University of Southampton

Faculty of Laws, Arts & Social sciences

School of Humanities

Feedback on Form Vs. Feedback on Content

The Changes in EFL Learners' Writing Accuracy, Syntactic Complexity and Content Complexity

By

Yasmine Mustafa

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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This study compares form-focused and content-focused feedback in terms of the changes in learners' written accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity. It also examines the students' attitudes towards teacher's feedback. In particular, it explores their opinions about the benefits of the feedback they received, the type of feedback they preferred the most and their suggestions regarding the way their teachers should deliver feedback. The study also identifies some potential factors that affect learners' responses towards form-focused and content-focused feedback. These objectives are achieved by conducting a quasi-experiment followed by focus groups and individual interviews.

The findings of the study revealed no significant differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback groups in terms of the changes in writing accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity. These findings were attributable to some potential factors such as students' proficiency level, students' unfamiliarity with teachers' feedback, students' difficulties to follow teachers' feedback and other factors. The findings also revealed that the learners value and appreciate receiving feedback on form or feedback on content or a combination of both types of feedback on their writing. However, there are some difficulties that they faced when processing feedback such as the teachers' use of complex language, students' unfamiliarity with some grammar rules and students motivation to write and to receive feedback. The learners offered

some suggestions on the way their teachers should deliver feedback. Most of them emphasized the importance of constructive feedback (i.e., feedback which contains motivating and encouraging comments) and how it impacts their writing development. Others suggested that peer feedback could be more helpful because it makes them feel comfortable and less embarrassed. They also held different views about the amount of feedback, some preferred feedback on all their errors, others want from teachers to target certain errors and give them time to work on them.

These findings imply that teachers should review their feedback practices and their perceptions of teaching writing and look for alternative ways to develop students writing skills other than correcting grammar errors. L2 writing teachers should also be aware of the complexity of language in their content feedback and ensure that students receive enough explanations on how to correct their content-related problems. In addition, teachers are reminded to use feedback in ways that increase students' motivation to write. Finally, teachers should also consider the benefits of using peer feedback in their classrooms.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

I, Yasmine Mustafa, declare that the thesis entitled:

Feedback on Form Vs. Feedback on Content: The Changes in EFL Learners' Writing Accuracy, Syntactic Complexity and Content Complexity

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
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3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
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5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;
7. None of this work has been published before submission Signature:

Signed:

Date:

Dedication

To the soul of my grandmother who passed away while I was drafting this thesis

To my beloved parents

Houria Guellouma & Maamar

To my husband and my daughter *Sirine*

To my brothers and sisters

Aicha, Hanane, Mohamed, Slimane, Tahar

To my mother in law *Zohra*

To my brothers and sisters in law

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List of Acronyms

CBA: Competency Based approach

CLT: Communicative language teaching

ESL: English as a second language

EFL: English as a foreign language

LMD: License/Master/Doctorate

SLA: Second language acquisition

WCF: Written corrective feedback

Chapter 1 General Introduction

1.1 Chapter overview

This study compares two different types of teacher's feedback (Form vs. content) in terms of the changes in the grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity of Algerian EFL learners' writings. It also explores the responses and the attitudes of EFL learners and their preferences for the types of feedback they received. This chapter introduces the background of the study, presents the objectives and the research questions, describes the context where this study took place and highlights the rationale of the study in terms of theory, methodology and practice.

1.2 Background of the study

It is generally agreed that written feedback plays a significant role in the development of second language (L2) writing skills (Truscott, 1996; Ellis, 2006; Hyland, 2003). Therefore, many teachers in different academic settings feel the need to give substantial comments on students' written texts to help them improve as writers and to justify the grade they have been given (Hyland, 2003). However, there is still a continuous debate as to whether or not written corrective feedback is helpful and which type of teachers' feedback is the most effective for EFL learners (Lalande, 1982; Ferris, 2006; Truscott, 1999). This debate was triggered by John Truscott in 1996 with his article *'The Case Against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes* in which he made a strong claim that providing grammar corrections on students' writing is a waste of time and teachers should attempt to use their instructional time in more constructive ways. Providing evidence from several studies (Kepner, 1991; Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992), he concluded that, "grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned" (1996: 328). Ferris (1999), among other writing researchers (Lyster, Lightbown, and Spada, 1999; Ferris and Helt, 2000; Chandler, 2003), has strongly reacted to Truscott's claims. She argued that Truscott's argument that grammar correction is harmful and should be avoided is inconclusive because several studies have demonstrated that error correction helps students to improve their writing. Other researchers such as Lyster, Lightbown, and Spada (1999) and Chandler (2003) have asserted that grammar correction is essential for the development of L2 acquisition, and therefore, it must remain an important component of L2 instruction.

Since then, there has been a plethora of research with improved designs which indicated that written corrective feedback can have positive effects; however, the question raised was how and in what ways it could be helpful (Ferris, 2004). Researchers, then, started to compare different types of written corrective feedback. Chong (2019), in a recent systematic review, identified the different types of written corrective feedback investigated. This include: direct/indirect WCF (explicit/implicit language error correction; e.g., Chandler, 2003), focused/unfocused WCF (selective/comprehensive language error correction; e.g., Lee, 2004), metalinguistic WCF (correction that offers explanations on the nature of language errors; e.g., Bitchener, 2008), synchronous WCF (real-time or delayed error correction (e.g., Shintani, 2016), dynamic WCF (language error correction strategy that is designed based on needs of individual learners; e.g., Evans et al., 2011), computer-generated/mediated WCF (language error correction assisted by educational technology; e.g., Li et al.,2015), and alternative WCF (alternative feedback sources, e.g., feedback provided by peers; e.g., Diab, 2016).

While these studies have reported promising findings regarding the positive effects of different types of written corrective feedback; however, the inconsistency of the results regarding which type of feedback is more effective makes it evident that further research is needed in order to get a deeper understanding on this issue (Bitchener, 2012). This has raised interests on how individual learners respond to written corrective feedback, to calls for further naturalistic classroom-based studies with high ecological validity and longitudinal research designs and to a shift from examining the efficacy of written corrective feedback to exploring students' perceptions (Bitchener and Storch, 2016; Goldstein, 2016; Storch, 2018, Boggs, 2019). Contributing to this research base, this study is carried out in a real-classroom setting using quantitative methods to analyse the differences between feedback on form and feedback on content in terms of the changes in learners' writing accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity. The study also uses qualitative data (focus groups, individual interviews) to explore learners' opinions about the benefits of the feedback they received, the type of feedback they preferred the most and their suggestions regarding the way their teachers' should deliver feedback.

This study is different from the existing studies in the literature because the aim is not to compare the effectiveness of form and content feedback but rather to compare these types of feedback to each other. In addition, this study adds to the existing literature by addressing different writing aspects such as accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity. Most of studies in teacher's written feedback addressed accuracy development with little attention given to other dimensions of writing such as syntactic complexity and content complexity (Storch, 2018; Sang and Zou, 2022). The study also used different qualitative data methods such as focus groups and individual interviews to inform the interpretation of the quantitative data.

1.3 The aims and the research questions

With the above considerations in mind, the ultimate aim of this study is to highlight the differences between form-focused and content –focused feedback. Moreover, the study aims at addressing the changes in students' writing accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity. Another aim of the study is to examine how EFL students, studying at the Department of English, at the University of Ghardaia respond to the different types of feedback and the difficulties these students may encounter when processing the teacher's feedback. In addition, the study also aims at reporting the students' preferences to the different types of teacher's feedback and the reasons for their preferences. Finally, the study highlights the students' suggestions regarding the way they prefer to receive feedback.

To achieve these objectives, the current study is geared by the following research questions:

1) Are there differences in grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?

2) Are there differences in syntactic complexity between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?

3) Are there differences in content complexity between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?

4) What are students' attitudes towards these different types of feedback?

   a) Did the students face any difficulties when processing teacher's feedback?
   b) Which type of feedback do they prefer?
   c) What do students want from the teacher's feedback?

1.4 The context of the study

1.4.1 The rivalry of languages in Algeria

The linguistic landscape of Algeria is considered as a rich and a complex one because of the number of languages used and taught in academic and non-academic settings. These languages include literary Arabic, Algerian Arabic "Derja", Berber with its varieties: Kabyle, Chaoui, Mzabi, Targi, and French. English, therefore, is considered as a second foreign language after French. This complexity is profoundly affected by 132 years of French colonial rule, which left an immense linguistic impact on Algerians. During this period, an assimilationist process was imposed on the country in an attempt by the French to suppress the native cultures and languages and to transform Algeria into an extension of France (Heggoy 1973: 180). After the independence of Algeria in 1962, French pervaded all walks of life (administration, education, economy, etc.) and

there were many attempts from the successive Algerian governments to adopt an Arabisation policy .In addition, they relegated the French language to the status of a foreign language (Mostari, 2004, Benrabeh, 2007). However, French continues to show great resilience especially in education as highlighted by Benrabeh (2014:47) "...French is still the key language for studies in scientific disciplines in Higher Education". French is taught as a compulsory subject from third year grade in primary education until university where 95% of undergraduate and postgraduate courses in sciences or medicine are still taught in the French language (Miliani, 2000: 20).

Although French is omnipresent, the desire to promote English in Algeria has significantly increased especially with the new educational reforms. As a result of globalization, English has become the language of education and business in several countries. The reason why English has gained increasing attention within the Algerian educational reform .In this regard, Miliani (2003) justifies that "the introduction of English is being heralded as the magic solution to all possible ills including economic, technological and educational ones." (2003:13). In fact, English was initially introduced in the Algerian educational system during the French colonial rule and continued to be taught as a second foreign language in the Algerian schools after independence despite the attempts made by the Algerian government to replace French with English in its educational system. For example, the first attempt touched the primary school sector in 1993 where the Ministry of National Education made it possible for parents to choose which language (French or English) their children should learn in primary school starting from the fourth grade until the 6th grade; however, this attempt failed as the number of individuals who chose English was insignificant. Ounis (2012), in a study made on some Algerian families, explained that some parents think that French is better for higher education studies especially scientific disciplines such as biology, mathematics, etc. which are still taught in French. Others think that French will increase job opportunities for their children in the Algerian society and other parents want their children to pursue their studies in France. Since then, English, was taught as a compulsory course starting from first-year middle school (i.e. around the age of 11). It covers seven years four of which at the middle school and three at secondary school. Apart from this, English in Algeria is not the students' natural communicative environment and is, to a certain extent, absent from daily life communications as compared to Algerian Arabic and French, which are widely used by the majority of the Algerian population.

Nevertheless, the Algerian president Abdelmadjid Tebboune, in an interview recorded by state-run TV, has recently announced for the first time in the country's history that, starting from the academic year (2022-2023), the teaching of English is compulsory in primary school starting from the third grade. In addition, some Algerian universities have already started to use English as a medium of instruction in some disciplines such as Economy, Mathematics, etc.

1.4.2 The teaching of English in the Algerian educational system

1.4.2.1 The Competency Based Approach

As a result of the changes that took place in the world due to globalization, many educational systems around the world adopted innovative teaching approaches, which are compatible to the new life demands. In Algeria, two major approaches have been adopted to meet the needs of the actual era: The Competency-Based Approach (CBA) in middle and secondary schools and the LMD system in higher education (Bader, 2007). The competency Based Approach (CBA) refers to an educational movement which "advocates defining educational goals in terms of precise measurable descriptions of the knowledge, skills, and behaviours students should possess at the end of a course of study" (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:141). This means that CBA emphasises the outcome of learning and focuses on what learners are expected to do with the acquired knowledge rather than on what they are expected to learn about.

Auerbach (1986) identified eight key features that characterize the Competency-Based curriculum:

1. A focus on successful functioning in society: The goal is to enable students to become autonomous individuals capable of coping with the demands of the world.
2. *A focus on life skills:* Rather than teaching language in isolation, students are taught just those language forms/skills required by the situations in which they will function.
3. *Task- or performance-centered orientation*: The emphasis is on what learners will be able to do with the language (overt behaviour) as a result of instruction and not on knowledge about language and skills.
4. *Modularized instruction*: Language learning is broken down into small chunks. That is, objectives are narrowed into sub-objectives. This way, both teachers and learners can get a clear a sense of progress.
5. *Outcomes which are made explicit a priori:* Outcomes are public knowledge, known and agreed upon by both learner and teacher. They are specified in terms of behavioural objectives so that students know exactly what behaviours are expected of them.
6. *Continuous and ongoing assessment:* Assessments are done in a continuous and ongoing way. Learners are pre-tested to determine what skills they lack and post-tested after being instructed in that skill.
7. *Demonstrated mastery of performance objectives*: Rather than the traditional paper-and-pencil test, assessment is based on the ability to demonstrate pre-specified behaviours.
8. *Individualized, student-centered instruction:* Learning is individualized and learner-centered. That is, objectives are defined in terms of individual needs. Also, learning is not time-based and learners have the freedom to move at their own pace. They can concentrate on the areas in which they lack competence.

(Auerbach, 1986: 414-415)

These features reflect a tendency towards learner centeredness in which the learner is no more a passive receiver of knowledge but rather an active participant engaging in diverse classroom activities that promote communicative competence. In fact, the development of learners' communicative competencies is a fundamental concern of the Algerian Competency - Based Curriculum and they are implemented as follows:

A: *Interact orally in English:* The learner should be able to produce oral messages using appropriate intonation, pronunciation, structure and vocabulary related to a specific communicative situation.

B: *Interpret oral and written messages:* The learner should interpret oral or written messages in order to get information, answer questions, and justify answers in a given communicative situation.

C: *Produce oral and written messages:* The learner should be able to produce an oral or written message in order to inform, describe, relate and prescribe by using different types of texts and the already acquired knowledge. (Riche et al., 2006: 04).

This means that Algerian first year undergraduate students are expected to have received an adequate instruction and are; thus, supposed to be able to produce an acceptable piece of writing using different genres already dealt with in previous education. In addition to the abovementioned competencies, the official curricula designed by the Algerian Ministry of National Education Curriculum Committee provided a statement covering the overall goals of the CBA, which emphasizes the need for more communication opportunities for the students to help them acquire the necessary skills to engage in a relationship with their environment.

1.4.2.2 The LMD system

LMD is the name given in France to the harmonization of academic degrees throughout the European Union. It stands for Licence, an equivalent of Bachelor's degree; Master, an equivalent of MA degree and Doctorate, an equivalent of PhD degree (Chelli, 2013). The License degree is granted after three years of study (corresponding to 180 ECTS32), the Master's degree is conferred after two years of study (corresponding to 120 or 300 ECTS credits earned) and, finally, the doctorate is conferred after the completion of research for at least three years and defending a thesis (Lakehal, 2008).

The ultimate aim of incorporating this system, according to Hanifi (2018), is to bridge the gap between the gained knowledge at the university sphere and the job market demands.

Furthermore, this system envisaged a number of long-term objectives that have been summarised by Mami (2013) as follows:

- Planning and evaluation of the students' needs as well as those liaised to the socioeconomic market.
- Developing multimedia at the level of oral expression and vocabulary,
- Encouraging student enhancement with mobility.
- Creating cooperation between universities that share the same objectives and interests
- Create listening cells and audits to register students' propositions.
- Prepare students for vocational education through the choice of English

(2013:913).

The implementation of this system has also urged a shift from traditional forms of assessment to the use of new assessment techniques, which comply with the principles of LMD. For many years, Algerian teachers did not give much importance to feedback and assessment in classrooms, they have relied mainly on the product approach which prioritizes the grammatical accuracy without taking into consideration the creativity of the students (Chelli, 2013). However, with the new reforms, it is expected that teachers shift their attention from an absolute focus on assessing the accuracy of students' writing to the assessment of the functional use of language.

1.4.3 Approaches to teaching writing in Algeria

For many years, the teaching of writing was a neglected area. Matsuda and Silva (2005) related this to the fact that prominence was given to the spoken forms rather than the written ones, particularly, in the mid of the twentieth century. However, few years later, writing gained more importance and became a fundamental concern for many scholars. Consequently, a number of teaching approaches have developed in order to enhance learners' written competencies.

1.4.3.1 The product approach

As its name suggests, the product approach is basically concerned with the final result of the writing process. It places emphasis on the linguistic knowledge of writers. It also considers the development of writing as resulting mainly from the imitation of the teacher's input (Badger & White, 2000). Pincas (1982) mentioned that the product approach has four major stages, which are: First, familiarization: it improves student awareness of certain features of a particular text. Second, guided writing: it enables the learner to produce simple sentences about a certain topic. Third, free writing: the learner can write a piece of work, guided by some pictures. Finally, controlled writing: it gives an opportunity for the learner to use the writing skill as part of a genuine activity such as a letter, story or essay.

Since the focus of the product approach is on accuracy, students are required to produce error-free written texts, as Tribble (1996) explained, teachers within this approach "tend to see errors

as something that they have a professional obligation to correct and, where possible, eliminate. In such context, one of the teacher's main roles will be to install notions of correctness and conformity." (1996:37). As such, teacher's feedback in this approach is mainly concerned with form-related aspects of writing such as grammatical structures, vocabulary and mechanics.

In the Algerian context, the teaching of writing has for decades focused mainly on the product approach, neglecting students' creativity and language skills and evaluating students' writing by their test scores rather than their writing development (Chelli, 2013). In fact, the extreme focus on written text accuracy and ignoring the steps that the writer goes through while producing a piece of writing is one of the limitations of this approach (Zamel, 1983); thus, the process approach was introduced as a reaction to these shortcomings.

1.4.3.2 The process approach:

According to Zamel (1983), "writing is a process through which students can explore their thoughts" (1983: 147). As such, the process approach places emphasis on the different cognitive stages that the writer goes through to reach the final product. Badger and White (2000) state that teachers of writing who apply this approach guide students to compose their final drafts through the different stages of the writing process rather than providing them with input. These stages are generally listed as follows: prewriting, composing/drafting, revising, and editing (Tribble, 1996). These teachers also "neglected accuracy in favour of fluency; the processes (generating ideas, expressing feelings) were more important to individual development than the outcome (the product)" (Reid, 2001:29). Therefore, teacher's feedback in the process approach feedback could take different forms such as written feedback, teacher-student conferences, peer feedback, praise, questions or suggestions, etc. (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996;Raimes, 1983; Hyland, 2003).

