2017

L2 Learners' Engagement with Direct Written Corrective Feedback in First- Year Composition Courses

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This study explores students' response to direct written corrective feedback (WCF) in first-year composition courses. To that end, it focuses on analyzing students' engagement with direct feedback and meta-awareness of the corrections provided on one of their drafts. Data include students' revisions recorded with screen-capture software and the video-stimulated recall, which was transcribed and coded for evidence of engagement and meta-awareness. The findings of the study indicate that students' engagement and meta-awareness may be affected by pedagogical factors, such as feedback delivery method. Based on the insights gained from this study, the author suggests that direct feedback may be more beneficial if it is provided in a comment or in the margin of the paper, and that the student may have a higher potential for learning if a brief explanation about the nature of the error is included. In addition, students may need to be provided with guidelines on how to engage with their instructors' feedback. The author concludes by suggesting that if direct WCF is provided, students should be held accountable for learning from the feedback, and the author recommends ways in which this can be done without penalizing students for not showing immediate improvements on subsequent writing projects.

Keywords: Written corrective feedback, direct correction, ESL writers, second language writing, electronic feedback, track changes, engagement, meta-awareness, noticing

Introduction

As more and more international students are admitted to universities in the United States, many of whom are at the intermediate levels of English proficiency in need of extensive support in developing their language skills, many first-year composition (FYC) instructors struggle with decisions on how much time to devote to focusing on language issues in their students' written texts. In some cases, the only language support that students receive in these courses is through written corrective feedback (WCF), as most instructors do not address language-related issues through direct instruction. The effectiveness of the practice on student language development has been debated for two decades now after the publication of Truscott's (1996) paper in which he argued against grammar correction claiming that not only is it not effective but also detrimental to students. These claims generated an interest in researching the effectiveness of different types of feedback on grammar accuracy in student texts (e.g., Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Ferris, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hartshorn et. al., 2010; Sheen, Wright, & Moldawa, 2009; Van Beuningen, De Jong, & Kuiken, 2008), and most findings of this research indicate a positive effect of WCF on students' accuracy.

Nearly two decades of research investigating whether grammar correction is effective or not, has led researchers to shift focus from investigating the effectiveness of different WCF types on grammar accuracy to investigating how students engage with the feedback provided in their texts. In his epilogue to the special issue of Studies in Second Language Acquisition that focused on the topic of WCF, Ellis (2010) provides a framework for investigating WCF. The framework identifies specific variables, such as individual and contextual, that have been found to affect students' engagement with WCF and, ultimately, student learning outcome. By proposing such framework, Ellis emphasizes the importance of considering all of its components and exploring how they are related. This recent shift in research focus can lead to provide us with more understanding of the learners and their revision process and the improvement of WCF practices. Such improvement can occur if we understand not just the potential of WCF in helping students improve accuracy but also the role of the learners' engagement with the feedback they receive.

Literature Review

Direct WCF and Learning Outcomes

Before turning to the studies that directly investigate students' engagement with WCF feedback, it is important to highlight the results of two decades of research that focuses on investigating the effectiveness of different types of feedback, particularly direct/explicit and indirect/implicit. Studies that measure the effectiveness of different types of direct feedback suggest that simply providing direct correction does not automatically lead to more accuracy in a new writing task and while the provision of metalinguistic explanation has short-term benefits, the gains are not replicated in delayed post-tests (Shintani & Ellis, 2013). However, when researchers compare the effectiveness of direct versus indirect feedback, there is more evidence suggesting that more direct/explicit WCF facilitates better learning outcomes (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Van Beuningen, Jong & Kuiken, 2012; Bitchener, 2012; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Radwan, 2005). The better learning outcome has been attributed to students' immediate access to target form and their ability to internalize it (Chandler, 2003). It has also been attributed to students' ability to retain the knowledge they gain, particularly for grammatical errors, such as word form or tense (Beuningen, Jong, & Kuiken, 2012). As Van Beuningen, Jong, and Kuiken (2012) report, indirect feedback can promote long-term gains, although such gains are only confirmed for nongrammatical language issues, such as word choice. But perhaps the most significant finding from studies of direct WCF, particularly direct corrections with metalinguistic explanations, is that it raises students' awareness of language-related issues, which has been positively correlated with language development (e.g., Radwan, 2005).

While the results of the previous studies measuring the effectiveness of WCF on students' accuracy are somewhat mixed, they highlight the importance of studying other factors that affect the effectiveness of WCF. It has been suggested that the effectiveness of WCF is influenced not so much by its type but by the students' ability to understand it and their willingness to engage with it (Hyland, 2010).

