchers in previous studies (Lee, 2003; Ko, 2010; Eissa & Fares, 2010; Al Hajri & Al-Mahrooqi, 2013; Al Shamsi, 2013; Hamouda, 2011). Based on the validity check and contextualisation of the instruments, some items were modified and some new items were added to target all the issues investigated in this study.

The questionnaire includes four sections. In the first section on demographic information, both teachers were asked about nationality, gender, governorate, educational qualification, years of teaching experience, and the number of in-service training received on WCF. The second section deals with general knowledge of the importance of providing WCF. This section consists of 12 items asking about the degree of agreement regarding their perception of the importance of providing WCF on students' writing errors. The responses were obtained on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree), with higher scores reflecting a higher degree of agreement on the importance of WCF. The third section addresses the most important part of this study, namely teachers' WCF practices. The third section consists of three sub-sections: A. Techniques of WCF; B. Focus of WCF; and C. Follow-up methods. This section follows a 5-point Likert scale, with the respondents able to choose one of the five following options: Always, Often, Sometimes, Rarely, and Never. In the first sub-section, the respondents were asked about how often EFL grade 11-12 teachers use various techniques in responding to student writing. It comprised 13 items. Teachers were required to base their responses on their own actual practices. The next subsection investigates how often EFL teachers focus on the three aspects of writing: content, organization, and language. In addition, it investigates to what extent teachers give WCF on the three language categories proposed by Storch and Tapper (2000): grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Sub-section C examines how often teachers use follow-up methods after providing WCF. It includes six items. The last section (Section 4) investigates the challenges of providing WCF. The participants were required to indicate their opinions about 12 statements concerning different problems that EFL teachers might face when practicing WCF. The participants were asked to mark a choice that best indicates the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with each difficulty. All the questionnaire items are closed-ended, but after each section, a space is provided for participants to add any comments, additional details or suggestions which might not be mentioned in the questionnaire items.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

To check the validity of the research instrument, the teachers' questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of 12 experts, who examined the clarity and relevance of each item. The panel consisted of six professors from SQU, two English language specialists in the Ministry of Education (MOE), and four practitioners (two English language supervisors and two English language senior teachers). The jury experts and practitioners checked not only the content, but also the grammar and vocabulary in order to avoid any confusion in the language of the questionnaire. The experts were asked to write any comments, suggestions and recommendations that could help improve the questionnaire. Many changes and modifications were made after the jury experts reviewed the questionnaires. The kinds of modification carried out on the questionnaires consisted of rephrasing some items, replacing some words with more accurate ones, deleting repeated questionnaire items, deleting irrelevant and unclear items, changing the order of some sections, and combining some items to shorten the instrument.

In addition, it is very important to test the research instrument before using it to check if it is ambiguous or not as well as to verify the internal consistency of the questionnaire. Therefore, in the current study, the teachers' questionnaire was piloted with 20 teachers who were teaching Post-Basic grades (11-12) in the academic year 2017/2018. The respondents were selected at random from the Al Batinah North because this governorate was not included in the actual study sample.

The reliability of the questionnaire was computed using the SPSS program. The Cronbach's Alpha of teachers' questionnaire was .83. This value thus shows that this instrument had an accepted level of reliability.

3.5 Data Analysis

The quantitative data was analysed using three statistical analysis techniques, including:

1. Descriptive statistics: They were also used to investigate the challenges faced by teachers while providing WCF, as perceived by the teachers themselves.
2. An independent sample t-test: It was conducted to assess whether there were any statistically significant differences in teachers' perceptions regarding WCF according to gender.
3. One-way ANOVA: This statistical analysis technique was used to analyse the significant differences in teachers' perceptions about their own WCF practices according to two variables: teaching experience and the number of training workshops received on WCF.

4. Findings and Discussion

This study investigated two main research questions, namely: how EFL teachers' perceptions about WCF vary according to a set of demographic variables such as gender, teaching experience and the in-service training received on WCF (Q1); and, what the difficulties encountered by teachers when providing WCF are, from the viewpoint of both the teachers themselves and the supervisors (Q2). The results pertaining to each question are presented in detail below.

Q1. Do the Perceptions of EFL Teachers Vary According to Gender, Teaching Experience, and In-service Training Received on WCF?

This research question aims to investigate the differences in EFL teachers' perceptions on WCF based on three main variables, namely: gender, the years of teaching experience, and the number of courses or training workshops on WCF that they have followed. The results of each variable are presented below.