Given the context of this study, this approach seems to be compatible to the principles of the CBA. However, writing instruction in many Algerian schools, as mentioned earlier, is still form-oriented and students' written texts are seen as products to be evaluated solely for exams (Chelli, 2012). This could be attributed to fact that the teaching of the writing skill has a marginal position in the classroom as the activities found in the course books are usually given as homework and rarely done in the classrooms (Chelli, 2013). Benaissa (2010), after an analysis of secondary school syllabuses and texts-books, argued that there is a degree of discrepancy between the syllabuses and what appears in the textbooks. To say it differently, the syllabuses sustains the process of writing by providing different writing strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, communicative, rhetorical and socio affective); however, these objectives are not clearly reflected in the school texts-books. These issues led the researcher to stress the need to reconsider the incorporation of writing tasks in the syllabuses in order to integrate the process of writing more explicitly.

Although many researchers and ELT practitioners advocated the process approach; however, it was criticised because the purpose and the content of writing was not taken into consideration. In addition, the writing process is a recursive and complex one as student writers may not do the different stage of the writing process in a linear sequence (Tribble, 1996; Badger and White, 2000; Hyland, 2003). The student writers also need a long time to go through all the stages of writing process (Harmer, 2005). Nevertheless, the process approach is still used in different academic contexts.

1.4.3.3 The genre approach:

Within the genre approach, writing is viewed from a social perspective, i.e. learners produce texts to suit a particular purpose. According to Cope & Kalantzis (1993), there are three phases for this approach: First, *modelling:* the teacher uses a selected text to guide the students to recognize the purpose of the text and the intended audience, the stages of the text as narrative, orientation, complication, resolution and the language features. Second**,** *joint construction*: the teacher and students engage in the joint construction of a new text explicitly about: the purpose of the text and the embedded audience, their language choices – the development in the text and if the purpose is effectively achieved. To do this, the teacher and students draw on previous knowledge about texts gained from reading and writing and from knowledge gained from the joint deconstruction of the model text. Third, *individual construction:* students use their knowledge stages in the text, language features and the purpose of the text and intended audience to write their own. Similar to the product approach, the genre approach focuses on the linguistic features of the text; however, it differs from the product approach in the sense that it emphasizes the social context where writing happens (Badger and White, 2000). The genre approach also differs from the process approach because it focuses on the readers and emphasizes "the constraints of form and content that have to be recognized when a writer attempt to match a text to a social purpose" (Tribble, 1996:46).

Similar to the process approach, teacher's feedback within the genre approach could be used in different forms such as peer feedback, teacher-student conference, computer mediated feedback, etc. Moreover, feedback in the genre approach focuses on the genre conventions and cares about all the aspects of writing. Thus, group discussions can also be used to give broader attention to different aspects and this may, in turn, benefit all students because their writing involves the same terminology and text features (Hyland, 2004).

Given that the writing course in the context of this study is not taught on its own but is rather integrated with reading *(See section 1.5),* some writing teachers in Algeria attempt to use the genre approach to achieve the course objectives. This is done through a set of tasks and activities,

which improve students' awareness about notions such as genre, register, discourse, audience and purpose as well as reading and writing strategies.

Like the product and the process approaches, the genre approach was also subject to criticism. For example, it is argued that this approach hinders students' creativity and deprives them from the ability to freely express themselves in their writing (Hyland, 2004). It is also argued that this approach underestimates the necessary writing skills and neglects the fact that learners may not have sufficient knowledge to express his/her ideas to a specific audience. In other words, the students may confront difficulties to write a scientific report if he/he lacks the sufficient knowledge of this genre.

1.4.3.4 The process genre approach

To deal with the shortcomings of the aforementioned approaches, the process genre approach was suggested in which writing requires the language knowledge (similar to product and Genre approaches), the context knowledge and the writing purposes (similar to Genre approach), and the use of language skills (similar to process approach). Writing development of students involves input provision to which learners respond (similar to product and Genre approaches) and attention on learners' skills (similar to process approach) (Badger & White, 2000).

Within this approach, the learners' proficiency level and their previous knowledge of the topic are important for the selection of appropriate tasks. For example, if learners are asked to produce a scientific report, as mentioned earlier, they should have enough knowledge of appropriate language and vocabulary to produce a text. In case students lack this knowledge, it is the teacher's task to guide the students through different sources: the input in terms of instructions and clarifications, students to work in groups, samples of the target text and use them as models to be followed (Hyland, 2007).

Like many EFL writing teachers, some Algerian university writing teachers attempt to use the process genre approach because it is believed to be compatible to the principles of the LMD system and it helps them to achieve the writing/reading course objectives; however, it seems that most of teachers in Algeria still follow the product-oriented approach because they put more emphasis on the linguistic level of writing and ignore other levels that are part of the writing skill (Chelli, 2012). With regard to this, Ouskourt (2008) suggested, "teachers need to be aware of the idea that the process of writing is best understood as a set of distinctive thinking processes, which students develop during the act of composing without neglecting the cognitive and metacognitive strategies the writing skill entails" (2008: 260).

1.5 The setting of the study

The current study took place at the department of English at Ghardaia University in Algeria. The department of English is one of the departments in the faculty of Letters and Languages at this university. It offers a BA program for students who have successfully passed their Baccalaureate exam in secondary school and wish to major in the English language and become future teachers of English, or simply future graduates in the English language. This course lasts for three years, which compose of enhancing some basic language skills such as writing/ reading comprehension and oral expression. The table below further explains how the Bachelor degree in the Algerian educational system is structured.

Table 1-1 The structure of the Bachelor degree in the Algerian educational system

First year	Semester 1	Adoption to university life and experimentation of various training offers.
	Semester 2	All students are taught together, regardless of their future specialisation.
Second year	Semester 3	Deepening students' basic knowledge of the subject chosen
	Semester 4	Common-core (80%) and specific subject (20%), depending on the specialisation chosen.
Third year	Semester 5	Focused on the students' chosen subject and specialisation
	Semester 6	Specific (80%) and Common-core (20%), depending on the specialisation chosen.

As mentioned in the table, the students of the department are required to study for three years to earn a BA in the English language. They must study English as a foreign language through a number of mandatory courses (See *Table 1.2* for the full list of courses taught at the department). During their three years of study at the department, students are required to study three integrated reading and writing courses, which are reading/writing I, reading/writing II, reading/writing III.

Reading/Writing I course is taught in the first year, and its main objectives are: First, develop effective reading strategies: predicting, skimming, scanning, previewing a text, etc. and increase their vocabulary repertoire. Second, reflect upon ideas and information in texts and use them to write different types of texts of different lengths (paragraphs, short essays). Third, develop effective writing techniques for paragraph and essay writing such as (outlining, cohesion, coherence, unity, word order, organisation of ideas, topic sentence, transitions, etc.).

To pass this course, intensive reading and intensive writing are both tools for continuous control and assessment of students' progress in reading and writing. Teachers have the choice to decide how to evaluate students' achievement in this course using different ways. First, they can give oral feedback only (no mark) or to integrate a mark in the test scores of both semesters. Teachers can also decide to evaluate students on a research project. For example: written essays /a

research portfolio). These evaluation tools will allow good students to get experience with research and enhance their essay writing skills, which are badly needed for the second year of the course. A mark on the project work would be an alternative to the test mark.

In the second year, reading/writing course, teachers are required to develop effective reading and writing skills and strategies of the learners, they also need to identify different types of texts and registers, and to ask students to produce a full-length essay and increase their cultural knowledge. To assess students' progress in reading/writing 2 course, teachers could either use reading comprehension questions + essay writing, or ask students to produce book reports/ diaries or presentations. These learning tools can be used by teachers to provide students with useful feedback on their progress; teachers may also give a mark that can be included in the final test mark.

Finally, in the third year, the reading/writing course aims to help the learners understand, respond to and use English effectively in a range of contexts, develop skills that enable them to express their thoughts, ideas and feelings clearly and appropriately, respond to the thoughts, ideas and feelings of others with purpose and finally enable the students to think critically about what they hear and react critically to it. The students are assessed for this course on the production of argumentative essays for both midterm test and final exam (CANEVAS LICENCE D'ANGLAIS 2016-2017)

Table 1-2 List of taught modules in the first year

Modules	**Time allowed**
Reading/Writing	1 hour 30 mn
Listening/Speaking	1 hour 30 mn
English grammar	1 hour 30 mn
Linguistic concepts	1 hour 30 mn
Literary genres	1 hour 30 mn
Anglophones cultures	1 hour 30 mn
Study skills	1 hour 30 mn
Sociology	1 hour 30 mn

1.6 The rationale of the study

Although written corrective feedback has been extensively investigated in L2 writing. However, there are still many questions that remain unanswered and several theoretical and methodological issues that needed to be addressed. Based on this, the rationale for conducting this research derives from the missing knowledge in teachers' written feedback literature, the methodological issues as well as my motivation as a teacher. First, it can be observed from what has been discussed so far that most studies on teacher's feedback analysed language accuracy

and only a few targeted other aspects of writing such as syntactic complexity and content complexity. This motivated me to address this limitation by analysing not only accuracy but also syntactic complexity and content complexity between students who received feedback on form and those who received feedback on content. Second, the methodological rationale for this study was evoked from the call of many researchers to more ecologically valid designs and from the fact that many research studies have compared the outcomes of different types of feedback between different groups (using controls groups). However, the two groups (form vs. content), in this study, serve as a comparison group for each other. Finally, my short experience as a teacher of English also played a role in choosing this research topic. Back in my home country, I have noticed in some classes that students' writing performance is far from being satisfactory and they show serious writing deficiencies although, they have been exposed to the English language for seven years before entering university. This low achievement in students' written texts drives the researcher to investigate teacher's feedback with the hope that it will help students to produce good pieces of writing.

1.7 The structure of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. **The introductory chapter**, the present one, introduces the background of the study, explains the objectives and the research questions of the study, describes the context where this study took place and highlights the rationale behind this study. **The second chapter** contains three major sections. The first section highlights the definitions of the key concept of the study. The second section discusses studies for and against corrective feedback in second language acquisition and language teaching, highlights the typologies for corrective feedback and, finally, reviews and discusses some related studies on the effects of different types of written corrective feedback. The final section of the chapter analyses students' attitudes towards different types of feedback, reviews some of research studies which investigated preferences of students for different types of feedback and the factors influencing their preferences and examines the students' difficulties and strategies when handling teacher written feedback.

The third chapter sets out the methodology adopted in the present study. It presents the research design, describes the participants and the research instrument. Then, it gives a detailed section on the intervention including the teaching and feedback procedures followed by a discussion of the ethical procedures. Finally, this chapter discusses the quantitative and the qualitative data analysis

The fourth chapter presents the quantitative data findings. It starts with the results of the pre-testing. Then, it identifies the differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback in

terms of grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity and the content complexity of learners' new pieces of writing. This chapter ends with a summary of the main findings.

The fifth chapter presents the results of the qualitative data. It begins with the general findings regarding students' attitudes including their opinions and their preferences towards teacher's feedback. Then, it presents the findings obtained from the individual interviews along with some concluding remarks at the end of the chapter.

The sixth chapter discusses the findings of the study. It begins with an overall discussion of the results. Then it provides a discussion of the main findings according to the research question stated in the thesis.

The seventh chapter: presents the general conclusion of the study. It highlights the implications of this study for the teachers of writing along with the limitations and the recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2 Theoretical Perspectives on Teacher's Feedback

2.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the literature that helps shape the framework of the study. It is organized into three main sections. The first section defines the key concepts in the study (Accuracy, syntactic complexity, content complexity, corrective feedback and written corrective feedback). The second section reviews early and recent research that claimed to have found evidence for and against corrective feedback. Then, it highlights the different typologies for corrective feedback. Next, it discusses some related studies on the effects of different types of written feedback in this area. The final section of the chapter reviews some of the studies that investigated the preferences of students for different types of feedback and the factors influencing the students' preferences and examines the students' difficulties and strategies when handling teacher written feedback.

2.2 Key concepts of the study

This section provides the definitions of the key concepts in this study including: accuracy, syntactic complexity, content complexity, corrective feedback and written corrective feedback. Particularly, this section will highlight how other researchers defined and measured these concepts and how they will be defined in the current study.

2.2.1 Accuracy

Accuracy has been figured as a major research variable in applied linguistics. It has been used both as a performance descriptor for the oral and written assessment of language learners as well as an indicator of learner's proficiency underlining its performance; it has also been used for measuring progress in language learning (Houssen and kuiken, 2009: 461). Although there is a lack of consensus in the literature on how accuracy should be defined (Houssen et al., 2012), some scholars have proposed various definitions for this concept. For example, Skehan et al., (1996) referred to accuracy as "how well the target language is produced in relation to the rule system of the target language" (1996:23). Another definition of accuracy is suggested by Wolf-Quintero et al., (1998) who defined it as, "the ability to be free from errors while using language to communicate in either writing or speech." (1998:33). Skehan and Foster (1999) defined accuracy

as "the ability to avoid error in performance, possibly reflecting higher levels of control in the language, as well as a conservative orientation, that is, avoidance of challenging structures that might provoke error" (1991: 96); whereas Ellis' (2003) definition was "the extent to which the language produced in performing a task conforms with target language norms" (2003:339).

Accuracy can also be interpreted as the extent to which an L2 learner's performance (and the L2 system that underlies this performance) deviates from a norm (i.e. usually the native speaker) (Houssen et al., 2012: 04). These deviations from the norm are traditionally labelled as "errors". However, the interpretation and the application of this norm in L2 data, according to Housen et al., (2012), is problematic because there is still no consensus whether this norm could be determined in relation to the native speakers of the language, to other non-native speakers of the language or to the same individual speaker at less or more advanced stages of learning. In light of these considerations, Housen et al., (2012) broadened the interpretation of accuracy to appropriateness and acceptability, which would account for language use in different contexts and genres. (2012:04).

From the definitions above, it seems that a commonly accepted definition of accuracy among scholars is the ability to produce error-free texts, i.e., the extent to which the language produced conforms to target language norms, which involves the correct use of punctuation, vocabulary and grammar. This contrasts with Skehan and Foster (1999)'s definition, which is likely to serve as a communication strategy rather than accurate use of the language, i.e., the ability to avoid the use of complex language to reduce errors in performance.

Given the context of this study, developing linguistic accuracy of the learners is one of the major objectives of the curriculum. However, linguistic accuracy, within this context, is no longer considered as an isolated element of the language learning, but as essential for the successful communication of ideas. This means that the purpose of linguistic accuracy, as Skehan and Foster's definition suggests, is not about how correct learners' use of the language system is but rather about how able is the learner to choose linguistic structures, which enable him/her to communicate ideas effectively. Therefore, accuracy, in this study is operationally defined as the ability of the learners to make appropriate grammatical choices in their writings to communicate the intended meanings.

2.2.1.1 Measuring accuracy

Researchers have used different approaches to measure linguistic accuracy in L2 writing. One of the common approaches is the use of holistic scales (Hamp-Lyons and Henning, 1991; Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, 1994; Tarone et al., 1993). Hamp-Lyons and Henning (1991), for example,

investigated the validity and the reliability of applying a multiple-trait scoring procedure to obtain communicative writing profiles of the writing performance of ESL writers. They rated the written tasks on 7 traits on a scale of 0-9 in each category. The traits covered different aspects of writing including: communicative quality, interestingness, referencing, organization, argumentation, linguistic accuracy and linguistic appropriacy (the descriptors of these traits appear in *Appendix F).* The study reported high reliability (.91) of this scale on the linguistic accuracy sub-scores. Another study by Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1992) compared the effects of peer and teacher's feedback on the quality of students' final drafts using a writing scale adapted originally from a scale developed by Jacobs et al., (1981). This scale comprises of five writing quality components, which include content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Each component is composed of the quantified description: Excellent to Very Good, Good to Average, Fair to Poor, and Very Poor. Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1992) reported inter-rater reliability on the entire composition score at (.87) as the average of pair-wise correlations among the 4 raters. However, the study did not report any reliability for any of the individual components. Similarly, Tarone et al., (1993) rated accuracy on a scale of one to six and provided a description for each scale item (6: essentially no errors in a pretty complete range, 5: Wide range correctly used for the most part, 4: Some variety but still limited. Generally correct, 3: Some word form problems. Some breakdowns in verbs. Probably limited, 2: Real gaps in syntax. Mixed up structures, 1: Hit or miss. Creates serious difficulties in comprehension).

Several advantages and disadvantages are associated with the use of holistic scores. The widely recognized advantage of holistic scoring is its practicality because scores are determined quickly (Weigle, 2002). In addition, their validity is greater because it reflects authentic, personal reaction of the reader (White, 1984). However this method has been criticised because it lacks diagnostic information, which identify test takers' strengths and weaknesses; consequently, reliability is reduced (Song and Caruso, 1996). Another disadvantage is that the scores can depend more upon the rater than upon text qualities (Hamp-Lyons, 2003) and that different assesors may have different understanding and different judgement for each scale (Lin, 2018).