Studies of Student Engagement with WCF

The interest in investigating students' engagement with WCF can be attributed to three case studies by Fiona Hyland. Each of the three case studies (1998, 2003, 2011) examines two participants' engagement with feedback by analyzing their revision strategies to determine how they impact feedback uptake. Through the use of retrospective interviews with participants, Hyland found that most of them valued form-focused feedback and by reviewing students' revised drafts, she found that they attempted to correct many of the directly or indirectly corrected errors (62–89% of attempts). The exception was one participant, Maho (Hyland, 2011), who utilized only 10% of the form-focused feedback. The interviews with Maho indicated that she did not perceive grammar to be problematic for her and she rarely paid attention to feedback on grammar. However, she was described as a very motivated learner, who valued feedback on content and on her ideas. Interestingly, that same participant failed the writing course, not once but twice, due to issues with language-related problems in her writing. On the other end of the spectrum, there were two participants (Hyland, 2003) who utilized most of the feedback provided: Liang attempting to correct 89% of errors with 86% of the revisions being successful and Keith attempting to correct 82% of errors with 75% of the revision being successful. Both of these participants indicated that form-focused feedback was very important to them and, as opposed to Maho, they believed in its potential to influence their language learning. Hyland concluded that the effects of feedback were largely influenced by students' willingness to process it, and their beliefs about its potential benefits.

Studies Investigating the Processing of Direct Feedback

Previous feedback processing studies that focus their investigation on different forms of direct WCF measure the role of noticing on students' uptake. For example, Qi and Lapkin (2001) who examined reformulation feedback investigated what language-related problems students notice when they compare their original text with the reformulation provided by the researchers to see if that noticing has any effects on output and students' subsequent writing. In an effort to measure noticing, the researchers asked the participants to verbalize their thoughts during the composing and comparing stage and the sessions were recorded and later reviewed

with the researcher. When analyzing the data, a distinction was made between perfunctory and substantive noticing, where substantive noticing meant not only commenting and verbalizing the observed difference but also stating the reason behind the change that occurred in students' reformulated text. The findings of this study indicate that substantive noticing of language-related problems positively impacts students' writing, as measured on the post-test. The study also indicates that noticing was most effective when the participants demonstrated an understanding of the problem (substantive noticing) as compared to noticing and no indication of understanding (perfunctory noticing). Qi and Lapkin (2001) concluded that substantive noticing is positively correlated with students' improvement on their writing, which suggests that the quality of noticing is an important factor that affects the effectiveness of WCF.

Furthermore, the findings of studies that examine the processing of direct and indirect feedback indicate that students are more engaged (i.e., show more interaction) while processing the indirect feedback, but that more engagement does not necessarily lead to uptake, or internalization of the feedback. For example, a study by Storch and Wigglesworth (2010) compared students' processing of reformulation feedback and editing symbols (i.e., direct vs. indirect feedback) to see which feedback type has the most impact on uptake. By analyzing student pair discussions of each feedback type and counting all language-related episodes (LRE), the researchers were able to quantify and qualify students' engagement with each type. Each LRE was divided into two categories: limited engagement versus extensive engagement. The extensive engagement included discussions of feedback that contained explanations, comments, or any other evidence of meta-awareness, such as noticing the change and verbalizing it, whereas the limited engagement included episodes in which participants only read or acknowledged the feedback.

Their findings indicate that students show evidence of extensive engagement when processing indirect feedback, that is, editing symbols. This is understandable since engagement with the indirect feedback included identifying the nature of the error and finding the appropriate correction through discussion. In contrast, while processing reformulations (i.e., direct feedback), students limited themselves to accepting the rewritten text and expressing their agreement.

However, while the researchers reported that the indirect feedback led to more extensive engagement, the internalization, or uptake, of that feedback was more likely to occur when the feedback provided matched the learners' goals and beliefs about feedback. This study provides evidence that uptake is not necessarily tied to more interaction, but to learners' attitudes and beliefs about feedback.

Problematizing the Definition of Engagement

The term engagement in the context of empirical studies reviewed here means processing of feedback, but the studies do not necessarily define processing in the same way. In some studies, the emphasis is placed on the level of meta-awareness of the feedback received or the level of noticing (depending on the type of feedback that was examined, i.e., direct or indirect). For example, Storch and Wigglesworth (2010) defined (extensive) engagement as "explanations, comments, or any other evidence of meta-awareness of the [reformulation] feedback" (p. 334).

Qi and Lapkin (2001), who investigated what students notice when they compare their text with the reformulated version, made the distinction between more and less extensive noticing where perfunctory noticing was defined as noticing without meta-awareness, and substantive noticing was noticing with evidence of meta-awareness manifested in verbalizing reasons behind the change that occurred in a student's reformulated text. Although Qi and Lapkin's study did not measure engagement per se, the analysis of noticing was done very similarly to Storch and Wigglesworth's (2010) analysis of engagement in that both noticing and engagement were analyzed for the evidence of students' level of understanding of the error or the feedback provided.