A. Gender

In order to explore the gender differences in teachers' perception of WCF, an independent sample t-test was run to compare between the EFL male and female teachers' perception of the practice of WCF. Table 2 presents the results of the independent sample t-test.

Table 2. The Differences between the EFL Male and Female Teachers' Perception of WCF (Independent Sample t-test)

Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.(2-tailed)</i>
Male	46	3.92	.43	.331	154	.741
Female	110	3.90	.37			

The results showed that there are no statistically significant differences in male and female teachers' perceptions of WCF practices, with $t(154) = .331$, $p = .741$. This finding significantly differs from previous results reported by Al-Said (1996) who found that gender had an influence on teachers' and students' beliefs about WCF.

B. Teaching Experience

In this study, the length of teaching experience (years) was categorised into four groups: 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, and more than 15 years. Table 3 shows the number of participants, the means and the standard deviations of each group.

Table 3. The Numbers, Means and Standard Deviations of the Four Teaching Experience Group (N=156)

Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1-5 years	23	3.80	.38
6-10 years	57	3.89	.39
11-15 years	40	3.94	.38
More than 15 years	36	3.98	.42
Total	156	3.91	.39

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the impact of teaching experience on teachers' perception of WCF practices. Table 4 gives the results of this statistical analysis test.

Table 4. The Differences between EFL Teachers' Perceptions of WCF According to Years of Teaching Experience (One-way ANOVA)

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
Between Groups	.495	3	.165	1.063	.367
Within Groups	23.607	152	.155		
Total	24.103	155			

The results show that there are no statistically significant differences at the $p < .05$ level in the EFL teachers' perceptions of WCF practices with regard to teaching experience, with $F(3, 125) = 1.063$, $p = .367$. Therefore, it can be concluded that, in this study, the EFL teachers' view on WCF practices is

not influenced by their teaching experience. This also contradicts the conclusion drawn by Al-Said (1996) and other researchers including Norouzian (2015), who found out that teachers with more years of experience provide more accurate and effective WCF on their students' writing. However, the result of this study concurs well with other previous studies (e.g., Leki, 1990; Evans et al., 2010).

C. In-service Training Received on WCF

A one-way between-groups ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of receiving WCF training workshops/courses on the teachers' perception of teachers' WCF practices. The participants were divided into four groups: (1) no training at all, (2) only one training workshop, (3) two training workshops, and (4) more than two training workshops. The results of the one-way ANOVA are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. The Differences between EFL Teachers' Perceptions of WCF According to the Number of Courses/Training Workshops Received on WCF (One-way ANOVA)

	Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>Effect Size</i>
Between Groups	1.752	3	.584	3.973	.009	0.073
Within Groups	22.350	152	.147			
Total	24.103	155				

As evident in Table 5, there is a statistically significant difference at the $p < .05$ level among the four training groups: $F(3, 152) = 3.973, p = 0.009$. The effect size was calculated using eta squared as .073, which is considered to be a medium effect. Post-hoc comparison using a Tukey HSD test indicates that the mean score for Group 1 (those who did not receive any training workshops) ($M = 3.82, SD = .32$) is significantly different from Group 4 (those who received more than Two training workshops) ($M = 4.08, SD = .42$). Table 6 shows the number of participants, means and standard deviations in each training group.

Table 6. The Numbers, Means and Standard Deviations of EFL Teachers' Total Perceptions in the Four Training Groups

Training Groups	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
No training workshops/courses	72	3.82	.32
One training workshop/courses	35	3.89	.44
Two training workshops/courses	16	4.01	.43
More than Two training workshops/courses	33	4.08	.42

This results show that receiving more training workshops/courses on WCF has a positive influence on teachers' WCF practices. When the mean scores for the four different groups are compared, as can be

seen in Table 6, a dramatic increase in the mean scores of teachers' perception of their WCF practices can be seen in line with the number of training courses on WCF. One reason of this result could be that training workshops may help provide teachers with an opportunity to update their knowledge, skills and attitudes in light of the development of providing effective WCF.

When compared with the results of previous studies, these results are in complete agreement with Lee (2008), but in contradiction with the findings of Evans et al. (2010). The results of this study confirm the effect of training on teachers' perception regarding their actual WCF practices and it values the importance of providing training courses for EFL teachers on WCF. This result indicates that, regardless of the years of teaching experience that they may have, it is the teachers who have received training on WCF who have a more positive perception of WCF. This is evident in their frequent use of WCF, which indicates that they value the importance of providing WCF.

Q2. What are the Challenges of Providing WCF as Perceived by EFL Post-Basic Education Teachers?