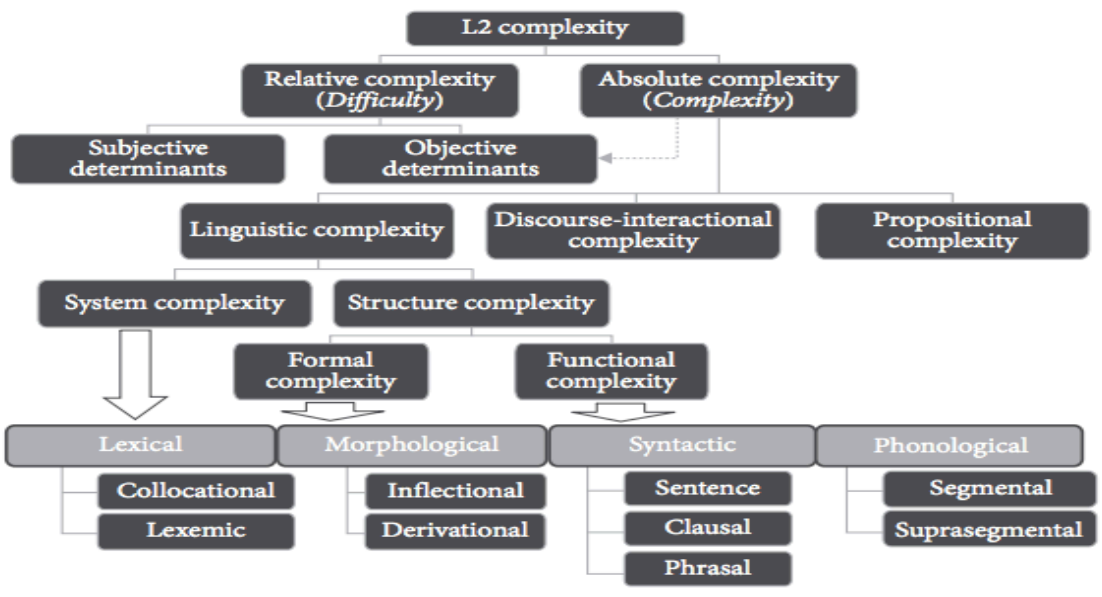
Other researchers (Zhang, 1982; Homburg, 1984; Bardovi and Bofman, 1989; Kepner, 1991) have developed another approach by counting "how many errors occur in relation to production units such as words, clauses, or T-units" (Wolf-Quintero et al., 1998:36). This could be done either by counting errors without classification (Zhang, 1982; Kepner, 1991) or by counting errors and classify them into categories such as syntactic, morphological and lexical (Kroll, 1990). Researchers such as (Casanave, 1994; Henry, 1996; Homburg, 1984; Larsen and Freeman, 1978, 1983) have used different ways to interpret errors. For example, Casanave (1994) considered count word endings, articles, prepositions, word usage and tense as errors (1994:199-200). Others

such as Henry (1996) and Larsen-Freeman (1978) considered all morpho-syntactic, vocabulary, spelling and punctuation faults as errors; whereas, Wigglesworth and Storch (2009) regarded grammatical errors (e.g., omitted plural 's', omitted preposition, omitted articles), as well as capitalization and lexical choice errors only when they impede meaning. However, some scholars such as Bardovi and Bofman (1989) argued that error-free measurement is problematic because it does not show what types of errors, how many types of errors, or even how these errors were distributed within the T-unit or any other units in the analysis. Furthermore, what is more problematic, as Conti (2015) asserted, is that without a further consideration to the errors types and levels, the accuracy of a learner who committed 10 errors in complex structures would be treated equally as to the accuracy of a learner who made 10 errors in simple structures. He further explained the possibility of penalizing the learner who commits more mistakes as a consequence of attempting complex structures, in that the learner would score less than the learner of the same proficiency level who plays it safe in addressing only simple structures.

2.2.2 Syntactic complexity

Similar to accuracy, complexity has been recognized as a key construct in learners' language proficiency, as an indicator of language development and a descriptor of the quality texts learners produce (Houssen et al., 2012). However many scholars suggested that complexity is one of the most difficult constructs to define because, as Palloti (2009) claimed, the term pertains different meanings depending on the various aspects of communication and language it has been applied to. This multifaceted nature of the term is clearly demonstrated in the following taxonomic model developed by Bulté and Housen (2012).

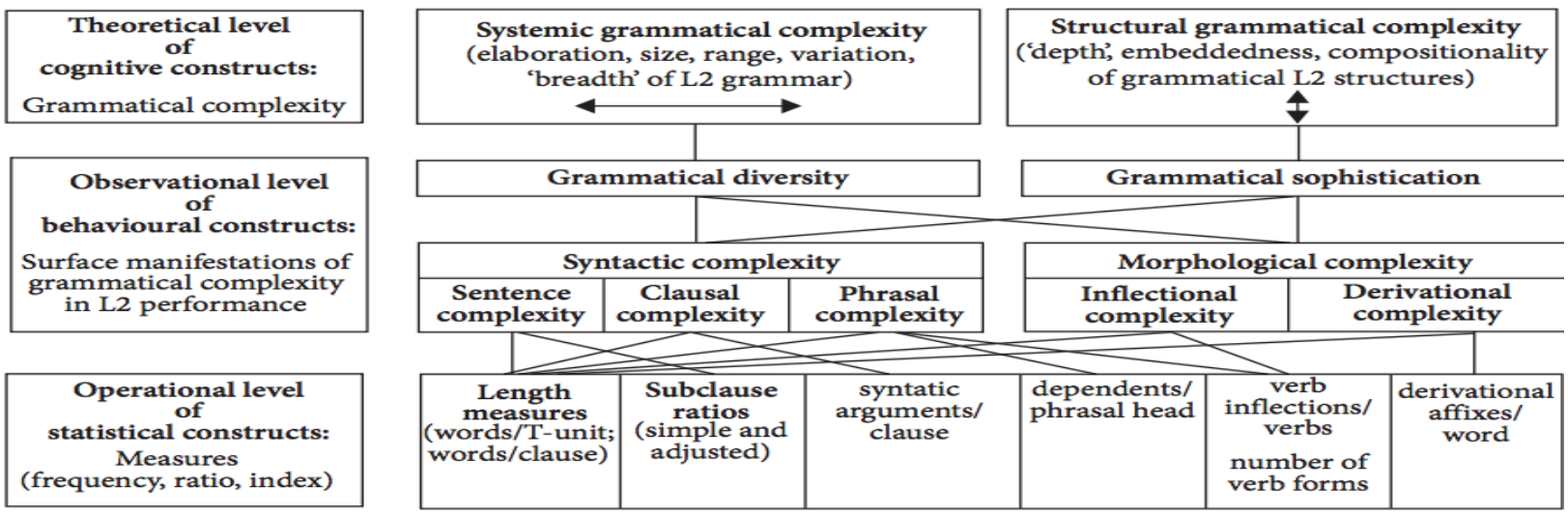
Figure 2-1 A taxonomy of complexity constructs (Bulté and Housen, 2012:23)



As clearly shown in the above figure, the first distinction is made between absolute complexity (also called inherent, objective or structural complexity) and relative complexity. (Also called difficulty, subjective or user-related complexity). Absolute complexity derives from objective inherent properties of linguistic units and/or systems (hence 'objective') while relative complexity implies the difficulty of processing or learning, which could arise from both user/learner-related variables (hence 'subjective') (Bulté and Housen, 2015). Moreover, under absolute complexity, Bulté and Housen (2012) further distinguished between three components of L2 complexity: propositional, discourse-interactional and linguistic. Propositional complexity refers to the amount of information or idea units a speaker/ writer encodes to convey a given message content. A higher number of idea units is thought to indicate higher indices of propositional complexity. Discourse-interactional complexity, on the other hand, is proposed in the analyses of learners' dialogic discourse, where the discourse-interactional has been characterized in terms of the number and type of turn changes that learners initiate and the interactional moves and participation roles that they engage in (Bulté and Housen, 2012). Linguistic complexity can be interpreted both at the global or structural level. Global or system complexity refers to the learners' linguistic repertoire, namely the range, variety or diversity of different structures and items that the learner knows or uses; whereas, structural complexity focuses on the depth and sophistication of the learners' structures. All these different components and sub-dimensions of complexity can be assessed across various domains of language such as lexicon, syntax, phonology and morphology. The present study focuses, particularly, on syntactic complexity.

Researchers suggested different definitions for syntactic complexity. Foster and Skehan (1996) defined the construct as a "progressively more elaborate language….[and] a grater variety of syntactic patterns"(1996:303). Wolfe-Quintero et al. (1998) defined it as "writing primarily in terms of grammatical variation and sophistication". Similarly, Ortega (2003) viewed syntactic complexity as "the range of forms that surface in language production and the degree of sophistication of such forms" (2003: 492). Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) defined syntactic complexity as "the extent to which learners produce elaborated language" (2005: 139). However, the problem with these definitions is whether the level of structure sophistications and the ranges of the syntactic patterns are determined based on native on non-native speakers of the language. With regard to this, Bulté and Housen (2012) highlighted the contradictory classification among scholars in terms of the third person singular 's'—as a formally simple; yet, functionally complex feature (Ellis, 1990), as a formally and functionally simple feature (Krashen, 1992), or as a formally and functionally complex feature (DeKeyser, 1997). To solve this issue, among other issues, Bulté and Housen (2012) proposed a solution, which is demonstrated in the following figure.

Figure 2-2 Syntactic complexity at different levels of construct specification



Bulté and Housen (2012: 27)

In the figure above, Bulté and Housen (2012) highlighted the three different levels of grammatical complexity. The first level can be analysed on an abstract theoretical level as a property of a (cognitive) system and/or of a structure (that forms part of such a cognitive system). This level allows an analysis of different constituents, how deeply they are lodged, and the relationship that exist between them. The second level is less abstract, observational level of language production, as exemplified by a sample of actual language use, these theoretical notions of complexity can be manifested in language behaviour in various ways and on several different levels (e.g. in the use of different strategies for combining and embedding clauses, by using different verb forms or specialized versus more common vocabulary). The final level involves the analytical measures and tools that have been created to show the amount of complexity in a given language sample. Establishing a clear link among these different levels by identifying, for example, the meaning of syntactic complexity theoretically, the ways in which it manifests itself in language production observationally, and how such manifestations can be measured, the metrics will not only be valid, but the interpretations of the studies will be meaningful (Bulté and Housen, 2012).

In short, although relevant definitions of syntactic complexity are varied in the literature; however, most L2 writing researchers focusing on assessing learners' written productions believe that the notion of syntactic complexity can be used to describe the structural characteristics of learner language and to study linguistically demanding production. Thus, for the purposes of the present study the concept of syntactic complexity has been defined as the extent to which the grammatical structures exhibited in the language production are varied and sophisticated. By variety we mean, as Lu (2010) stated, the range of syntactic resources deployed and sophistication refers to the extent to which these grammatical features are elaborate. To put it in a different way, the learner's writing is set to be syntactically complex, if he or she uses divers and well crafted production units; this includes a wide range of phrases (e.g. nominal, verbal and

prepositional), a wide range of sentences (e.g. complex, compound and compound complex sentences) in addition to varied clause types (e.g. relative, adverbial, complement).

2.2.2.1 Measuring syntactic complexity

There are two complexity measures, which are frequently used in the literature. The first analyses the mean length of T-unit in a text (MLTU) (e.g., Larsen-Freeman, 1978, Henry, 1996); whereas, the second analyses the number of dependent clauses per T-unit (C/TU) (Bardovi and Bofman, 1989). Other measurements to complexity are found in a book-length research synthesis by Wolfe-Quintero et al., (1998) in which they examined more than 100 measures of accuracy, fluency and complexity in several second language writing development studies. Most of these measures gauge syntactic complexity by quantifying one of the following: length of production unit, amount of subordination or embedding, amount of coordination, range of syntactic structures, and degree of phrasal sophistication.

In recent years, researchers have developed automated tools to examine the syntactic complexity such as Coh Metrix and SCA (syntactic complexity analyser). The latter is used to examine the syntactic complexity in the current study (See chapter 3 for the rationale of using this analyser). Lu (2010) designed the L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyser to digitally automatic measure the syntactic complexity of English writing samples produced by university-level English learners in order to alleviate the intensive efforts of manual analysis. This computational system allows the researcher to automatically analyse 14 different measures of syntactic complexity which are demonstrated in the following table

Table 2-1 The fourteen syntactic complexity measures (Lu, 2010)

Measure	Code	Definition
Type 1: Length of production unit		
Mean length of clause	MLC	# of words / # of clauses
Mean length of sentence	MLS	# of words / # of sentences
Mean length of T-unit	MLT	# of words / # of T-units
Type 2: *Sentence complexity*		
Sentence complexity ratio	C/S	# of clauses / # of sentences
Type 3: *Subordination*		
T-unit complexity ratio	C/T	# of clauses / # of T-units
Complex T-unit ratio	CT/T	# of complex T-units / # of T-units
Dependent clause ratio	DC/C	# of dependent clauses / # of clauses
Dependent clauses per T-unit	DC/T	# of dependent clauses / # of T-units
Type 4: *Coordination*		
Coordinate phrases per clause	CP/C	# of coordinate phrases / # of clauses
Coordinate phrases per T-unit	CP/T	# of coordinate phrases / # of T-units
Sentence coordination ratio	T/S	# of T-units / # of sentences
Type 5: Particular structures		
Complex nominals per clause	CN/C	# of complex nominals / # of clauses
Complex nominals per T-unit	CN/T	# of complex nominals / # of T-units
Verb phrases per T-unit	VP/T	# of verb phrases / # of T-units

As can be seen from the table above, the 14 syntactic complexity measures that the software computes are classified into five categories. The first category includes three length measures; these indices measure the complexity of the syntax in terms of length of production units. The second category measures the complexity of the sentence. The third category covers four measures that determine the amount of subordination. The fourth category includes three coordination measures and the final category embodies three measures that analyses the sophistication of particular structures. All except the first three measures are ratio measures. These categories allow researchers to obtain an in-depth analysis of the different aspects of syntactic complexity.

2.2.3 Content complexity

Unlike linguistic accuracy and syntactic complexity, which have been widely investigated in L2 writing research, few, if any, studies have targeted the content complexity of L2 students' writing. This could probably be attributed to the vagueness of the term, which has been used by different researchers for different purposes. Therefore, in this study, content complexity has connections with what has generally been referred to in the literature as thematic progression which is a valuable tool for writing assessment because it helps to identify students' writing deficiencies and teach students how to arrange old and new information to improve their ideas in a written text coherently (Wang, 2007)

Thematic progression has been defined as "how speakers construct their messages in a way which makes them fit smoothly into the unfolding language event" (Thompson, 2014:117). Daneš (1974) defined it as "the choice and ordering of utterance Themes, their mutual concatenation and hierarchy, as well as their relationship to the hyper-Themes of the superior text units (such as the paragraph, chapter…), to the whole text and to the situation. Thematic progression might be viewed as the skeleton of the plot" (1974: 114). Therefore, thematic progression concerns the way that the texts develop the ideas they present. More specifically, thematic progression concerns where Themes come from—how they relate to other Themes and Rhemes of the text (Jing, 2015).

Theme and *Rheme* are two key terms that have been introduced in thematic progression analysis. *"Theme"* is often used interchangeably with terms like topic or Subject. It has been interpreted differently among linguists. According to Mathesius, the first linguist to describe the *Theme/Rheme* distinction, "Theme" is the segment "that is being spoken about in the sentence" (Daneš, 1974: 106). Mathesius (1975) further elaborated this definition by stating that theme is "...an overwhelming majority of all sentences contain two basic elements: a statement and an

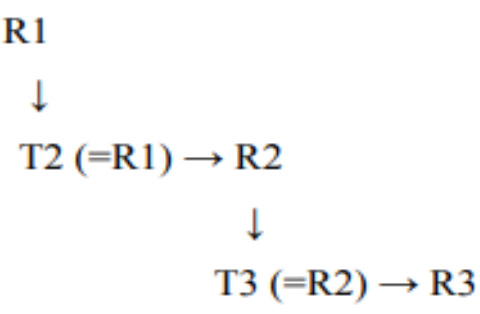
element about which the statement is made." (1975: 81). Babby (1980) viewed theme as "conveying the old or given information" (1980: 03) and (Witte, 1983) as "what the sentence is about" (1983:338). Halliday (1985) suggested another definition "...the Theme is the starting-point for the message; it is what the clause is going to be about" (1985: 39). On the other hand, "Rheme" refers, as Halliday (1994) stated to "the remainder of the message, the part in which the Theme is developed" (1994: 37). In many instances, Rheme is generally recognized with *New* Information, while Theme is related to *Given* Information. In other words, *Given* refers to what is already known, while New refers to what is unknown. Halliday (1994) elaborated the distinction between *Given* and *New* as "information that is presented by the speaker as recoverable (Given) or not recoverable (New) to the listener" (Halliday, 1994:298).

Given the lack of explicit definitions for content complexity in L2 writing research, as mentioned earlier, content complexity in this study is used to refer not only to the topical/thematic progression of students' written texts but it also covers the coherence of texts by tracking the progression of Themes and Rhemes and their development throughout a written discourse. To do this, researchers have proposed different models to examine thematic progression in students' writing. Some of these models will be highlighted in the next section

2.2.3.1 Measuring content complexity

Most research on thematic progression analysis refers to Daneš' (1974) thematic progression model, which classify progression into four types: linear progression, constant progression, split theme progression and Split Rheme Progression (1974:119).

Linear progression is the most basic thematic progression pattern, where the Rheme or part of the Rheme of one sentence becomes the theme of the subsequent sentence.

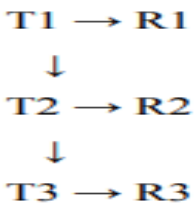


For example:

> "***At this point*** we must add an important qualification to what we have just said. ***That is***, we are using the terms rule and rule-governed in the special way that linguists use them. ***This usage*** is very different from the layperson's understanding of the terms".

Constant progression: In this pattern, the same theme or part of it appears in a series of propositions though not necessarily with identical wording.

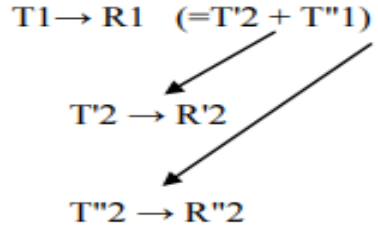
Chapter 2



For example:

> "***And yet we*** understand them and don't even notice that they are new. ***We*** speak, ***but usually we*** are not aware of the movements of our tongue, lips, or other parts of the mouth or throat involved in the production of sounds"

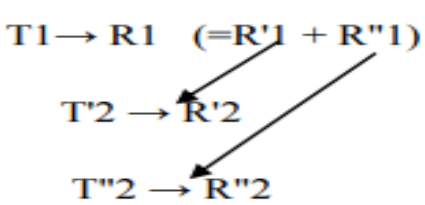
Split theme progression: In this pattern, the theme of the first clause is split into two or more ideas, and these ideas are developed in the themes of subsequent clauses.