In addition to examining engagement as evidence of meta-awareness or noticing, engagement has also been examined as a physical response to feedback. For example, in Hyland's (1998, 2003, 2011) studies, engagement was considered to be any action taken as a result of reading the instructor's feedback, such as discussing feedback with others or keeping a language log of all errors indicated through feedback. The focus here was not placed on the level of understanding but, rather, on the level of action that has occurred as a result of the feedback encountered in students' texts.

If we take all of these perspectives into consideration, it appears that the definition of engagement overlaps with other notions such as meta-awareness and noticing, whereas it might be more suitable to study them as two distinct constructs. Engagement may lead to meta-awareness or noticing but assuming that lack of meta-awareness means lack of engagement may be undermining the role of other factors that may be influencing students' ability to show evidence of meta-awareness.

As argued by Svalberg (2009), engagement is a multifaceted construct that encompasses not only the cognitive realm, but also the affective and social. The characteristics of cognitive engagement include alertness, focused attention, and action knowledge (making knowledge one's own), whereas affective engagement is characterized by positive attitude/willingness and social engagement, which can be measured by the level of interaction/doing and agency. Svalberg argued that such definition allows us to understand "why some linguistic or language-related behaviours and attitudes seem to facilitate language learning and learning about language/s more than others" (p. 243). This point is particularly relevant to studies of WCF that have yielded mixed results when examining the effectiveness of different feedback types. In regards to studying engagement with WCF, the definition proposed by Svalberg can be used to study how alert and willing to engage students are when they revise the texts, or what their attitudes are before studying how their engagement influences noticing or meta-awareness of language-related issues, as examined in Qi and Lapkin's (2001) and Storch and Wigglesworth's (2010) studies. By making this distinction, we can account for other forms of engagement, such as deliberating an error or checking a dictionary, which may or may not result in meta-awareness or noticing but which certainly provide evidence of students' willingness to understand feedback and learn from it.

Having established that engagement with feedback (as defined by the empirical studies reviewed above) is a key component that influences learning, especially if the feedback matches learners' expectations, the goal of the current study is to provide additional insights into the nature of L2 writers' engagement with feedback. To provide more nuanced insights in the current study, engagement and meta-awareness are measured separately, which is reflected in the following questions: (1) Do students

engage with direct corrections provided on drafts of their papers? (2) Does engagement lead to meta-awareness? and (3) What factors affect students' engagement and meta-awareness?

Method

A qualitative, multiple-case, research design was employed to investigate these issues in first-year composition (FYC) courses, which is a context in which no previous feedback processing studies have been conducted. The study was conducted at a large university in the Southwest region of the United States and data were collected from eight Chinese native speakers enrolled in the FYC courses designed specifically for students whose native language is not English. The courses, Stretch First-Year Composition, WAC 107 and ENG 107, are equivalent to ENG 101 and ENG 102, respectively, and they were taught during a regular 16-week semester. Students in these courses are asked to write three analytical essays just as students in mainstream sections of the FYC. All of the student participants are between the ages of 19 and 23 and are international students holding a student visa. Most of them came to the United States less than a year prior to the study. The exception is two students who came to the United States as high school exchange students. One of the students resided in the US for two years at the time of the study and the other for nearly three.

Recruitment

After obtaining the list of faculty teaching the FYC courses for multilingual students, the instructors were contacted via e-mail to ask for their participation, and ten instructors responded to the invitation by filling out an online questionnaire that was designed to elicit information about their feedback practices. The final number of instructor participants included in the study was determined by whether or not the students in their classes agreed to participate in the study. In the end, four instructor participants were included. Three out of the four instructors are native English speakers and one is a non-native English speaker. At the time of the study, most of the instructors had more than three years of experience teaching English composition to multilingual writers, except for one instructor who had no such prior experience. In addition, two of the four instructors had TESOL background and the other two had advanced degrees in English and rhetoric and composition.

Procedure

Neither students nor the instructors were given any specific directions on what to do while participating in the study over the duration of the semester. More specifically, the instructors were not asked to provide any specific kind of feedback and the students were not asked to revise their drafts in any specific way. I met with the students during the first two weeks of the semester and near the end of the semester to discuss their experiences with grammar feedback and their expectations and beliefs about feedback. To address the first research question (Do students engage with direct corrections provided on drafts of their papers?), I met with students individually when they indicated that they had received grammar feedback from their instructor. All students received grammar feedback on the first draft of one of the three required projects. Some students contacted me after receiving feedback on the first major project, some on the second, and one student contacted me near the end of the semester when he was revising his final project.