Table 7. Scale Used to Interpret the Means of EFL Teachers' Perception toward the Challenges of Providing WCF

Scale Value	Level of agreement
1 - 1.79	Very low agreement
1.8 - 2.59	Low agreement
2.6 - 3.39	Moderate agreement
3.4 - 4.19	High agreement
4.2 - 5	Very high agreement

The teacher respondents were presented with 12 statements. Each statement represented a challenge that might be encountered by teachers when they give WCF. Table 8 lists these challenges and presents the means and standard deviations of the teachers' responses to each statement. These statements are ordered according to the mean scores from the highest to the lowest. The level of agreement scale is also used to interpret these values.

Table 8. Means and Standard Deviations of EFL Teachers' Perception about the Challenges They Face When Providing WCF (N = 156)

NO.	Statements	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	It is difficult for me to provide WCF because:		
1	I focus on all types of errors (content, organisation, and language) at the same time.	4.25	.90
2	I provide WCF to too many students in class.	4.22	.85
3	I am overloaded with a lot of school work.	4.14	1.06

4	I provide WCF based on students' writing needs.	4.09	.81
5	I categorise some errors according to the symbols/correction codes.	3.94	.95
6	I provide WCF to students who make too many errors.	3.92	.98
7	I am under the pressure to complete the syllabus.	3.91	1.00
8	I provide WCF on students with a low level of English proficiency.	3.79	1.28
9	It requires a lot of time.	3.67	1.36
10	I use symbols/correction codes that students may not understand.	3.38	.97
11	It is stressful.	3.35	1.23
12	It is boring.	2.84	1.18
Total		3.79	.59

The grand mean of this section (3.79) indicates the EFL teachers are at a high level of agreement toward the listed challenges that might be encountered when providing WCF. The mean values range from 4.25 to 2.84. The highest mean score represents the most common difficulty that is supported by a very high level of agreement by the respondents. In contrast, the lowest mean score indicates the least common difficulty that teachers think they might face when providing WCF. On the basis of the table given above, the three most common challenges (having the highest mean scores) as perceived by the EFL teachers include focusing on all the three aspects of writing at the same time (4.25), the high number of students in class that they are required to provide WCF to (4.22) and being overloaded by school work (4.14). All these difficulties may overlap with one major problem which is the constraint of time. Providing comprehensive WCF through focusing on language, content, and organization at the same time for a large class requires a great deal of time and effort especially if teachers experience a heavy workload imposed by school duties. The three least common difficulties that are only moderately agreed to by the respondents include the use of marking codes that their students may not understand (3.38), the fact that provision of WCF is stressful (3.35), and the fact that teachers find giving WCF boring (2.84). This matches with the results found in Al Shamsi (2013) as some teachers with a mean of 3.29 indicated that their students struggle to understand the correction codes and few teachers with a mean of 2.27 stated that responding to students' writing is boring. The possible justifications behind the fact that these three difficulties were ranked low could be that teachers provide students with a list of the correction codes and trained them on how to correct their errors when these codes are used by the teacher. They also seemed that they are motivated to provide WCF as they did not think it is stressful and boring and this could be because they value the benefits of WCF for their students.

The teacher respondents were asked to list any other challenges they faced and make any other comments. Some of their comments are listed below:

- It requires time and huge effort from teachers, especially those who teach a large number of students.

- I give students WCF according to their level. However, some of them, who have a very low level, need to be given an explanation with the correction. That requires time and I don't have it. So, I ask good students to help them. Although I believe in the importance of using drafts, this needs time and effort, especially when there is a high number of students in one class. There are over 30.
- Some students don't really care or even read the WCF, so it's a waste of time.
- Few of the students pay attention to my comments.
- Unfortunately, students don't care about checking and correcting their errors.
- There were no courses provided on WCF or similar. I did my own research to have this skill and I explained my own marking code list to my students.

The above-mentioned challenges reported by the respondents indicate that teachers suffer mostly from having a large class, time constraints, students' carelessness with respect to the WCF, and the lack of training received on WCF. These challenges are also greatly emphasised by the participants in Salteh and Sadeghi (2015).

5. Conclusions

The findings of this study have emphasised the importance of providing teachers with a number of training workshops to apply to their error correction practices and help them become more effective WCF providers. This study also explored the challenges encountered by EFL teachers when providing WCF and the results revealed that both teachers and supervisor agreed with list of the difficulties identified. The findings of these challenges contribute to a better understanding of the barriers that hinders teachers from providing the best practices of WCF (e.g., using selective WCF and multiple draft methods).

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