For example:

> "***The mother and the child*** made a plan. She first found the wolf and tore his stomach, **and the child** brought some stones to fill the olf's stomach".

Split Rheme Progression, also called the Multiple-Rheme pattern is where the Rheme of a clause involves two ideas, which are worked up in consequent clauses.



For example:

> "***I will*** use the term 'language teaching method' to mean a coherent set of links between actions and thoughts in language teaching. ***The actions*** are the techniques and ***the thoughts*** are the principles in the title of this hook: ***Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching***".

Based on Daneš' (1974) model, researchers developed other models to measure thematic progression in students' writing among which Lautamatti's (1987) Topical Structure Analysis Model. This model was initially created to address the problem of how to achieve coherence in writing from a more process oriented and cognitive perspective (Regala et al., 2015). This model has been recognized as one of the effective methods to raise students' awareness of textual coherence and helps them detect their own coherence problems in writing. Lautamatti (1987) described three basic sentence elements that play a role in TSA. She identified the initial sentence

element (ISE), which is what comes first in the sentence. This may be the subject of the sentence, an introductory phrase or clause, etc. The second element is the mood subject, or the grammatical subject of the sentence. The final element is the topical subject, which or which may not be the mood subject. After the three elements are identified in each sentence, the topical subject will be plotted onto a graph, in order for the physical representation of the thematic development to be visualized.

Lautamatti (1987) suggested three types of thematic progression in her presentation of TSA: TSA: Parallel progression (two consecutive clauses with the same topical subject); extended parallel progression (a topical subject that occurs in two clauses that are not consecutive); and sequential progression (the *Rheme* element of a clause becoming the *Theme* element of the consecutive clause). The example of sentences topics in an essay and the three types of topical progression is illustrated in the example below:

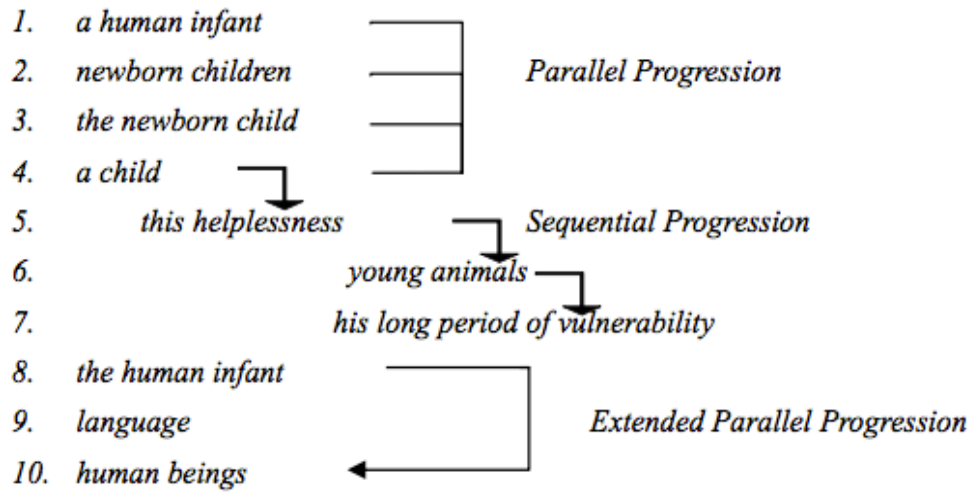
Language and Community

(1) When a human infant [a] is born into any community in any part of the world, it has two things in common with any other infant, provided neither of them has been damaged in any way either before or during birth. (2) Firstly, and most obviously, new born children are completely helpless. (3) Apart from a powerful capacity to draw attention to their helplessness by using sound, there is nothing the new born child can do to ensure his own survival. (4) Without care from some other human being or beings, be it a mother, grandmother, sister, nurse, or human group, a child is very unlikely to survive. (5) This helplessness of human infants is in marked contrast with the capacity of many newborn animals to get to their feet within minutes of birth and run with the herd within a few hours. (6) Although young animals are certainly at risk, sometimes for weeks or even months after birth, compared with the human infant they very quickly develop the capacity to fend for themselves. (7) It would seem that this long period of vulnerability is the price that the human species has to pay for the very long period which fits man for survival as a species. (8) It is during this very long period in which the human infant is totally dependent on others that it reveals the second feature which it shares with all other undamaged human infants, a capacity to learn language. (9) For this reason, biologists now suggest that language is "species specific" to the human race, that is to say, they consider the human infant to be genetically programmed in such a way that it can acquire language. (10) This suggestion implies that just as human beings are designed to see three-dimensionally and in colour, and just as they are designed to stand upright rather than to move on all fours, so they are designed to learn and use language as part of their normal development as well-formed human beings.

Note: Underlining indicates sentence topic.

(Lautamatti, 1987: 92)

Figure 2-3 A visual illustration of Topical progression: Lautamatti (1987:96)



2.2.4 Corrective feedback

Researchers have used different terminology to describe corrective feedback. The most common are: “negative evidence”, “negative feedback”, “error correction” and “corrective feedback”. These terms are often used interchangeably in the SLA and language teaching literature (Schachter, 1991; Gass, 1997). However, to avoid potential terminological confusion, it is important to elaborate the meaning of each term. According to Long (1991), ‘negative evidence’ provides the learners with information about what is unacceptable in the target language. This includes explanation, expansion and correction of wrong sequences and ungrammatical sentences (Abolhasanpour and Jabbari, 2014). It can either be direct or indirect. Direct negative evidence refers to some kind of input, which indicates errors with the purpose to attract the learners’ attention to it. On the other hand, indirect negative evidence shows the learner that a certain language feature is not possible because it is never present in the input (Vickers, 2001). Considering this, Kartchava (2012), based on Chaudron’s definition to corrective feedback, pointed out that negative feedback is “any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of the learner’s utterance” (Chaudron, 1977:31), it is, therefore, a subset of direct negative evidence, not its counterpart. However, corrective feedback can be equated and interchangeably used with negative feedback when it is defined as “any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is incorrect” (Lightbown and Spada, 1999). Kartchava (2019) further argued that the terms “corrective feedback” and “error correction” should not be used interchangeably because of the different meanings they hold. She mentioned that, in Chaudron’s (1977) view, the term “error correction” is used to refer to corrective moves that lead to repair of the non-target-like forms. Corrective feedback, on the other hand, simply signals the presence of an error in hopes of repair. (2012:17).

Researchers suggested other definitions for corrective feedback. However, it seems that most of them address the same idea, which is a response from teachers to learners’ performance on various tasks by indicating their errors and supplying them with information, which improves the correct use of the target language. Lalande (1982) broadly defined feedback as “any procedure used to inform a learner where an instructional response is right or wrong” (1982:141). Truscott referred to corrective feedback as a “correction of grammatical error for the purpose of improving a student’s ability to write accurately” (1996:329). Accordingly, Russell and Spada (2006) view corrective feedback as “any feedback provided to a learner, from any source, that contains evidence of learner error of language form” (2006:134). Ellis et al., (2006) offered a more comprehensible definition in which they describe corrective feedback as any teacher’s response to a learner utterance that contains an error. This response can consist of (a) an indication that an

error has been committed, (b) provision of the correct target language form, or (c) metalinguistic information about the nature of the error, or any combination of these. (2006:340).

Hattie and Timperley (2007) further explained that corrective feedback aims to provide information that can be obtained from different sources (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) and which helps students to narrow the discrepancy between what is understood and what is aimed to be understood. This can be done through "restructuring understanding, confirming to students that they are correct or incorrect, indicating that more information is available or needed, pointing to directions students could pursue, and/or indicating alternative strategies to understand particular information" (2007:82). More recently, Bitchener and Storch (2016) identified WCF as "a written response to a linguistic error that has been made in the writing of a text by a second language (L2) learner" (2016:01)

While these definitions clearly illustrate the meaning of corrective feedback. However, they are limited because the focus is mostly on language form. However, corrective feedback can take two different ways: feedback that focuses on form such as grammar, sentence structure, etc. and feedback that focuses on content such as ideas, arguments, writing style, etc. (Horbacauskiene and Kasperaviciene, 2015). Another problem is whether or not these definitions are relevant in contexts that are based on principles of communicative language teaching (CLT). In other words, teaching within these approaches (CLT) has shifted from an exclusive focus on the formal aspects of the language towards a focus on meaning and use (Han, 2002). The assumption is that if learners have sufficient opportunities to use language for communicative purposes, they will be able to master the language successfully without any explicit instruction (Nassaji, 2016). This suggests that corrective feedback, as referred to in the definitions above, is accorded low status in classroom processes and that teachers are expected to provide corrective feedback in ways that are compatible to the principles and the practice of CLT. In fact, there has been a long-standing debate in language teaching literature over whether to follow a synthetic approach (focus on form) or an analytic approach (focus on meaning) when giving feedback particularly in CLT contexts. Some scholars such as Lyster and Ranta (1997) cautioned that focusing on form in communicative or task-based classrooms does not lead to grammatical accuracy and could undermine the flow of communication. Conversely, others such as Lightbown and Spada (1990) contended that form-based instruction within a communicative context contributes to higher levels of linguistic knowledge and performance (1990: 443). The next section will further discuss the place of corrective feedback within a communicative language classroom.

2.2.4.1 The place of Corrective feedback in communicative language classrooms

Over the years, the notion of the role of corrective feedback in language learning has substantially changed. In the era of audio-lingual teaching method in 1950s to 1960s, learner errors were regarded as a deficiency that should be avoided. Until the late 1970's with the introduction of communicative language learning (CLT) and Krashen's (1985) comprehensible input hypothesis, the role of form-focused instruction and corrective feedback became inferior. The focus of language learning was on meaning and fluency, while learner errors were perceived as part of the natural learning process and would diminish over time. This led to a widespread misconception regarding the place of form-focused instruction and corrective feedback in CLT classrooms. Many CLT practitioners think that this teaching approach ignores the grammar instruction and it only focuses on the development of communicative skills. Indeed, some scholars have argued strongly that explicit grammar teaching should be avoided because, according to Prabhu (1987), the knowledge that a speaker needs to use is too complex. One more argument is because that knowledge is of a kind, which cannot be passed on in the form of stable rules, but can only be acquired unconsciously through exposure to the language (Krashen, 1988, as Cited in Thompson, 1996). However, the exclusion of explicit attention to grammar, according to, Thompson (1996), was never a necessary part of CLT although it is widely believed that the introduction of CLT to language teaching was basically a reaction against the heavy emphasis on structure at the expense of natural communication. Yet, there have always been theorists and teachers pointing out that grammar is necessary for communication to take place efficiently. Spada (2007) added: “CLT is not conceptualized as an approach that was intended to exclude form but rather one that was intended to include communication”(2007:275-276). Due to this misconception along with the influence of some SLA theories, discussing the place of form-focused instruction in CLT became a controversial issue in language teaching. Some theorists believe that form-focused instruction is an integral part in communicative contexts because it contributes to higher levels of linguistic knowledge; thus, it should be included in CLT classrooms. On the other hand, other scholars argued that form-focused instruction does not lead to grammatical accuracy and could undermine the flow of communication.

Research providing evidence that CLT alone does not necessarily contribute to grammatical accuracy development comes from Canadian French immersion programs. These programs are referred to by Krashen (1985) as "communicative programs par excellence" since the focus is almost exclusively on meaning through subject-matter instruction rather than on the form of the language itself (Lightbown and Spada, 1990: 431). These programs provides young classrooms learners with opportunities to develop productive repertoire in French; However, It has been demonstrated that, while children learn to speak French fluently and confidently, their accuracy in

French syntax and morphology is still far below what one might expect of learners who have spent several years immersed in the second language (Harley and Swain, 1984). Indeed, some observers have concluded that French immersion is the best demonstration of the inadequacy of CLT (Hammerly, 1987)

Other studies have examined the impact that both form-focused instruction and communicative-focused instruction have on the L2 learning of students. Savignon (1972), for example, compared the grammatical and communicative skills of three groups of college students, all of them have received four hours per week of audio lingual instruction where the focus was on the practice and manipulation of grammatical forms. The results of this study revealed no significant differences between groups on the linguistic competence measures; however, the communicative group outperformed the other two groups on the four communicative tests developed for the study. Savignon (1972) concluded that Second language programmes that focus only on accuracy and form do not give students sufficient opportunity to develop communication abilities in a second language.

Lightbown and Spada (1990) investigated the effects of form-focused instruction and corrective feedback in the context where the emphasis was primarily on communication (based on principles of communicative language teaching (CLT). The research was carried out in intensive ESL programs for francophone children in elementary schools near Montreal, in the majority French-speaking province of Quebec in Canada. These programs provide students in grade 5 or grade 6 (aged 10-12 years) with 5 hours of daily ESL instruction for 5 months of the school year. In the remaining 5 months of the year, the children complete the rest of their academic program (primarily French language arts and mathematics). The results of the study revealed further evidence for the hypothesis that form-based instruction within a communicative context contributes to higher levels of linguistic knowledge and performance. The findings of the study suggested that accuracy, fluency, and overall communicative skills are probably best developed through instruction that is primarily meaning-based but in which guidance is provided through timely form-focus activities and correction in context.

In the post-method era, however, language teaching methodologists are less inclined to be so prescriptive about corrective feedback, acknowledging the cognitive contribution it can make while also issuing warnings about the potential affective damage it can do (Ellis, 2009b). In this perspective, Ur (1996) recognized that “there is certainly a place for correction” but claimed “we should not over-estimate this contribution” (because it often fails to eliminate errors) and suggested that it would be better to spend time preventing errors than correcting them; a

position that accords with a behaviourist view of language learning and with what Lightbown (1998) called " preventive pedagogy" (1998:193).

Given the purpose of this study which aims at comparing form and content-focused feedback, corrective feedback, in this study, is defined as a pedagogical practice which provides comments on the form and/or on the content of the text to encourage students to develop their writing and consolidate their learning.

2.2.5 Written corrective feedback

According to Mi-mi (2009), there are five different types of corrective feedback for students' writing improvement: Teacher Written Feedback, Peer Feedback, Self-monitoring, Teacher-learner Conference, and Computer-mediated Feedback. This study, however, will focus on teacher written corrective feedback.

2.2.5.1 Types of written corrective feedback

Researchers proposed different typologies for written corrective feedback. Among these typologies, Ellis (2009) typology provides a detailed overview of the different types of written corrective feedback. It encompasses six major categories, namely, direct/indirect, metalinguistic, focused/unfocused, electronic, and reformulation.

Direct written feedback is the type of feedback that draws students' attention to an error and provides the correct form. This could be done in a number of ways such as a) cross-outs: when the teacher omits any wrong addition from students' original texts, b) rewrites: when the teacher rewrites a word, phrase or a sentence, providing the correct spelling, structure or form on students' original texts and c) additions: when the teacher adds any missing items on students' original texts (*e.g.* prefix, suffix, article, preposition, word, etc). Ferris (2002) argues that direct corrective feedback is useful in treating errors of prepositions and other issues of idiomatic lexis. She also claims that it is useful in the final stages of the writing process to help students focus on the remaining errors in their texts and refer to them in future tasks**.** However, teachers will have to spend a lot of time correcting the learners' papers (Ferris and Roberts, 2001).

Conversely, in *indirect corrective feedback*, the teacher indicates where the error exists by underlining or specifying the location of the error without providing any correction. This can be done by indicating and locating the error or by only indicating the error. Ferris and Roberts (2001) held that this type of feedback is advantageous to the direct form in that the learners spend more time trying to figure out what is wrong, hence, more processing time. In other words, this will allow more reflection on the type of error the learner has; thus, there will more cognitive

processing. However, Bitchener and Ferris (2012) argued that indirect feedback limit teachers' contribution to students' texts. In addition, some students may not be able to identify the nature of the errors when teachers underline or circle them.

Metalinguistic corrective feedback is another type of written corrective feedback in Ellis classification (2009). It is commonly recognized as a different version of direct feedback. Within this type, the teacher provides the learners with an explanation of what has caused the errors by using error codes or by providing a brief grammatical description. In the former, the teacher writes some codes in the margin to suggest what problems learners have (e.g., WR = word order; prep=preposition). The learners will have a list of codes to avoid confusion. However, in the second form of metalinguistic feedback, the teacher numbers the errors and briefly offers a brief explanation for the error at the end of the text. This type of corrective feedback, according to Bitchener and Storch (2016), is advantageous in the sense that it provides the learners with an initial instruction of a new knowledge and raises their consciousness about what has been partially acquired

The next type of feedback, according to Ellis (2009), depends on the focus of the feedback. As its name suggests, in *unfocused WCF,* the scope of correction is not limited and the teacher could correct all the errors found in the text (grammatical, lexical, etc.); However, in focused WCF, the teacher targets a number of particular linguistic features and ignores the rest.. Researchers have different views regarding the usefulness of these two types. For example, Ellis et al., (2008) argued that based on theoretical reasons, focused WCF is expected to be more valuable to accuracy development than unfocused WCF. They added students are more likely to notice and comprehend feedback when it targets a specific error type(s). However, targeting a great range of grammatical features at the same time may cause a cognitive overload and hinder feedback processing (Sheen, 2007; Bitchener, 2008).

In recent years, Electronic *feedback,* often referred to *as computer mediated feedback or automated* feedback, has emerged in WCF research. This type of feedback is generated by special softwares (e.g., *Grammarly*) that read written texts and provide feedback on grammar and usage. Some researchers (*e.g.,* Chen, 1997; Yao and Warden, 1996) advocated the use electronic feedback because it has the potential to save teachers' time in a way that helps their learners to pay attention to other aspects of writing rather than grammar. Another aspect of electronic feedback is *peer feedback*. Some scholars such Sullivan and Pratt (1996) discussed how computer mediated feedback could create an interactive environment among the learners. They argue that non-natives become motivated when they are provided with the opportunity to interact and share their writing online; a view that contrasts with Liu and Sadler (2003) who believe that face to face communication is better because online communication results in superficial responses

and comments.