Students agreed not to review the feedback before our meeting, which occurred within two days after students had contacted me. On the day of our meeting, students opened their draft with the instructor's feedback and began revising while being recorded by Camtasia Relay video recorder, software that allows full-resolution screen capture and full-facial expression capture. Immediately after the students were finished revising their essays, they participated in the video-stimulated recall. The students and I watched the video, which captured the revisions they made as well as their facial expressions, which appeared in the lower corner of the screen. The capture of students' facial expressions was useful in noticing when students seemed confused or when they were not looking directly at the screen. There was no protocol for the stimulated recall; we paused the recording every time a student was seen making a revision or encountered the correction made for them, and I asked what they thought about the feedback at the time they encountered it.

Data Analysis

Students' Drafts

The copies of students' papers, both with electronic and handwritten feedback, were collected for analysis. All instances of direct feedback were identified and coded to determine its delivery method (track changes, electronic or handwritten comment, or handwritten correction).

Screen-Capture and Video-Stimulated Recall

The data obtained from the video-stimulated recall during which students verbalized their thoughts and reasons for changes, or lack thereof, were transcribed and analyzed using the analytical framework that involved the identification of language-related episodes (LREs). This analytical framework was previously utilized to study noticing and engagement during collaborative feedback processing (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 2002; Qi & Lapkin, 2001). In the current study, an LRE is defined as any instance of direct feedback encountered by the students in their papers regardless of uptake. Direct feedback consisted of direct corrections in students' texts (either electronic or handwritten) and in marginal comments that contained brief explanations or questions. To examine students' engagement feedback, each LRE was coded as either "Yes" or "No." I considered that students were engaged during episodes if they showed any evidence of some activity, such as transferring the error from one draft to another, checking a dictionary, or deliberating the error.

The second stage of coding involved determining students' meta-awareness of the errors. In other words, I also sought to determine if students thought about the errors while they were making the corrections in their original draft or looking over the corrections made for them and if they showed any evidence of understanding the nature of the error. Just as for engagement, each LRE was coded "Yes" or "No" for meta-awareness. For example, if a student said, "I said 'say' and it is changed to 'said,' so, it's still the tense," I coded it as "Yes" because the student showed evidence of understanding the nature of the error (tense) by looking at the error. For the purpose of the study, I coded "Yes" for meta-awareness when students

were able to at least indicate to me in some way that they noticed what was corrected and why. However, it should be noted here that students' indication that they understood the issue is in no way an indication that they will not commit that same error in the future. It merely indicates that they understood the feedback that was provided at the time of the revision. Making this distinction allows us to focus on how much of the feedback that instructors provide is likely (but not definitely) to lead to learning.

Reliability of Coding

Coding for engagement and meta-awareness separately proved to be challenging, mostly because determining students' understanding of the error was sometimes easily confused with students' understanding of the feedback. For example, just because a student made a correct revision, which was coded as evidence for engagement, did not automatically indicate meta-awareness. At the same time, noticing that the instructor changed the tense did not necessarily indicate that the student understood why it needed to be changed. I tried to be very careful about eliciting this information to ensure that the answers that the students had given me were their thoughts they had at the time of revision and not a result of our discussion, and on rare occasions it resulted in dubious episodes. To ensure the reliability of coding, a second coder, a PhD student in rhetoric, composition, and linguistics, coded 25% of the data. The inter-rater reliability scores were calculated using percentage agreement. For students' engagement, the initial agreement was 95%, but a 100% agreement was reached upon the review of the data.

When coding for meta-awareness, the initial agreement was 90% and upon reaching an agreement for one of the errors, the final inter-rater reliability for meta-awareness was 95%. The final inter-rater reliability for both engagement and meta-awareness was reached after re-watching the screen-capture video and relistening to the video-stimulated recall and discussing the reasons for our initial disagreement. While the second coder only coded 25% of the data, having the opportunity to discuss our rating of this portion of the data was very helpful as we discussed the reasons why certain episodes were initially coded differently (e.g., whether students' meta-awareness was evident during the revision or during the interview with the researcher). I then used what I learned from our sessions in coding the rest of the data.

Results

The analysis of students' drafts resulted in identification of 103 instances of direct feedback. Nearly all of the direct feedback was direct corrections in students' papers with a few instances of direct correction with metalinguistic explanation. Six of the eight students received their feedback electronically via track changes or in marginal comments, and two received handwritten feedback that included direct corrections written above the error.

Students in this study showed a very low level of engagement with direct feedback and an even lower level of meta-awareness. As is seen in Table 1 below, on average, students showed evidence of engagement with 24% of direct feedback and, as seen in Table 2, they showed evidence of meta-awareness of only 17% of the errors corrected in their papers. Most of direct feedback with which students did not engage was identified as feedback provided by track changes, which was the method by which three out of the four instructors delivered their feedback, and nearly all of the direct feedback with evidence of meta-awareness was found in revisions by two students, which I will show can be attributed to noticing a pattern of correction.

Table 1

Engagement with Direct Feedback by Method of Delivery

Name	Yes	No	Total
	Track Changes		
Lin		38	38
Qiang	1	27	28
Hui	4	1	5
Dong		3	3
	Comment		
Zehao	10		10
Ping	7		7
Xin	1		1
	Track Changes and Comments*		
Min	2	9	11
Total	25 (24%)	78 (76%)	103 (100%)

*This category refers to a combination of some corrections via track changes and some via comments, or both.

Uscinski, Izabela (2017). "L2 Learners' Engagement with Direct Written Corrective Feedback in First-Year Composition Courses." *Journal of Response to Writing*, *3*(2): 36–62.

Table 2

Meta-Awareness of Direct Feedback by Method of Delivery

Name	Yes	No	Total
Track Changes			
Lin	7	31	38
Qiang	6	22	28
Hui		5	5
Dong		3	3
Handwritten or Comment			
Zehao	2	8	10
Ping		7	7
Xin	1		1
Track Changes and Comments*			
Min	2	9	11
Total	18 (17%)	85 (83%)	103 (100%)

*This category refers to a combination of some corrections via track changes and some via comments, or both.

Direct Feedback Delivered via Track Changes

No evidence of engagement: Disregard for track changes. As seen in Table 1 above, most students who received direct feedback via track changes were found not to process it in any way as there was no indication that they took any action as a result (like accepting or rejecting the change), or that they deliberated the correction, or at least paid attention to it by reading the correction in the context of the sentence to try to understand why the correction was made. For example, Min did not indicate any consideration made to the direct corrections via track changes. The video recording of Min's revision showed that he skimmed over the track changes and focused on the comments in the margins, which will be analyzed below. When I asked Min about the direct corrections by track changes (see example in Figure 1), Min indicated that he "just ignored it" and when asked if it were likely that he would return to these corrections later after we were done recording, he stated: "No, never. I just totally ignore it."

> Pokemon, or Pocket Monster, is a media franchise, which currently belongs to a Japanese tycoon in the entertainment business, Nintendo, and one of those most successful video games in the world.

Figure 1. Min's direct feedback (deletion of "which")

I also asked about the two instances of direct feedback in the following sentence:

> Pokemon contains hundreds of tiny adorable creatures in the series, and it is what I called universally cultural acceptance, which means the common agreement of attraction shared by all cultures in the world.

Figure 2. Min's direct feedback (called universally)

Min responded: "I saw it for a second but didn't do anything about it" (video-stimulated recall). It is quite evident that by not engaging with the feedback, Min did not indicate any awareness of why the corrections were made. I should note that when this student submitted his final draft, the changes were accepted and during our final interview the student indicated that he "accepted all changes" by selecting that option from the drop-down menu before submitting the final draft to his instructor, which is in no way an indication that the student paid any attention to the corrections. It could be argued that correcting students' errors this way will result in more accurate revised drafts, assuming that they at least accept the changes made by the instructor, but it is not likely to have any impact on language development.

Evidence of engagement: Noticing correction pattern. Despite the overwhelming percentage of direct feedback via track changes being ignored, two students, Lin and Qiang, showed evidence of meta-awareness when reviewing the instructor's correction, which I believe can be attributed to noticing a pattern in the corrections. In nearly all the cases when Lin

and Qiang indicated that they knew what was corrected and why, the corrections were related to simple past tense indicated by adding the ed ending to regular verbs (Figure 3).
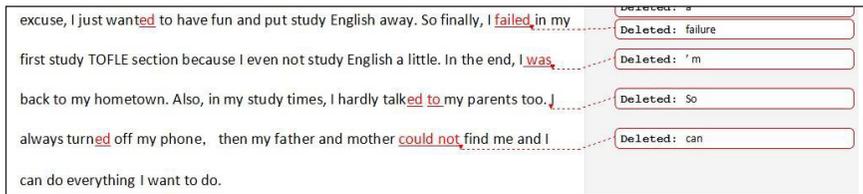

Figure 3. Qiang's paragraph with direct feedback (past tense)

Therefore, while the students did not show evidence of engagement with the feedback as they did not make any changes nor deliberated the corrections, they did show evidence of meta-awareness simply by looking at the corrections. As can be seen in Figure 3 above, most of the corrections are made to verb tense, but some are made by adding the ed ending and some are not. In this short extract from Qiang's paper, only the corrections made by adding the ed ending were coded as "Yes" for meta-awareness because Qiang indicated that he did not pay attention to the balloons,[2] which indicated what was deleted, and therefore, I could not determine that he understood the reasons for the corrections. For example, while the correction "failed" could be attributed to a tense issue, Qiang did not indicate that he was aware that the word he used instead was not a verb. It appears that Qiang noticed a pattern of error in his text and was able to determine that he used tense incorrectly for regular verbs to which the ed ending was added, but he did not consider the other changes made to his text long enough to determine the reason for them.