The last type of WCF in Ellis's classification is reformulation through which the teacher reconstructs the inaccurate part of a text to make it more natural as illustrated in table 2-2. In reformulation, the whole idea is to retain the original meaning but to reshape the form to make it more native-like. Hedge (2000) found this type of feedback as a useful tool for writing development, particularly for students who have produced a first draft and are looking for local possibilities for improvement. Students can compare the target model on their own to notice the differences. However, as the other types of WCF, reformulation has been criticized for being time-consuming because it requires a whole text to be re-written (Hairston, 1986). Other researchers argued that providing the learner with a model to imitate may limit students' creativity (Luchini and Roldan, 2007).

Table 2-2 Student's original text excerpt with reformulated version

Original Text	Reformulation version
It was a beautiful spring day and the boys and girls still be in the camping. The sun was shining and the sky was blue .The teacher, Susan, wake the student up and they started the day	It was a beautiful spring day. The sun was shining and the sky was blue. The children had spent an exiting night and they were enjoying the camp. Their teacher, Susan, had woken the children up and they started with the activities.

Luchini and Roldan, (2007:236)

In addition to the different types of corrective feedback, researchers have also questioned the type of errors that should be corrected. With regard to this, some researchers made a distinction between "global and local" errors and between "treatable and untreatable" errors. Burt and Kiparsky (1972) refer to global errors as those that interfere with the comprehensibility of the text such as word order, lexical errors and might result in communication breakdowns, while local errors are minor errors such as morphological errors, which do not impede the understanding of the text.

Ferris (1999) in her response to Truscott (1996) provided another dichotomy of writing error types. She classified errors into 'treatable' errors, which occur in "patterned, rule-governed way" and 'untreatable' errors in which "there is no handbook or set of rules students can consult to avoid or fix those types of errors" (1999:06). Bitchener et al., (2005) further explained the difference between these types of errors:

A distinction between 'treatable' and 'untreatable' errors, suggesting that the former (verb tense and form, subject-verb agreement, article usage, plural and possessive noun endings, and

sentence fragments) occur in a rule-governed way, and so learners can be pointed to a grammar book or set of rules to resolve the error, while the latter (word choice errors, with the possible exception of some pronoun and preposition uses, and unidiomatic sentence structure, resulting from problems to do with word order and missing or unnecessary words) are idiosyncratic and so require learners to utilize acquired knowledge of the language to correct the error'

(2005: 194).

Bitchener et al., (2005) and Bitchener and Ferris (2012) also distinguished between “based/rule-governed” and “item-based/less rule-governed” errors. According to Bitchener et al., (2005) different types of feedback could have different effects on these types of errors. He argued that explicit types of feedback such as direct feedback could be more effective for item-based/less rule-governed errors because students are less likely to benefit from referring to rules because rules have exceptions. However, implicit types of feedback such as indirect feedback may be more helpful for rule-governed errors because students can refer to strong grammatical rules when resolving their errors.

2.3 Factors influencing written corrective feedback

As mentioned in the previous section, there are different types of written corrective feedback, each of which has potential advantages and disadvantages. Guénette (2007) argued that the success or the failure of WCF depends on a number of factors such as “classroom context, learners’ proficiency level, learners’ motivation and attitudes towards feedback, the type of errors students makes, the type of writing they are asked to do, and a collection of other factors that are as yet unknown” (2007:52). These factors are further elaborated in the following sections.

2.3.1.1 Context of instruction

Context of instruction such as EFL vs. ESL has been recognized as one of the factors that might influence the effects of written corrective feedback. Hyland and Hyland (2006) stated: "what is effective feedback for one student in one setting is less so in another" (2006: 88). Ellis (2009 a) also commented "the search for the best way to do WCF may in fact be fundamentally mistaken if it is accepted that CF needs to take account of the specific institutional, classroom and task contexts” (2009a: 106). Therefore, students in different contextual settings should be treated differently when providing corrective feedback because they might have differing goals and motivations. For example, ESL students may show an integrative motivation towards the feedback they get because they study to participate in society, which uses the target language in daily life. However, EFL students possess more instrumental motivation towards feedback in order to achieve a qualification (Wahlström, 2016). In this line of research, Sheen (2004) studied the variation in patterns of corrective feedback and learner uptake in communicative classrooms

across four instructional settings (i.e. Canada immersion, Canada ESL, New Zealand ESL, and Korea EFL). She found significant differences in the types of corrective feedback used in different contexts. For example, recasts were much more frequent in comparison to other types in intensive NZ ESL and even more so in Korea EFL classrooms (68% and 83%, respectively) than in the Canadian Immersion and ESL classrooms (55% for both). This, according to Sheen, shows that the four native-speaking teachers in the NZ ESL and Korea EFL settings rarely used feedback types other than recasts in responding to learner errors. In light of this, Sheen (2011) pointed out "the learning context may determine how learners respond to the corrective feedback they receive" (2011: 44).

Accordingly, Lyster and Mori (2006) examined the amount of uptake in two different contexts: French immersion in Canada and Japanese immersion in Japan. The results showed differences in the distribution of learner uptake in the two contexts, showing a higher rate of uptake following recasts in the Japanese context but a higher rate of uptake following prompts in the French immersion context. Meta-linguistic studies of feedback have also shown a significant effect for context. Mackey and Goo (2007), for example, found a large mean effect size for feedback in research conducted in foreign language contexts than in research in second language contexts. This could be attributed, as Ellis and Sheen (2006) explained, to the fact that in foreign language contexts instruction is form-focused than in second language contexts. In other words, when students receive feedback in contexts where the focus is on form, they are more likely to notice the intention of feedback than when they receive feedback in contexts where the language is used as a means of communication.

2.3.1.2 Proficiency level

It has also been claimed that the proficiency level of leaners is another factor that might influence the effectiveness of corrective feedback. Some researchers found a complex relationship between students' proficiency level and the effects of corrective feedback. For example, Findings from Gass et al., (2003) suggested that more advanced learners can laverage their attentional resources to better perceive corrective feedback than their lower-proficiency counterparts. Similarly, In Li's (2009) study, it was found that the level of proficiency influenced the efficacy of the different forms of feedback for the lower-proficiency learners, in that they benefited more from explicit feedback than implicit; however, the advanced learners benefited from both explicit and implicit feedback. These findings are also consistent with another study conducted by Atanassova (2012), which demonstrated that advanced learners were significantly more likely to report awareness of corrective feedback as well as awareness of the target form. Moreover, the type of feedback or the target feature did not negatively impact advanced learners' awareness of feedback.

Chandler's (2003) study on L2 learners' correction of grammatical and lexical errors also targeted learners with at least an intermediate level of L2 proficiency, that is, those who scored at least 500 on the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) or those who had completed a year-long intermediate ESL course with at least a B- grade. Although Chandler's (2003) results did not show significant differences for various feedback types, she openly speculated that underlining errors would be more suitable for learners with advanced levels of proficiency. Additionally, Bitchener and Knoch's (2010) study, which compared three different types of feedback (two types of direct feedback, and one of indirect feedback via circling of errors), also recruited advanced L2 learners of English studying at a university in the USA. Their study targeting learners' use of the articles found significant differences between the control group and the three treatment groups in an immediate post-test. Significant gains were retained in a delayed post-test for the two direct feedback groups, but not for the indirect feedback group. Based on their findings, Bitchener and Knoch (2010) recommended direct feedback with 'simple meta-linguistic explanation, namely, explanation of rule(s) with example(s)' for learners' long-term retention. However, although their suggestion seems valid, providing direct feedback with explanation of rules and examples may not be an easy feat for teachers with over-sized classrooms. It should also be noted that the participants in Bitchener and Knoch (2010) study were advanced learners, and that the same results may not be obtained for learners with low levels.

It can be noticed from the literature that many studies comparing the effects of different types of direct feedback have mostly targeted lower level learners (Bitchener and Knoch, 2008, 2009a, 2009b). On the other hand, studies comparing different types of indirect feedback have generally targeted high intermediate to advanced proficiency learners (Bitchener and Knoch, 2010; Bitchener et al., 2005; Chandler, 2003; Lalande, 1982). The reason behind this could, probably, be related to the common assumption that learners with lower levels of proficiency are more likely to benefit from direct feedback compared to those with higher proficiency, who are more likely to benefit from indirect feedback. However, many questions remain unanswered regarding how learners of varied proficiency levels could benefit from the different types of feedback.

2.3.1.3 Type of error

Another mediating factor that impact the success of written corrective feedback is the type of error corrected. For example, Lira-Gonzales and Nassaji (2020) in their study examined the occurrence and effectiveness of written corrective feedback techniques used by ESL teachers in their classes in order to detect the differences in the types of errors made, the type and the degree of feedback provided, as well as the students' ability to incorporate the feedback while revising their texts across three instructional settings (primary, secondary and college). The results

revealed that grammatical errors were the most frequent error type followed by lexical and spelling errors. However, these types of errors varied across the three educational levels. For example, college students made more lexical errors (35%) than those at the secondary (24%) and primary (14%) levels. College students produced significantly fewer spelling errors than the secondary students (11% and 26%, respectively). Further analysis revealed that the subtypes of grammatical errors also varied across these levels. At the primary level, for example, the most common errors concerned sentence structure agreement (noun-adjective, subject-verb). At the secondary level, however, agreement between determiners and nouns was the most frequent error type. In college, sentence structure agreement errors (noun-pronoun), question formation issues, and problems with verb tenses were most frequent. Lira-Gonzales and Nassaji (2020) attributed the variations in types of errors across these levels to the differences in the writing tasks used at each level.

Similarly, Havranek and Cesnik (2001) pursue this line of research and measured the success of corrective feedback in an instructional setting. They found that the role of feedback depends on a number of factors including the type of error corrected (pronunciation- stress; phonemes; grammar-verb tenses and prepositions). In addition they found out that the type of error depends on the proficiency level of the learners. That is, less proficient learners benefit more from corrections of their own errors in verb inflection and rule-goverened auxiliary use while their peers performed better on pronunciation items including spelling pronunciation correspondences and morphophonemic alteration. The results also revealed that learners at levels benefited least from the correction of tense and preposition errors.

2.3.1.4 Effect of task

According to Ellis (2009 b), a language learning activity to be called a task, it should primarily focus on meaning with a clearly defined outcome and learners should rely on their linguistic and non-linguistic resources to complete the task (2009: 223). Tasks can either be focused (grammatical structures) or unfocused (written essays) and are used to asses students' writing proficiency. In written corrective feedback research, tasks have been identified as one of the factors that influence the effectiveness of written corrective feedback. For example, a study conducted by Riazantseva (2012) investigated the outcome measure of writing as a mediator of the effects of corrective feedback. Particularly, the study examined the effect of writing tasks on the accuracy rate. Riazantseva analyzed three types of tasks: summaries, analysis, and a research paper written in class and at home. The three outcome measures consisted of in-class essays, in-class summaries and at-home summaries, which differed in terms of cognitive and linguistic demands. The findings suggested that these outcome measures affected the accuracy rates observed.

Furthermore, the results of the paired t-tests for total errors showed significant differences between the pre-treatment and post-treatment error rates for all the three outcomes measures, in-class essays (t (31)=3.706, p=. 001), in-class summaries (t (31)=2.691, p=. 011) and at-home summaries (t (31)=3.132, p=. 004). The results of the paired t-tests for grammatical errors showed significant differences between the pre-treatment and post-treatment error rates for only two of the three outcome measures, in-class essays (t (31)=2.839, p= .008), and at-home summaries (t(31)=2.158, p=.039). No differences between pre- and post-treatment error rates were found for in-class summaries (t (31)=. 990, p=. 330). In similar line of research, Way et al. (2000) explored L2 French learners' performance on three task types (descriptive, narrative, and expository writing) and found differences in accuracy, with the descriptive writing being more accurate than expository writing. Lira-Gonzales and Nassaji (2020) who used three types of prompts in their study (bare prompt consisting of simple explanation of the task, prompt with a list of vocabulary, and prompt that provided a prose model) also found an effect for types of writing prompts, with the prose model prompt leading to more accurate text than the other types of prompts.

In terms of genres of writing tasks, empirical studies (Kuiken and Vedder, 2008; Yoon and Polio, 2017) gave evidence that different types of genres have different communicative as well as functional requirements that might result in different language use. For example, Yoon and Polio (2017) argued that more complex language could occur in argumentative essays because they require higher reasoning demands than narrative essays. Similarly, Polio and Young (2018) found that the functional requirements for narrative and argumentative writing are different; thus, the two genres require different language. These findings indicate that diverse writing tasks could have a contributing impact on the effectiveness of written corrective feedback. In light of this, Van Beuningen (2011) claimed that the communicative nature of writing task might impact the writing outcomes in the sense that they allow learners to focus less on accuracy. In her study, writing tasks involved participants to write emails to friends explaining biology related topic. Van Beuningen asserted that these writing tasks were communicative in nature "without any inherent focus on language form" (2011: 134), which in her opinion might have allowed learners to provide minimal attention to accuracy in the post-test sessions in her study.

2.3.1.5 Previous learning experience

Previous learning experience is another important factor that may impact the effectiveness of written corrective feedback. As Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) commented, when giving feedback on students' writing, teachers need to take into consideration not only the students' proficiency level, but also a variety of other factors, such as the nature of the language-exposure/learning experience that learners may have undergone previously. Some researchers have made a similar

distinction between “eye learning” and “ear learning” (Ferris, 2011). Ear learners’ knowledge about the L2 come from the language to which they have been exposed in a naturalistic setting, whereas eye learners’ knowledge about the L2 come from formal L2 instructional settings and as mentioned earlier, these types of learners should be treated differently when providing corrective feedback because they might have differing goals and motivation. In other words, Ear learners might have a good level of the language because they have been exposed to it in their daily life and; thus, their motivation behind learning is to participate in society; however, eye learners levels could probably be less than ear learners because they are exposed to the language only in an instructed setting and; thus, they learn it in order to achieve a qualification (Wahlström, 2016). In similar vein of research, Bitchener and Knoch (2008) examined the effects of written corrective feedback on what they referred to as migrant and international students, where the international group comprised ‘visa’ students who were studying English in New Zealand for fewer than six months, and the migrant group comprised students who had settled in New Zealand within an eighteen month period. Their study incorporated different types of direct feedback including direct feedback with or without metalinguistic explanation on learners’ use of two functions of the English article system: the referential indefinite article “a” and the referential definite “the”. The study found (1) that students who received all three WCF options outperformed those who did not receive WCF, (2) that their level of accuracy was retained over seven weeks and (3) that there was no difference in the extent to which migrant and international students improved the accuracy of their writing as a result of WCF. Although Bitchener and Knoch (2008) solely focused on the provision of different direct feedback options, it is important to note that they factored in the participants’ prior L2-learning experience as an independent variable. The authors suggested that students’ previous learning experiences may have had an impact: the international students were from Asian countries that may have emphasized a focus on accuracy and were accustomed to receiving corrective feedback on form, while the other group of learners were not.

Park et al., (2016) made a similar distinction between heritage language (HL) and non-heritage language (NHL) learners with Korean being a target language. The HL learners in their study included those who had had contact with Korean as it was the language of their grand-parents and/or parents who spoke it as their mother tongue (i.e. a heritage language). Students who had not had previous informal oral contact, but who chose to study Korean as an L2 for a variety of personal or professional reasons, comprised the NHL learners in their study. The results indicated there were significant differences between the two groups of learners for all the different types of error used in the study (Tense and Conjugation errors [$t = 3.896$, $p < 0.000$], Orthographic errors [$t = -5.454$, $p < 0.000$], Particle errors [$t = 3.834$, $p < 0.000$], Lexical errors [$t = 2.403$, $p = 0.021$), with

the NHL group producing significantly more TC errors, PA errors, and LE errors, but significantly fewer OR errors than the HL group.

2.4 Factors influencing teachers' feedback practices

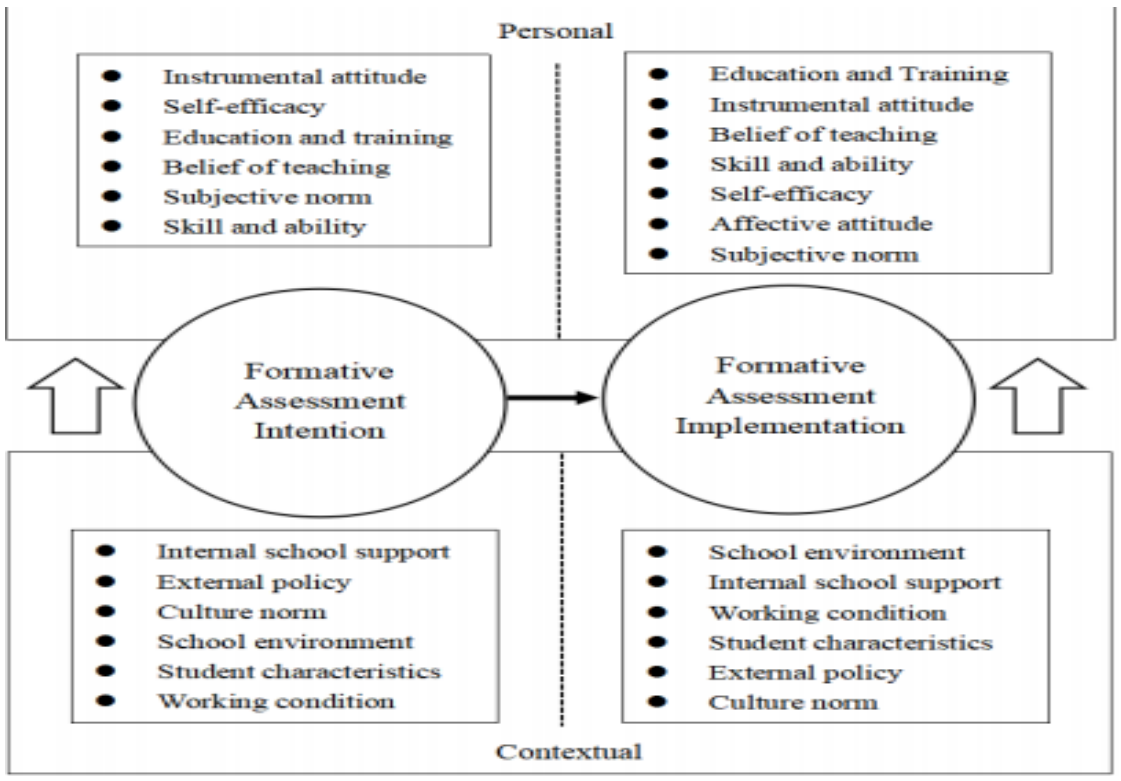
In addition to the factors that might impact the success or the failure of corrective feedback, some studies in the literature went further and identified some possible factors that have an impact on teachers' feedback practices. Lee (2008) in her study, for example, highlighted four factors influencing teachers' feedback practices: accountability, teachers' beliefs and values, exam culture, and the lack of teacher training. First, some teachers in the study reported that they were required to respond to student writing in ways compatible to the school policy and if they deviate from the established practice, they had to justify it. Consequently, whether a teacher was ''good'' or not partly depended on the extent to which s/he marked student writing according to the panel policy. Furthermore, teachers were also accountable to their students (and parents) who expect teachers to provide detailed response to their writing. If marking was not detailed enough, according to the teachers, they were considered ''lazy and irresponsible.'' (2008:79). Second, teachers' beliefs seem to influence teacher selection of feedback. Lee reported that some teachers prioritized grammar correction over content because they believed that writing serves the primary purpose of reinforcing language structures whereas organization and content remain less urgent issues in feedback. Third, exam orientation in the education system i.e., students are asked to write in order to prepare them for exams. This exam culture has also influenced teachers' assessment in the sense that they focused on writing accuracy because, according to them, this was the major focus of the exams authority in marking student writing. Finally, teachers in this study also highlighted that the lack of training among teachers in the area of writing assessment is another factor influencing their feedback practices. In other words, some teachers confessed that their previous training had not exposed them to innovative methods of teacher feedback.