When I asked Qiang about direct corrections in other parts of the paper, he indicated that he had not paid attention to them and that he just "passed them." While Qiang noticed that something was done, he did not check what the instructor corrected and why. When I questioned Qiang about the correction of "watch" (see Figure 4), he stated, "I just write watch

2 It should be noted that track changes also allows for the deleted text to be shown "in line," in which case, the student would be able to see what was deleted more clearly.

and she changed to watching" (Qiang's stimulated recall), and when I asked if he thought about why he needed to make the change, he said that he just "read and pass[ed]" it, which does not indicate that any time was taken to try to understand the error. While noticing that something was changed is good, simply seeing that someone added the ending ing to a verb does not show evidence of error-awareness since this ending could, for example, indicate a gerund or present progressive tense.
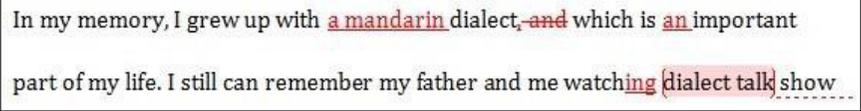
In my memory, I grew up with a mandarin dialect, and which is an important

part of my life. I still can remember my father and me watching (dialect talk) show

Figure 4. Qiang's direct feedback ("watching")

Handwritten Direct Feedback

When direct feedback was handwritten, students transferred the corrections to their revised draft, which shows that they at least acknowledged the error. As was seen in Table 1 above, just because students processed the direct feedback to some extent by transferring handwritten corrections, they did not always indicate any awareness of their errors. In other words, while students took action as a result of the direct correction and corrected the error themselves in their original draft (evidence of engagement), they did not indicate the awareness of why they needed to make the correction.

Zehao did not show evidence of meta-awareness of eight of the ten direct corrections in his paper, and Ping showed evidence of none. For example, when Zehao was asked about the deletions of the words "recycle" and "of" made by the instructor (Figure 6), he indicated that he had not thought about why he needed to delete the words suggested by her; he "just deleted them." While this is evidence this student processed the feedback, which is better than not noticing the corrections at all, it does not indicate that the student thought about the nature of the error, that is, why these words were deleted. The question is, can this type of engagement (i.e., processing without much thought) provide the condition conducive to learning? On the one hand, when students transfer the corrections to their

original draft, they read their original sentence and need to make sure that the correction is inserted in the right place in the sentence, which forces students to consider the change in context of their sentence, as opposed to just seeing the change made by the instructor via track changes. On the other hand, when students transfer the corrections, they are not necessarily encouraged to consider why the error occurred, so it could be argued that they are not aware of what was wrong or why. Still, if we assume that learning can occur simply by being exposed to the target form frequently and in the meaningful context, then this type of engagement could be argued to be potentially beneficial.

Figure 5. Zehao's direct feedback (deletions of words "recycle" and "of")

Hui, who chose to transfer all the track changes into his original draft, which I believe was due to his unfamiliarity with how track changes work, essentially revised his paper as if it were handwritten, so his attention was drawn to all of the corrections made by the instructor. In addition to making the changes in his original document, Hui, unlike Zehao and Ping, indicated thinking about the corrections extensively and being confused by the corrections. For example, I asked Hui what he had thought (at the time of revision) about the deletion of "has been" as seen below:

Figure 6. Hui's direct feedback (deletion of "has been")

Hui indicated that when he saw the deletion, he thought to himself that he was not "very familiar with this form." He explained it further in the excerpt below:

> H: I don't know when should I use it, and how to use it right, in the right situation. So, I think maybe use the past way is a safer way . . . I am not very familiar with this kind of grammar, have, have done.

> (Short pause)

H: However, I also still think that I should use have, has, here 'cause it is, at that time, China has reached 800 million, so.

I: Has reached? Now you said "has reached".

H: Or should I use "had"?

I: So now you see a different possibility. Do you think that the instructor may have corrected it wrongly?

H: No, this is also a right way.

It appears that Hui thought that it was not wrong to use the present perfect tense to indicate an event that was completed at some point in the past. However, his attention was effectively drawn to this tense (but not form) and if the instructor included a brief explanation, such as "China's population is not 800 any longer, so there is no connection to the present time." The student would likely understand at least one of the errors in this particular case. This example reveals that for more complex language issues, instructors' feedback can result in more confusion than clarity, but I would argue that the direct correction in this particular case is more beneficial to students' learning than an indirect feedback, which would likely just result in no change or an incorrect revision. This example also shows that how students engage with direct feedback is largely determined by how they choose to engage with it. While Qiang or Zehao were seen to simply skim over the corrections, Hui took the time to analyze them.

Direct Feedback Provided in a Comment

When direct feedback was provided in a comment box along with an explanation or a hedging, students showed evidence of both engagement and meta-awareness. For example, Min received a total of 11 direct corrections in his paper and the only two with which he engaged were corrections provided in a marginal comment, one with a question mark and one with a hedging. After reading the comment with the hedging "I think" (Figure 10), Min incorporated the feedback in his paper and instead of just copying the direct phrase provided by the instructor, he altered the suggestion and revised "children's memorial" to "childhood memories," instead of

"memories of childhood" as was suggested. This may indicate that when a direct correction is offered as a suggestion with some level of uncertainty, as indicated by the use of "I think" in this example, students may at least feel the need to consider it before making the change, and may even come up with their own revision as a result, especially students of higher language proficiency levels like Min.
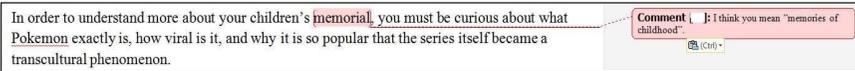
In order to understand more about your children's memorial, you must be curious about what Pokemon exactly is it, how viral is it, and why it is so popular that the series itself became a transcultural phenomenon.	Comment [...]: I think you mean "memories of childhood". ☐ (Ctrl) ▾

Figure 7. Min's direct feedback in a comment

Another example of an effective direct correction that prompted a student to not only make changes but also show awareness of the issue was recorded in Xin's paper. She received direct feedback in a marginal comment along with a metalinguistic explanation (Figure 11), which not only prompted her to make the change in her draft, but also resulted in the clear understanding of the error, at least at the time of the revision. In the screen-capture video recording, Xin is seen reading the comment and deleting the s ending from "apparel" in the paper. During the stimulated recall, Xin indicated that she understood why she had to delete the s ending from the word "apparels," stating: "I don't need -s because apparel is plural and singular," which shows that she did not simply repeat what the feedback indicated, but was able to rephrase it in her own words. While it may not be possible to provide such short and neat explanations for all errors, in the case of the plurality error presented here, it proved to be helpful and well understood by the student.

Group identity has been one of the reasons yeasted that a brand of apparels founded based on lingeries been pervasively swept. It is not hard to see "Pink" embroidered girl's left corner on their tees or right corner above hips swinging around schools. We are now hanging out in a world of "What's up" instead of "How are you doing?". Shorter, straight forward, naked and	Resolve 12:53 PM Yesterday mass noun, plural is the same as singular, so "apparel" Reply to this comment...

Figure 8. Xin's direct feedback in a comment

Students' Perceptions of Direct Feedback

Regardless of what the instructors' intentions are for the feedback that they provide, students seem to have their own interpretation about it. Min, one of the students who received some direct corrections via track changes and some via marginal comment (e.g., I think you mean . . .), summed it up in the following way:

> I think I have two types of mistakes in this paper. The first one is accident mistakes and another one is I just have no idea what it is. And I think the instructor separates feedback into three parts. One is correcting for me, one is highlight, and the last one is highlight with comments. And I think the first two are accident mistakes; I just automatically thought it is accident mistake for me and I just need to be careful next time. But when it is something with comment, I think it is rather important, even if there are some accident mistakes, I still think they are important, I don't know why, but it is.

While I do not believe that Min's interpretation is fully accurate, as I would not say that the errors corrected in track changes were not important, he provides an important insight into how students may perceive corrections when they read them. There is no research to date that examines how such perceptions affect students' engagement with feedback, but it appears that the students in this study would concur with Min's interpretation that when errors are corrected for them, they do not appear very important. I do not believe that we should interpret this as a sign not to provide direct correction, rather, as a sign that we need to be transparent with our students and explain to them why we do what we do.

Discussion and Implications

An important insight gained from this study is that direct correction via track changes tends to be ignored by students, who gravitate toward feedback provided in the comments. However, while students made all the revisions indicated by direct feedback when it was provided in a comment or a hard copy of the paper, making the change did not necessarily lead them

to think about the error and show evidence that they were aware of what was changed and why. While making the correction may potentially lead to learning if students consider the change in the context of the sentence, simply making the correction without focused attention is unlikely to effect change. It appears that when instructors expected students to think about their errors or took the extra step to explain them, students responded to it with more attention; but when the correction was only made for the students, they did not feel it was important enough to consider.