The success or the failure of implementing feedback in the classroom also depends on the teacher's knowledge and skills. That is, teachers need to be equipped with the required knowledge and skills to successfully design and implement feedback in classrooms. With regard to this, Heitink et al., (2016) conducted a systematic review to reveal prerequisites required for the successful implementation of assessment for learning in classrooms. The findings identified four different prerequisites: the teacher, students, assessment and context. The teacher's prerequisites include teacher's knowledge and skills as well as teacher's attitudes and beliefs. Heitink et al., (2016), among other researchers, emphasized the importance of assessment Knowledge and implementation skills for teachers to effectively collect, analyse and interpret

assessment data and adjust subsequent instruction. In other words, teachers need to be proficient in several fundamental areas of assessments, such as developing and grading rubrics for open response tasks, using assessment data to monitor learner progress and to identify ways to enhance learning, and to utilise results from assessments to inform their own teaching practices (Girgla et al., 2021). This factor might closely correlate with the teacher's training factor. As discussed earlier, the lack of professional training decreases teachers' opportunities to learn innovative feedback strategies. Therefore, professional training and development are, particularly, important for teachers in the sense that they can facilitate the implementation of assessment by not only improving teachers' knowledge and skills related to assessment (Dixon and Haigh, 2009; Hondrich et al., 2016; Koloi-Keaikitse, 2016), but also their pedagogical content knowledge (Jones and Moreland, 2005).

Yan et al., (2021) conducted another systematic review on the factors influencing either teachers' intentions or implementations regarding formative assessment. The results were categorized into personal and contextual factors as summarised in Figure 2-4

Figure 2-4 An integration of factors influencing formative assessment:



(Yan et al., 2021:23)

According to figure 2-4, the major personal factors influencing teachers' intentions to conduct formative assessment were instrumental attitude, self-efficacy, and education and training. The widely reported contextual factors included internal school support, external policy, school environment, and cultural norm. For implementation, education and training, instrumental attitude, and belief of teaching are the most common personal factors, with school environment, internal school support, and working condition as the most frequently reported contextual factors.

As far as the factors that have impact on teachers' feedback practices are concerned, instrumental attitude is one of the common reported factors in Yan et al., systematic review and it generally refers to one's opinion about the effectiveness or consequences of something. Yan et al., demonstrated that this factor has significant effects on teachers' intentions to implement formative assessment. In other words, the more positive attitude teachers held regarding the desirable consequences of practicing formative assessment, the more willingly they were to implement formative assessment. In particular, teachers valued the merits of formative assessment as a useful tool to identify students' learning strengths and weaknesses to enhance students' learning performance and to facilitate instruction adjustments.

Self-efficacy is another common personal factor influencing teachers' assessment implementation. By definition, self-efficacy refers to teacher's confidence in their ability to implement formative assessment and take control of it (Karaman and Sahin, 2017). Similarly, Wong (2014) found that teachers who regarded formative assessment as an easy task were more likely to implement it than those who perceived it as being difficult.

In addition to the personal factors, the commonly reported contextual factors as demonstrated in figure 2-4, are internal school support, external policy, cultural norm, and school environment. First, internal school support includes school policies and resources that facilitate teachers' implementation (Brink and Bartz, 2017; Crichton and McDaid, 2016; Moss et al., 2013). In a study conducted by Crichton and McDaid (2016) study, the teachers reflected that they were required to implement formative assessment by their schools without any formal support measures. This led to the teachers' unwillingness to implement formative assessment, as they felt not prepared to do it. Conversely, in Brink and Bartz (2017) study, the school administrators made formative assessment the first priority, provided effective technical support, continuous professional development, and other necessary resources for curriculum change. These supports resulted in the teachers' positive attitude changes and inclination to implement formative assessment. Second, external policies also impact the teachers' intentions to implement formative assessment. For example, if governments officially promote formative assessment, teachers may find a sense of legitimacy to learn about it, and then become more willing to implement it. Furthermore, educational policies supporting formative assessment will encourage schools to provide relevant professional development which, in turn, enhances teachers' intentions to implement formative assessment. Teachers reported that they became motivated to implement formative assessment when they were supported by the government and school (Tang et al., 2006; Wallace and Priestley, 2011). Third, the cultural norm or societal perception of assessment could also influence teachers' formative assessment practices. As an example, the Chinese education system has been dominated by the examination culture since a long time ago which

considered assessment as a tool of accountability and a standard of achievement (Brown and Gao, 2015; Yan and Brown, 2021). High-stakes examinations have been used to decide students' access to further education or employment opportunities. Therefore, stakeholders valued the summative assessment and teachers are used to the norm, ensuring the grades of students are more prioritised; and, they are reluctant to change their examination-oriented assessment practices (Wallace and Priestley, 2011). Fourth, a school with a positive school environment for formative assessment is also crucial and could be developed by encouraging leadership and collegiate support (Moss et al., 2013; Wallace and Priestley, 2011). When school leaders are aware of the importance of formative assessment and know how to support teachers, a positive school environment can be built. Moss et al., (2013) found that when administrators had a deep level of understanding and appropriate attitude towards formative assessment, their teachers were more inclined to take actions. It appears that, to enhance teachers' willingness to conduct formative assessment, administrators should establish a supportive school culture that is susceptible to formative assessment and observe the needs of the teachers. Last, Student characteristics and working conditions are also two influential contextual factors. For example, teachers are encouraged when they see students' active participation in formative assessment activities (Brink and Bartz, 2017). In addition, teachers working in larger classes are less intended to practice formative assessment because of the difficulties of class management and time (Brown and Gao, 2015).

It can be concluded for what have been discussed in this section that being aware of these factors is important for teachers, researchers, school leaders, and policy makers in order to make effective use of WCF in the classrooms.

2.5 Theoretical grounds of the use of WCF in SLA

To correct or not to correct learners' errors is an issue, which raised conflicting views among SLA theorists. Some of them refute error correction because it is harmful to L2 acquisition and, thus should be ruled out completely, while others advocate the role of error correction because of its essential role in L2 development. Therefore, it is important to highlight some SLA theories when discussing the role of WCF in L2 writing .Guo (2015) pointed out that theories may guide WCF research, and WCF studies, may be in turn, contribute to theory-building by revealing how L2 develops. Although the current study is driven by pedagogical questions, however, in this section, there will be a discussion of different SLA theories and what these theories say about the role of WCF in L2 learning and acquisition. The purpose behind this is to provide possible explanations for the findings of some empirical studies on why written corrective feedback may or may not lead to L2 writing development.

Initiated by early Behaviourist approaches, which were influential during 1950s, error was considered as a sinful act that should be prevented, “errors, like sin, are to be avoided and its influence overcome” (Brooks, 1960:58). The behaviorists believe that the occurrence of errors should be prevented because they might become habits and interfere with the learning process (Bitchener and Ferris, 2012). Hence, they require immediate treatment or correction. This concept is grounded on their hypotheses that language acquisition occurs “through habit-formation, which was brought about by imitation, reinforcement and repetition of behaviour” (Littlewood 1984:17).

Preventing errors from occurring also gave birth to the audio-lingual teaching approach, which is based upon the idea that “foreign language learning is basically a process of mechanical habit formation” (Richards and Rodgers, 2001: 57). In other words, teachers, within this approach, are recommended to require the students to memorize dialogues and perform pattern drills and learn large number of grammatical generalizations so they could minimize the chances of producing mistakes (Richards and Rodgers, 2001; Bitchener and Ferris, 2012; Mitchell, et al., 2013). Teachers are also responsible to correct students’ errors immediately after they occur to prevent them to become habits (Richards and Rodgers, 2001).

On the other hand, nativists have dismissed any perceived benefits from corrective feedback. Their views are based on Chomsky’s theory that humans are born with an innate structure called Universal Grammar “the system of principles, conditions, and rules that are elements or properties of all human language” (Chomsky, 1975: 29). This innate structure helps them to process and acquire the languages used around them. That is, a learner “must be exposed to language for the acquisition process to start; that he possesses an internal mechanism of unknown nature which enable him from the limited data available to him to construct a grammar of a particular language” (Corder, 1967: 164). Accordingly, in this view error correction (negative evidence) has no or little impact on developing learners’ inter-language, and only positive evidence which is part of natural input is needed for the development of learners’ inter-language (Krashen, 1982).

Similarly, Krashen (1982,1985) argued even further that error correction is not only unnecessary but could have potential harmful effects in that it may activate learners’ affective filters by raising the students’ level of anxiety which may, in turn, prevents learners from acquiring communicative ability. Krashen’s view is based on his theory of second language acquisition, which involves five basic hypotheses (The Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Input Hypothesis and the Affective Filter Hypothesis). These hypotheses show that language acquisition takes place through exposure to comprehensible input “by

understanding messages, or by receiving ‘comprehensible input” (Krashen, 1985:02). In more details, The Acquisition Learning Hypothesis considers acquisition and learning as two separate processes. While acquiring a language is described as a subconscious process similar the process by which children develop their first language, learning a language is a conscious process leading “ to knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them and being able to talk about them” Krashen (1982:10). In other words, acquisition occurs when the learners are engaged in meaningful interaction in the target language, whereas learning occurs when learners are exposed to formal lessons about the rules and forms of the target language. This shows that acquisition does not require explicit teaching of language or grammar neither correction of errors because comprehensible input is sufficient to trigger language development.

The second hypothesis in Krashen’s theory is The Natural Order Hypothesis. This hypothesis suggests that grammatical structures are naturally acquired in a pre-determined natural order, which is unchangeable even with the intervention of WCF or form-focused teaching (Chen, J et al., 2016). In other words, teachers’ corrective feedback might not have an impact on learners if they are corrected on grammar rules, which they are not ready to acquire. With regard to this, Truscott (1996) argued that teachers, who wish to help students through grammar correction must select the corrections on the basis of the student's current stage of development with respect to individual aspects of grammar.

Furthermore, Krashen’s Input Hypothesis suggests that language learners acquire a language when they are exposed to “comprehensible input”. Krashen (1982) argues that for learners to move from their current level of competence (i) to the next stage (i+1) they must be exposed to an input, which contains (i+1) in that 1 refers to the “linguistic items that are slightly beyond the learner’s present linguistic competence” (Richards and Schmidt, 2002:99). These structures beyond the existing level of competence are attained “with the help of the context or extra-linguistic information” (Karshen, 1982:21). Therefore, it could be concluded that comprehensible input is the central element for language acquisition, however, formal instruction of grammar rules and error correction have no impact in this process.

The fourth hypothesis in Krashen’ theory is The Monitor Hypothesis which states that already acquired knowledge serves as a monitor that learners use to edit their language performance. This ‘monitor’ acts in planning (before we speak or write) or editing and correction (after we produce), and it functions when three specific conditions are met. The first condition is that the learners must have sufficient time. The second condition is that the learners must focus on form and they should be thinking about how they are performing. Finally, the third condition requires that the learners to know the rule that applies.

The last hypothesis is The Affective Filter Hypothesis, which suggests that second language acquisition is influenced by affective variables such as motivation, self-confidence and anxiety. Krashen (1982) argued that acquirers vary according to the level of their affective filters. In other words, learners with low motivation may get less benefit from the input they receive because affective variables act to "impede or facilitate the delivery of input to the language acquisition device" (1982:32). Considering the role of WCF in L2 acquisition, Krashen (1982) asserted that error correction has an impact on learners' affective filters because learners "will try to avoid mistakes, avoid difficult constructions, focus less on meaning and more on form" (1982:75).

As opposed to the nativists, other SLA theorists (interactionists) acknowledged the importance of error correction in second language acquisition. According to them, language acquisition occurs through the process of interaction. With regard to this, Schmidt (1990), for example, proposed The Noticing Hypothesis which posits that noticing is a necessary condition for second language acquisition. Schmidt (2010) claims that learners "must attend to and notice linguistic features of the input that they are exposed to if those forms are to become intake for learning." (2010:730). That is, learners cannot learn grammatical forms and structures unless they notice them. Schmidt (2010) also suggested the *"noticing gap"* in which learners carry out a comparison between what they have observed in the input and what they produce on the basis of their current inter-language systems (Schmidt, 2010). This latter highlights the importance of corrective feedback in SLA. In other words, teachers' feedback enables learners to notice the gap between their output-errors and the teachers' input feedback and push them to modify their erroneous output. (Bitchener and Storch, 2016). In addition, Bitchener and Storch (2016) claimed that noticing which is triggered by corrective feedback promotes self-repair and it, therefore, facilitates language development.

Another hypothesis that supports the role of written corrective feedback in SLA is The Output Hypothesis, which is proposed by Swain (1985). Drawing upon her research with students learning French in immersion classes in Canada, Swain argued that although the learners received a rich amount of comprehensible input, their production skills were far from native-like performance. This led Swain to argue that comprehensible input alone may not be sufficient for language acquisition and that comprehensible output is an important factor for language acquisition to occur. Swain (1995) further assigned three functions for comprehensible output: a noticing function, a hypothesis- testing function and a metalinguistic function. Firstly, the noticing function also referred to as the consciousness-raising role enables the learners to notice a gap between their target output and their actual output so they recognize their linguistic errors and lacks of knowledge. As a result of this, as Swain (1985) posits, learners will pay careful attention to relevant linguistic structures in future output. Secondly, the hypothesis-testing function offers the

learners with opportunities to test their hypotheses about the comprehensibility and linguistic accuracy of their utterances. As a result, they modify their hypotheses in response to their interlocutors' feedback (e.g. teachers/ peers) (Swain, 1995). The learners will manage to notice the gaps between their inter-language and the target language if they receive corrective feedback, which is salient and sufficient. (Panova and Lyster, 2002: 573). Finally, output has a metalinguistic function also referred to as the negotiation of form. This function enables learners to reflect upon their own target language (Swain, 1995). In other words, learners may receive feedback by way of reflection on the target language form through conversational interactions. Then, this will lead to learning to occur.

Correspondingly, Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis further highlighted the role of error correction in second language acquisition. This hypothesis places emphasis on the importance of meaning negotiation in communicative interactions. It was originally developed in an oral context and it directly supports oral corrective feedback. However, this does not mean that this hypothesis does not play a role in written corrective feedback because it may fit even better in this context. In other words, although in a written context, the learner's output does depend on instant mutual understanding. However, negotiation could be used after instead of during the production of written texts (Bitchener and Storch, 2016). This could be done through teacher learner's one to one meeting or through negotiation-scaffolding between the teacher and the learner.

In summary this section highlighted the role of corrective feedback in second language acquisition. Some SLA theorists (the nativists) argued against the role of error correction in L2 acquisition; whereas, others (the interactionists) provided evidence for the essential role of corrective feedback in L2 acquisition. These opposing views paved the way for researchers to empirically test these theories in writing classrooms. The following section will present some empirical studies for and against corrective feedback.

2.6 Different views on the effects of written corrective feedback

Relevant literature reveals that scholars hold different views about the effects of corrective feedback. While some of these studies concluded that there are positive effects of feedback on students' writings (Ashwell, 2000; Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Gascoigne, 2004; Lalande, 1982; Sheppard, 1992.), Others claimed that corrective feedback is ineffective and should be abandoned in L2 writing classrooms (Truscott, 1996, 2007; Fazio, 2001; Kepner, 1991, Polio et al., 1998; Semke, 1984; Truscott and Hsu, 2008). This section reviews and discusses some of these studies.