Furthermore, by making the distinction between engagement and meta-awareness I was able to provide more insights into the relationship between these two concepts. While it seems natural to assume that students' willingness to engage with feedback plays a key role in learning, sometimes, despite students' willingness and positive attitude, their engagement resulted in lack of meta-awareness, especially if direct feedback was provided via track changes. When the direct correction was provided electronically as a marginal comment, with a question mark or a brief metalinguistic explanation, students showed more evidence of meta-awareness. This observation leads me to believe that the effectiveness of direct feedback may not necessarily stem from students' willingness to make revisions but perhaps from how they are expected or even motivated to engage with it by the instructor.

The Need for Providing Clear Expectations and Guidance

Based on these findings, there might be a need to provide students with clear guidelines on how they are expected to use direct feedback. Instructors could communicate to their students that direct feedback can have the potential to help them learn the language if students analyze (i.e., engage with) the corrections provided by the instructor. Manchón (2011a, b) refers to such feedback as "feedback for acquisition" rather than "feedback for accuracy." If direct feedback is provided with the goal for WCF to facilitate language development, rather than to edit students' papers, then instructors may need to encourage students to examine the corrections carefully and consider providing an explanation to students about how they are expected to use it.

Providing Effective Direct Feedback

Providing WCF is complex and requires not only the recognition that an error occurred but also the consideration about the type of feedback and even the method of its delivery. Based on my analysis of this practice, I suggest that direct feedback may be more effective if it is provided in a comment or in the margin of the paper. It will also be more effective if it includes more than a single word so that students are exposed to "useful exemplars" and "patterns of usage" (Ellis, 2013) that are needed for language learners to make generalizations and inferences about the language they are acquiring to build their inventory, or database, of patterns. The direct feedback may also be more effective if a brief explanation about the nature of the error is included. Such explanation could provide students with an indication of how their error affected the meaning in the particular context of the sentence. Such explanations would not only help the learner understand the issue better but also indicate that it is important for the instructor that they understand it. This can, in turn, help students view direct corrections as an opportunity to learn rather than just edit their paper.

The Need for Accountability

When direct feedback is provided, it is important to hold students accountable for learning from it. I do not believe that we should harshly penalize multilingual students for grammatical errors in their writing; however, if students are provided with corrections, it seems fair to me to expect that students make every effort to learn from the errors that were pointed out. One approach that I believe would be particularly suitable is to require students to write a brief note along with the submission of the revised paper about their response to the instructor's feedback (Bitchener, 2005). While requiring students to write the notes does not guarantee that they will always understand why something was wrong or why something was corrected, making a conscious effort to understand it in the context of the sentence will provide students with the input they need to learn from the feedback and the opportunity to engage in "languaging" (Swain, 2006), which I believe can facilitate meta-awareness that can lead to learning.

The approach to require students to write a note explaining to the instructor the revisions that were made (or not made), as explained by

Bitchener (2005), is similar to requiring authors who submit their article for publication in a journal to show proof of the revisions made after receiving feedback from their reviewers. Expecting this kind of accountability may help to professionalize WCF practice in college, rather than seeing it as a remedial practice for low-language proficiency students. I believe that this form of communication would allow the instructors to develop closer relationships with students and communicate to them the importance of revision without penalizing students for their proficiency level, as they would be expected to address the issues that were pointed out by the instructor. Observing how students incorporate instructors' WCF into their revised drafts could also improve instructors' own WCF practice.

Conclusion and Future Research

The current study was designed to investigate how direct feedback was utilized by students who were not instructed to use it in any particular way and were not going to be tested on how well they performed. In other words, the study essentially measured students' willingness and motivation to use it, which, as was pointed out by Hyland (2010), may ultimately determine how effective corrective feedback can be, regardless of the feedback type. While caution should be taken when interpreting the results that were based on a limited number of students, there is at least an indication that sometimes, despite students' willingness to engage with WCF, how they engage with it is influenced by other factors, such as the type of feedback, the method by which it was delivered, and students' beliefs about feedback. Future studies could focus on investigating whether students can be taught how to use each direct feedback more effectively to facilitate their language development, not just help them submit an edited draft. I have recommended various strategies, some of which have been suggested in previous studies, to be used by instructors to encourage students' engagement with direct feedback that would be appropriate in FYC. Future experimental research with a treatment and a control group could investigate the effectiveness of such approaches. In addition, it would also be valuable to learn about FYC instructors' perspectives about implementing such approaches into their practice.

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