2.6.1 Studies against written corrective feedback

In Semke's (1984) study, 141 German FL students in an American university were assigned to four groups, each of which received a different feedback treatment: comments only, direct correction, direct correction with comments and indirect (coded) correction. Students in this study were not requested to revise their papers after receiving feedback except the group who received indirect correction. After a ten-week period, the results revealed that all the students progressed in writing with no significant differences among the four groups. Semke (1984) justified students' achievement to only one factor that is the writing practice. However, corrections, in Semke's words, "do not improve writing accuracy" (1984:195). He also argued that error correction not only consumes time of teachers, but it may have negative effects on students' attitudes .Yet, Guénette (2007) noted that the groups in Semke's study were treated differently and this is likely to have had an effect on her findings. Similarly, Kepner (1991) examined the effects of written corrective feedback by comparing the accuracy of 60 students enrolled in a Spanish class. The students were divided into two treatment groups: one group received direct written feedback and the other group received content feedback. The results of the study show that the two groups did not differ statistically in terms of linguistic accuracy except with the content feedback group who improved more than the control group by 15%. Kepner argued that this was not a significant improvement and that error correction did not help in the development of writing accuracy. However, the study has some shortcomings in terms of methodology and design. According to Ferris (2003), Kapner did not compare the first set of written texts between the groups. In fact, this is a serious flaw in design as noted by, Bitchener and Ferris (2012), because it gives no idea whether the two groups had the same initial level of accuracy. Additionally, Ferris commented that the fact that students were not required to revise their written texts is another reason why students could not handle the error correction. This might suggest that feedback without students' revision to their written texts is ineffective.

Another evidence against corrective feedback is a study conducted by Polio et al., (1998). The participants in this study were 65 undergraduate and graduate ESL students enrolled in English for an academic purposes composition course at an American University. These students were divided into a control group (no feedback) and an experimental group (direct feedback). In a seven-week period, students in the control group were asked to write four journal entries every week, and received no feedback; whereas, students in the experimental group wrote regular journal entries, reviewed grammar, edited exercises, They were provided with feedback on both the editing exercises and the journal entries. The findings of the study were similar to Semke (1984) and Kepner (1991) in terms of feedback ineffectiveness. Polio et al. showed that the

linguistic accuracy of the students who received direct feedback improved compared to those who did not, but no difference between the two groups was detected.

Correspondingly, Fazio (2001) also presented findings that clearly argue against any positive effect for error correction. His study investigated the influence of providing differential feedback (corrections, commentaries, and a combination of the two) on the journal writing accuracy of Grade 5 minority-language students and francophones in the context of French-language schools in Montreal, Canada. These students were divided into three groups according to the type of feedback they received. The data gathered from journals writing activities, classroom observations and interviews indicated that both minority-language and francophone students did not experience a significant change in their accuracy in grammatical spelling as a consequence of receiving different types of feedback. Fazio, however, concluded that the lack of improvement was probably due to the short treatment time, which might have affected the results.

While the findings from the studies reviewed above clearly support the ineffectiveness of corrective feedback on students' writings in different contexts, other studies concluded that error correction is effective and teachers should be encouraged to integrate it in the teaching process. The following section will outline some of these studies

2.6.2 Studies supporting written corrective feedback

Fathman and Whalley (1990) are among the early researchers who reported positive effects of feedback. In their study, they looked at the effects of both content-based and form-based feedback on the development of 72 intermediate ESL students' writings. The participants were given 30 minutes in class to produce a story in which they describe a sequence of eight pictures. Students, then, were provided with different types of feedback (zero, content, form, and content and form). Form feedback included underlining all grammar errors; whereas, content feedback consisted of general comments that were not text specific. Fathman and Whalley concluded that most of the students including those who received no feedback developed the content of their compositions. However, grammar feedback was found to be more effective because content feedback failed to point out the errors of the students. What is more, Fathman and Whalley also found that students who re-wrote their essays without receiving feedback improved both in fluency and content and, surprisingly, it was also reported that students who received grammar feedback also improved their content. However, Truscott (1996) argued that students' ability to reduce errors on a re-writing task is not clear evidence that their accuracy would develop for the long term if they receive the same treatment. Nevertheless, Fathman and Whalley (1990) study is

useful in the sense that giving content and form feedback simultaneously is just as effective as giving content feedback or form feedback separately.

In a similar vein of research, Hyland (2003) explored the effects of teacher written feedback on the revisions and writing products of six ESL writers on a full-time 14- week English proficiency programme course at a university in New Zealand. Teachers in the study have used coded feedback to show form-related problems, but they often supplemented this with comments in the margin, complete corrections and generalized comments at the end of the essay (2003:220). It was found that indirect coded feedback, focusing on form, was used by most of the students in their immediate revisions to their drafts and was highly acknowledged by them. However, Hyland suggested that feedback should be examined in tandem with other aspects of the context, such as the reinforcement provided in class, students' self-directed study and the motivation of the individual students (2003:228).

Replicating a 1997 study by Ferris on the type and effect of feedback on advanced English-as-a-second-language (ESL) composition revisions within a beginning L2 environment, Gascoigne (2004) investigated if teacher feedback helped students improve their writing, and also tried to find out what factors of corrective feedback influence beginner students' writing. Twenty-five freshman students participated in that study. All of them were native speakers of English and had either no formal exposure to French prior to this course, or were placed into the beginning course as the result of their score on a standardized placement exam. The students were required to write 8 essays in class and the duration of each class was 50 minutes. After teacher commentary on the essays, the students were asked to revise them. The effect of teacher commentary on students' revisions was calculated on a scale of 0 to 6. Like Ferris' (1997) findings Gascoigne's study also found that corrective feedback improved students' writing.

Ferris and Roberts (2001) investigated 72 university ESL students' abilities to self-edit their texts through the use of three different feedbacks (errors marked with codes; errors underlined but not marked or labelled; no error feedback). They found that the group receiving feedback of both coded and underlying were able to revise 64% of their grammatical errors, while the one receiving only underling as the feedback were able to revise 60% of such errors. Both groups (coded and no-coded) outperformed the no-feedback control group who were able to self-correct only 18% of their errors.

Chandler (2003) has challenged these findings and examined the effects of four types of feedback (direct correction, underlining with description, description only, underlining only) on students' grammatical and lexical errors. She concluded that direct feedback and simple underlining are more effective than only describing the type of error. She also noted that direct correction of

errors worked best for producing accurate revision. These results, however, seem to also contradict with an early study carried out by Lalande (1982) which reported an advantage for the indirect correction, but a negative effect for direct correction.

In light of the discussion outlined above, I would argue that the question regarding the effects of teacher's feedback remains a topic of continuous discussion among researchers. Although the studies discussed in the literature represent only a small fraction of a large body of research on feedback and although most of them have reported interesting results, yet, the inconsistency of their findings makes it evident that further research is needed in order to get a deeper understanding on this issue.

2.7 The written corrective feedback debate

As mentioned in chapter one, the debate over the effectiveness of corrective feedback started with the publication of Truscott's (1996) controversial article "The Case Against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes". Truscott (1996), based on earlier studies such as Kepner (1991), Semke (1984) and Sheppard (1992), argued that giving grammar correction is ineffective and potentially harmful for L2 writing and, therefore, it should be abandoned. By definition, grammar correction, according to Truscott, means the "correction of grammatical error for the purpose of improving a student's ability to write accurately" (1996:329).

Truscott (1996) gave several reasons not to correct grammar in ESL students' writing compositions. First, he asserted that researchers who assumed the effectiveness of grammar correction have paid insufficient attention to the side effects of this practice, such as its negative effect on students' attitudes as well as the time and efforts it takes in the writing classes. He also maintained that there was no empirical evidence to show that error correction helps to develop students' writing accuracy for the long term, and even if some studies show improvements, this could be a consequence of other factors such as their writing practices. Truscott also identified theoretical and practical arguments against corrective feedback.

Theoretically, he asserted that teachers still adopt a simplistic view of learning, which relies on the transfer of knowledge from teacher to students. He explained how this view of learning failed to acknowledge the complex learning process underlying the development of a students' interlanguage. He added, "the acquisition of grammatical structure is a gradual process, not sudden discovery as the intuitive view of correction would imply" (Truscott, 1996: 342). He continuous that teachers who want to help their students with corrective feedback should take into consideration the learners' readiness to acquire a particular form or structure. Otherwise, corrective feedback is unlikely to be effective. However, few teachers if any, as referred by

Truscott, ever consider these developmental sequences. Another argument against error correction was pedagogically focused, Truscott questions the ability of some teachers to identify, understand and explain the error and the learners' ability to grasp and retain the feedback provided all of which is compounded by the fact that L2 teachers generally tend to be inconsistent and unsystematic in their corrections, and that students may not have sufficient motivation to attend to numerous adjustments directed at the use of grammar forms. In addition, Truscott (1996) mentioned that teachers might face difficulties to correct students' errors because "busy teachers grading large numbers of written texts assignments have serious problems with time and patience, problems that can easily affect the quality of their comments" (1996:350)

Truscott's claims have been heavily criticized for being premature and overly strong. Ferris (1999) was the first to publish a rebuttal of his case. First, Ferris claimed that Truscott's use of the term "error correction" lacks definition, describing this as a "critical lack" (1999:03). Second, she maintained that his reviews of previous studies show crucial variation in terms of the subjects of these studies, the research paradigm, the teaching strategies as well his focus on reporting the negative findings with no reference to studies that contradict his claims (1999:04). Moreover, Ferris, based on the findings of the same research studies on which Truscott based his argument against grammar correction, argued that while some participants in those studies did not benefit from feedback, others did. In Ferris's opinion, this difference is due to the effect of different types of correction on different types of errors and concluded, "in discussing whether or not grammar correction is 'effective,' it is important to know what sort of error correction we are discussing" (1999:04). Furthermore, Ferris observed that learners have a great desire to be corrected in order to improve their grammatical accuracy and she views this preference as a further argument in favour of correction that should not be ignored or dismissed.

Truscott (1999) further responded to Ferris's (1999) rebuttal and stood by his claims. He replied to Ferris claims that students' preference to receive feedback does not mean that teachers should give it to them. He believes that learners' "false faith" to correction is due to teachers' influence on students' beliefs. In other words, when the teacher provides the learner with feedback, he/she encourages him/her to believe in it; and because students believe in it, teachers continue using it (1999:116). Truscott also gave evidence to this claim from his own teaching experience:

> *…my correction-free approach neither produces student rebellions nor leads to signs of frustration or lack of motivation or confidence in learners. By all indications, including end-of-semester evaluations, these students are quite happy with the course, considerably happier, in my judgment, than were students in past years when I did correct.*
>
> (Truscott, 1999:116)

Nevertheless, although Truscott rejects any potential effect for error correction, however this does not mean that Truscott is against corrective feedback because, as he mentioned in his response to Ferris (1999), there are cases where corrective feedback could be effective such as feedback that focuses on the content of students' writings. However, what both Truscott (1999) and Ferris (1999) agreed on was that many questions remain open in the field and researchers should look on the case against grammar correction in more in-depth as stated by Ferris (1999):

> *… reading Truscott's essay and reviewing the primary sources he cites has highlighted for me the urgent need for new research efforts which utilize a variety of paradigms to examine a range of questions that arise around this important topic*
>
> *(Ferris, 1999:02)*

Since then, a number of studies, with improved designs, responded to Truscott's claims and indicated that corrective feedback could be effective. However further investigations were needed on how and in what ways corrective feedback could be more helpful (Ferris, 2004). This has resulted in a plethora of studies that have compared the effects of different types of corrective feedback (e.g., direct vs. indirect; focused vs. unfocused; content vs. form). Although these studies have reported positive results in favour to corrective feedback, they did not come to conclusive findings on which type of corrective feedback is the most effective. This has led to further developments in corrective feedback research, which will be discussed in the following sections.

2.8 Studies on the effects of different types of feedback

2.8.1 Studies on the effects of direct and indirect corrective feedback

One important dichotomy in early and recent literature is the distinction between direct and indirect corrective feedback and the extent to which they develop learners' writing (Semke, 1984; Kepner, 1991; Sheppard, 1992; Ashwell, 2000; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Chandler, 2003; Hyland, 2003; Bitchener and Knock, 2008, 2009, 2010). As mentioned earlier, direct feedback occurs when the teacher identifies the error and provides the correct form (Van Beuningen et al., 2008:282). It may take various forms including crossing out some words, phrases, inserting missing words or writing the correct form to errors (Lee, 2003; Ferris, 2006; Ellis, 2008; Bitchener and Ferris, 2012). On the other hand, indirect feedback occurs when the teacher indicates that an error has been made by means of underlining, coding, circling, or other mark but it is the student task to detect and correct the error that has been called to his or her attention (Ferris, 2002; Lee, 2003; Ellis, 2008).

Over the years, researchers have examined the differential effects of both direct and indirect feedback to find out whether one type is more effective than the other. Chandler's (2003) tested the effects of direct corrective feedback and two types of indirect corrective feedback: underlining of errors, and error codes on the accuracy improvement of 20 ESL learners. Chandler argued that direct error correction and underlining was more helpful for producing more accurate drafts than indirect corrective feedback. Nevertheless, She found that indirect feedback in form of underlying errors useful for accuracy improvement over time. That is, students' retained improvement for a longer period of time after they received less explicit feedback. However, this study, as many other studies, was not accepted as providing evidence that direct CF is more or less effective than indirect CF because of the lack of a control group, but the control group in Chandler's study was not a "no feedback" group but rather they received their feedback later than did the experimental group. Chandler explained that the questionnaire results had demonstrated "that the vast majority of students wanted the teacher to mark every error. Since the students felt strongly about this, the teachers could only justify the treatment of the control group by offering them the same treatment as the experimental group later in the semester" Chandler, 2003: 273). Bitchener and Ferris (2012) further clarified "writing researchers (who are normally teachers) feel ethically constrained from withholding written CF from students for any substantial period of time by using a subset of student writers as controls, but if they do not so, they are criticized for lack of empirical rigor". (2012: 87)

Another contribution to error correction debate is a study carried out by Van Beuningen et al., (2008). In this study, the authors explored whether direct or indirect feedback help students improve their writing accuracy. The participants of the study were assigned to four different treatments; two experimental treatments: (a) direct corrective feedback, (b) indirect corrective feedback and two control treatments: (a) practising writing and (b) revision without feedback (self-correction). All groups except the no feedback group were asked to revise their work between the sessions. The results showed that corrective feedback is effective for the development of students' writing accuracy. Furthermore, the student who received direct feedback performed significantly better for the long term than the ones that received indirect corrective feedback. However, short -term effects were found for both in the direct and indirect corrective feedback.

Using the same research design, Van Beuningen et al., (2012) investigated the effects of direct and indirect comprehensive (or unfocused) WCF on written accuracy (grammatical/ungrammatical), complexity and lexical diversity both in text revisions and new pieces of writing. Particularly, the aim of this study was to investigate the interaction of these two feedback types in relation to specific error types and two different educational levels. The authors

also investigated whether students avoid more complex structures because of error correction, the effect of revision without any corrective feedback, and whether time spent on CF is better spent on writing practice All groups were given four tests (pre-test, treatment test, post-test and delayed post test) during four different sessions. The findings revealed that both direct and indirect comprehensive feedback resulted in improved linguistic accuracy during text revisions and in new texts. For the short-term effects on the students' grammatical accuracy, only direct corrective feedback significantly helped to reduce the students' errors. For non-grammatical accuracy, both types were effective. As for the long-term effects, direct corrective feedback proved to be more effective on grammatical errors while indirect corrective feedback more helpful on non-grammatical errors. The study also reported that indirect CF did not lead to learners' avoidance of structurally complex sentences.

Benson and Kekeyser (2018) examined essays by 151 ESL learners to find out whether direct and metalinguistic written feedback has an effect on errors with two verb tenses (simple past/ present perfect). At the time of the immediate post-test, both treatment groups showed progress with the two verb tenses compared to the control group, who did not show improvement with either structure. Increases in predicted accuracy were significant for both treatment groups for the simple past tense and the present perfect tense. However, for the long-term gains, only learners who received direct feedback on the simple past maintained significant gains compared to the control group at the time of the delayed post-test. In contrast, learners who received metalinguistic feedback did not retain predicted improvements on the simple past tense by the time of the delayed post-test. For the present perfect tense, neither treatment group maintained the gains shown on the immediate post-test when asked to write again four weeks later. However, direct feedback was more durable than metalinguistic feedback for one structure (the simple past tense.)

Suzuki et al., (2019) investigated the interactional effect of WCF explicitness and type of target structure on the accuracy of students' revision and new pieces of writing. A total of 88 Japanese university students of English were assigned to four groups, each receiving either direct or indirect corrective feedback that differed in its degree of feedback explicitness: Direct corrective feedback with metalinguistic explanation, direct corrective feedback only, indirect corrective feedback with metalinguistic explanation and indirect corrective feedback only. While both types of WCF enabled the learners to improve the accuracy of both target structures in revision, a significant improvement from the first writing to the new writing was only found for the past perfect. A significant effect was partially found of WCF explicitness on learner revision for the past perfect, but not on new pieces of writing regardless of the type of target structures.

2.8.2 Studies on the effects of focused and unfocused feedback

Some studies have also examined the effects of focused and unfocused feedback. Unfocused error correction refers to feedback that "address all or most of the errors learners commit", while focused error correction refers to feedback that "address just one or two error types" (Ellis, 2009: 06). Truscott and Hsu (2008) examined the effects of indirect WCF on a broad range of error types (i.e. all linguistic errors, spelling and punctuation). The findings revealed that unfocused corrective feedback facilitated the students to develop the accuracy of a specific text during revision. However, it did not result in accuracy gains in a new written text, suggesting that WCF did not have an impact on students' writing development. However different results were found in Van Beuningen et al., (2008 and 2012) studies, which investigated the effects of direct and indirect WCF on different error categories (all grammatical and non-grammar errors), they concluded that both types of feedback have short-term effects, but direct WCF was found to also have long-term effects. Furthermore, The study also reported that indirect WCF seems to help students to reduce their non-grammatical errors; whereas, direct WCF was more effective on grammatical errors. However, although these studies revealed that unfocused WCF helped the learners to reduce their error rates, these results are interpreted with caution with regard to the role of WCF for learning. Truscott and Hsu (2008) noted that the accuracy improvement of their experimental group's accuracy development that they gained during revision did not lead to accuracy improvement in their writing of newly written texts and, therefore, they concluded that "the successful error reduction during revision is not predictor ... of learning" (2008: 299). However, Bitchener (2009) argued that one of the reasons for the failure of early studies to draw firm conclusions about the effects of WCF is the use of unfocused feedback which targets a broad range of errors, which will, in turn, result, in a cognitive overload and learners would be unable to attend to the WCF. That is why another category of studies investigated the effects of WCF on specific errors to find out the extent to which WCF enable learners to understand how some forms and structures in the English language system work, and help them to use these structures accurately in their revised and newly written texts.

Bitchener et al., (2005) investigated the effect of WCF on three error categories (the use of English articles, the past tense and prepositions) over 12 weeks and found it to be effective in helping learners to improve their accuracy regarding the use of articles and the simple past tense but not prepositions. However, this study failed to show which particular functional uses of the article were most effectively targeted by feedback. Therefore, more focused studies (Bitchener and Knoch, 2008; Sheen, 2007; Ellis et al., 2008) were carried out and found that WCF is effective for both functional uses of the English article system. Bitchener (2008) and Bitchener and Knoch (2008, 2009, 2010,) examined the effects of WCF on two particular functional uses of the English

article (the use of the indefinite article of a/an for the first mention, and the use of the definite article 'the' for subsequent or anaphoric mentions) .The findings from these studies revealed that WCF is effective in improving learners' accuracy regarding using articles for both functions, and for different proficiency levels (intermediate, low intermediate and advanced learners) .

In addition to articles, other studies (e.g., Bitchener et al, 2005; Rummel, 2014; Frear, 2012) targeted other errors such as the simple past tense, present perfect, regular/irregular verbs, prepositions, preposition of space. Rummel (2014) found WCF to be effective for both types of tenses (simple past, present perfect). However, prepositions, in Bitchener et al., (2005) study, were found to be less responsive to WCF compared to the English articles and to simple past tense. They argued that past tense and articles are patterned and rule- governed problems while prepositions are more idiosyncratic in nature, which supported the view that WCF would be most likely to be successful when directed at rule-governed, treatable errors, and that rule-governed, untreatable errors are less amenable to feedback (Ferris, 1999). Furthermore, Frear (2012) examined the effects of WCF on the use of the regular simple past tense and irregular simple past tense and he found that WCF is effective for the use of the regular simple past tense but not the irregular forms. According to Frear (2012), the failure to find any effect for WCF on the irregular past tense was largely demonstrated in the analysis of the effects of WCF on new pieces of writing. In other words, for those irregular past tense errors that were corrected, learners tended to not use them correctly in new pieces of writing because they had to write on a new topic involving different irregular forms. However, those errors that were subsequently used correctly, there was some evidence that some types of WCF were more effective than others. Notably, focused direct CF was more effective in the long-term than unfocused indirect CF.

2.8.3 Studies on the effects of Form and content-focused feedback

Griffin (1982) noted: " the major question confronting any theory of responding to students writing is where we should focus our attention" (1982:299). In fact, teachers frequently ask this question and still there is no general consensus among teachers and researchers about how teachers should respond to student writing. Much of the discussion on this issue has been whether teachers should focus on form (grammar, mechanics) or on content (organization, amount of detail) (kroll et al., 1990). With regard to this, Vygotsky (1978) stressed the importance of negotiation of meaning among learners in developing their cognitive skills and promoting social interaction. Similarly, Zamel (1985) urges teachers to "hold in abeyance our reflex-like reactions to surface-level concerns and give priority to meaning." (1985:82), this indicates that focusing on form-focused errors might hinder learners who are in the process of learning a foreign language. Learners would be more motivated if they responded to meaning rather than form. He added:

"methods that emphasize form and correctness ignore how ideas get explored through writing and fail to teach students that writing is essentially a process of discovery." *(*1985:195). He also emphasised that content feedback and form feedback should kept separate to avoid confusing students about what they should attend to at any particular stages of the feedback process. This disagreement on whether teacher should give form or content feedback urged many researchers to further investigate both types of feedback

Olson and Raffeld (1987), for example, investigated whether form feedback is more effective than content feedback by examining revisions made by 66 college students to a draft upon which they had received written feedback. The participants of the study were education majors enrolled in two entry-level reading education classes. Each class was randomly assigned to a treatment or control group. The treatment group received content comments with the aim to encourage students to the needed content and ideas. On the other hand, the control group received surface comment, which focused on problems such as word choice, spelling, punctuation, and/or language use. In addition, the treatment group participants engaged in five writing assignments. While the control group participants were not exposed to the five assignments, they engaged in longer lectures and discussions about the same content. The findings revealed significant differences among the groups for holistic scores and for learning course content. The treatment group that received content written feedback wrote significantly better essays than the control group. However, both groups received significantly better scores on the course content test. Olson and Raffeld suggested that these findings might have occurred because the content type treatment group and the control group engaged in similar kinds of cognitive activities although the delivery of the activities varied.

Sheppard (1992) compared the effects of meaning-related comments in the margins and coded WCF on seven compositions written by 50 ESL students at the upper-intermediate level. Students in the form-focused groups, after receiving corrective feedback on verb forms, attended a meeting with the teacher about these errors and were asked to make a corrected copy. The content-focused group received general requests for clarification of contents. These comments were discussed in the teacher-student conferences. After ten weeks, both groups made significant progress in verb accuracy (person, tense, aspect and context) and there was no difference between the two groups in the use of the verb forms. But the form-focused group experienced a decline in complexity as measured by the use of subordination, probably due to avoidance. However, Sheppard acknowledged that the difference in complexity could have been influenced by a low frequency of the focal structures. Another limitation of the study lies in the fact that clarification requests in the content-focused group may have included comments on verb usage.

Ferris (1997), in her study, examined 110 drafts of 47 advanced ESL students, providing feedback in terms of its syntactic features and its pragmatic goals, i.e. requesting information, making a request, and giving information. She concluded that form-based feedback led to more revisions than content-related comments. In other words, students took more seriously comments in questions and statement format. Although imperatives occurred rarely, students took them seriously as well, even if they were only marginal feedback. As to the goals of providing feedback, it was found that feedback that requested for information, regardless of its syntactic, would lead to substantial changes in students' writings. On the other hand, comments, which gave information, were less influential.

Replicating Ferris's (1997) study, Gascoigne (2004) studied 114 first drafts of papers of 25 beginning French language students and concluded that comments in the form of statement and question that provided information to students were less influential, and those which requested for information had the most influential impact. Later, Sugita (2006), conducted a similar research on the effects of comments in three syntactic forms with three functions of providing, describing, and adding information on 25 intermediate and pre-intermediate Japanese students' revision of the content of their writings. Contrary to Ferris and Gascoigne who employed the same framework, he found that imperatives result in more substantive revisions compared with the questions and statements; among the three, questions lead to minimal changes.

In a longitudinal study (one-year period), Ashwell (2000) explored whether mixing content and form feedback was more beneficial for writers than giving only one type of feedback and whether teachers should give form feedback alone without any comments on content on the paper. 50 Japanese students enrolled in 2 writing classes participated in this study. The participants we divided into three treatment groups (who received three types of feedback) and one control group who did not receive feedback. Out of the three treatment groups, one group of students received content feedback on their first draft and form feedback on the second. Another group received form feedback first and then content. The last treatment group received both content and form feedback on their drafts. The findings of this study revealed that there were no significant differences between the three feedback groups. However, all three-feedback groups outperformed the control one in formal accuracy. Additionally, Ashwell pointed out that the group, which received both types of feedback on all their drafts improved in their writing slightly more than the other ones, but this difference was not statistically significant. Another finding was that mixing both types of feedback did not harm students' writing. Ashwell, however, pointed out that the fact that the different types of feedback were applied in new pieces of writing could be a reason why students did not improve the content of their writing. Therefore, he suggested that rewriting could help students to improve better content. He also mentioned that the researcher

being the provider of all feedback, lack of significant inter-rater reliability in the content quality check, small sample size, and lack of training of scorers as limitations to his study.

Correspondingly Fazio (2001) examined the effects of three feedback conditions (form-focused, content-focused, and combination of both) on students' linguistic accuracy. The participants of the study were fifth grade native speakers of 16 different languages in French immersion classes who were examined through in-class journal writing. The findings revealed that both types of feedback were ineffective for students' writing accuracy. Fazio, however, concluded that the lack of improvement probably was due to the short treatment time, which might have affected the results.

Although, a number of studies have supported the use of form-focused feedback, content-focused feedback or a combination of both as a tool to enhance students' different aspects of writing; however, other studies were more interested on how students respond to these types of feedback. Hubais and Dumanig (2014), for example, examined how EFL students respond to both form and content feedback and further investigated which of the two types is highly and least preferred by the learners. During the experiment, the participants were asked to produce argumentative essays and underwent three revisions. The results revealed significant differences on students' responses in the form-focused feedback compared to content-focused feedback. More specifically, the students who received form-focused feedback obtained a percentage error reduction of 65 from the first draft to the third draft; whereas students who received content-focused feedback obtained only 59.31 as the percentage error reduction from the first to the third draft. This study also accentuated the positive effect of the use of a combination of form and content feedbacks on overall writing quality development of the language learners. Moreover, based on the interviews conducted with the students, the results revealed that the students held positive attitude towards form-focused feedback. However, this study fails to address the reasons behind students' reliance and preferences towards form-focused feedback. In addition, the researchers did not provide sufficient information about students' background (e.g., proficiency level), the learning context (e.g., teaching approach) and the types of feedback addressed (e.g., errors targeted in form-focused feedback and content-focused feedback). These factors are important to improve the validity and the reliability of the results presented. Similar results were achieved in a study conducted by Shobeiry (2020) who found out a noticeable impact of a combination of form+ content feedback on writing improvement of participants. However, Shobeiry (2020) reported that the focus on only form-focused feedback seems to be ineffective in this study

It can be observed from the studies discussed above that most of early and recent studies have paid much attention to the effects of direct and indirect feedback on students' writing accuracy and only few studies have focused on the effects of other types of feedback such as content-focused feedback. Moreover, there is a lack of research on the effects of WCF on other aspects of writing such as syntactic complexity and content complexity. Nevertheless, some attempts from researchers were made to cover some of these uninvestigated areas. For example, Mubarak (2013) investigated the effects of direct and indirect WCF on Bahrain students' writing accuracy and complexity. In his study, Mubarek targeted grammatical errors, such as verb tenses, prepositions and auxiliaries, subject verb agreement and articles, as well as lexical errors, such as wrong word choice and missing words. The findings of the quasi-experiment showed that although the students improved in the course of the experiment, no effect of either feedback type on the students' writing accuracy and complexity was found. Mubarek (2013) suggested some explanations for these results. These include the duration of the treatment and the proficiency level of the students. In other words, Mubarek claimed that 12 weeks of treatment might not be enough to help the students to improve their grammatical accuracy and the complexity of their writing. Another possible reason is that most of the students involved in his study had a low level of proficiency in English, which might explain why they were unable to benefit from the WCF (2013:174).

As far as students' proficiency level is concerned, it seems that Mubarak's conclusion regarding the relationship between the low proficiency level of students and the uneffectiveness of WCF in his study makes sense as researchers in this area of research claimed that the effects of WCF vary according to the students' proficiency levels. That is high-level proficiency learners have better existing knowledge and analytic abilities, which enable them to deal with WCF easily compared to low-proficiency level learners (Bitchener and Storch, 2016). This was further confirmed in the studies of (e.g. Bitchener and Knoch, 2010; Bitchener, 2008) which found out that WCF is effective for advanced and intermediate learners.

Another study by Karim (2013) also investigated the differential effects of direct and indirect WCF on grammatical and non-grammatical errors of fifty-three intermediate level English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students. These students were divided into four groups (direct, underlining only, Underlining+metalinguistic, and a control group) and were asked to produce three pieces of writings from three different picture prompts and revised those over a three-week period. In addition, the students in each group were also asked to produce a new piece of writing after two weeks to examine the delayed effects of feedback on students' writing. Karim concluded that that both direct and indirect WCF in the forms of underlining and underlining + metalinguistic feedback can significantly improve both grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy during the

revisions of texts written earlier. The findings also demonstrate that direct WCF has the potential to promote grammatical accuracy in new writings, at least, of intermediate level learners. In addition, the findings also revealed that underlining +metalinguistic WCF has a significant effect on overall accuracy in a new piece of writing. (2013:175-176). However, the fact that this study was not conducted in real-classroom setting and the genre of writing used in this study (narratives) were considered as limitations which might have impacted the results.

In the same line of research, Dabboub (2019) examined the effects of direct and indirect WCF on the development of EFL learners' writing accuracy, structural complexity and lexical diversity during revision and when producing new written texts. The results showed that direct corrective feedback had more positive effects on the learner's overall accuracy than indirect corrective feedback in the revised and the new written texts. However, neither types of feedback had noticeable effect in reducing or increasing learners' language complexity in their revised texts. Dabboub attributed these results to a number a factors. First, given that her study targeted a wide range of errors, processing feedback might have been cognitively challenging for some of learners. In addition, the learners' background and past experience could have also impacted the results. In other words, some participants' misunderstanding of direct and indirect corrective feedback can be related to the fact that the students are not used to receive feedback in the form of metalinguistic information or circling from their previous teachers.

A recent study by Cheng and Zhang (2021) targeted other aspects of writing that are complexity, fluency, content and organization quality of EFL students' writing. The participants of the study were divided into a comparison group and a treatment group receiving four sessions of direct comprehensive WCF. The results show that such WCF contributed to writing accuracy and fluency over time. More specifically, it benefited students' grammatical accuracy by helping the students to reduce some rule-based grammatical error types. However, it showed limited effects on complexity, content, or organization of students' writing. On the other hand, the comparison group did not improve any dimensions of their writing. However the issue with this study is that it documented the effects of one type of feedback (direct feedback) on one writing genre (argumentative). In addition, and based on Skehan's Trade-off Hypothesis which proposes that learners cannot give equal attention to different writing aspects and, thus, they prioritize one over the other, this study revealed found that this practice improved L2 learners' accuracy and fluency simultaneously without negative effects on complexity or content and organization. That is the improvement in accuracy was not at the cost of other aspects of writing.

While an extensive body of research on WCF (focused/ unfocused; direct/indirect; content/form with or without metalinguistic explanation) have reported its effects on different aspects of L2

writing quality, recent developments on WCF research have shown a growing interest on how WCF can be effective (Evans et al., 2011). Therefore, researchers called for the contextualization of WCF in L2 writing by considering the "interaction of the individual and context-related factors" (Bitchener and Storch, 2016: 85). Through meaningful interactions between teachers and learners, WCF provision in L2 writing gradually becomes more dynamic, responsive and individualized (Careless et al., 2011). One possible way to contextualize WCF in L2 writing is through teacher's scaffolding which is a "situation where a knowledgeable participant can create supportive conditions in which the novice can participate and extend his or her current skills and knowledge to higher levels of competence" (Donato, 1994: 40).

It is generally agreed that scaffolding is a useful technique for the development of different aspects of L2 writing. For example, Boggs (2019) compared the effects of teacher-scaffolded (1 to 1 conferences), self-scaffolded, and unscaffolded direct corrective feedback and found that all three groups experienced similar, signifcant and durable increases in grammatical accuracy in EFL writing. Similarly, Li and Zhang (2021) explored teacher-scaffolded WCF on L2 written language accuracy and rhetorical genre skills. The results of the study confirmed the effects of scaffolded WCF on L2 written language accuracy and rhetorical genre skills. In addition, Scaffolded WCF, in this study, enhanced learners' understanding of L2 knowledge, raised their awareness in the writing processes and impacted their future writing practices. More recently, Sang and Zou (2022) examined the effects of joint production as a pedagogical treatment to integrate teacher-scaffolded feedback, on the accuracy and complexity of second language writing and found that joint production was effective in developing learners' writing accuracy, but not in syntactic complexity which might suggest, according to Sang and Zou (2022), that joint production placed learners at an advantageous position in developing accuracy at a higher rate than their counterparts receiving regular comprehension-based instruction and prioritized accuracy over complexity.

So far, recent research on WCF has reported promising findings for its positive effects; however, researchers have addressed the need for more ecologically valid and longitudinal studies, which are still relatively scant in the field (Storch, 2018). In addition, most researchers and teachers agree that corrective feedback on L2 writing takes maximal effects when it is situated, meaningful, and timely. Therefore, how to contextualize instantaneous corrective feedback within a meaningful context and how learners respond to WCF in L2 writing classrooms becomes another key issue to address (Bitchener and Storch, 2016; Goldstein, 2016; Sang and Zou, 2022).

2.9 Learners' preferences towards written corrective feedback

Learners have different learning styles and preferences to the way they learn. These preferences vary depending on multiple factors such as age, language background, level of education, field of study, and experience. As written corrective feedback is used for the benefit of the learners, acknowledging these preferences is important because it helps teachers as well as L2 researchers to understand how different students' preferences to feedback could support or inhibit feedback roles in their language learning, their language acquisition and their writing skills development (Hedgecock and Lefkowitz, 1996; Chiang, 2004; Lee, 2005). In addition, Ferris (2003) pointed out that students' preferences towards WCF help "us understand what students want and how they feel about what we do, can assist us in perceiving ways in which our philosophical and practices and even our specific feedback techniques may be misunderstood by students" (2003: 93).

In fact, this shift from WCF information (the impact of feedback) to an emphasis on feedback process (learners; engagement with WCF), as mentioned earlier, is the focus of many recent studies on WCF. Many researchers called for more learner-centered investigations (Goldstein, 2005; Ferris, 2006; Storch and Wigglesworth, 2010; Bitchener and Ferris, 2012) to get an in-depth understanding on how learners respond to WCF using case study methodologies with data collected from multiple sources (e.g., actual feedback, interviews, surveys, questionnaires). This strand of WCF research focused mainly on whether students value teachers' WCF; what types of WCF they prefer the most; how they respond to WCF; the difficulties they encounter with teacher's feedback and a consideration of their needs and wants about the way they want their teacher deliver feedback. The next section will review some of these studies.

2.9.1 Preferences to the types of WCF

2.9.1.1 Form or content WCF

Based on the existing literature, it seems that students hold positive views towards teacher's corrective feedback. They also believe on its effects on the development of their writing skills (Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990; Hyland, 2003; Chiang, 2004; Diab, 2005b; Lee, 2008; Hamouda, 2011). Additionally, the findings from different studies showed that students held different views regarding the type of feedback they preferred the most. Some research studies in ESL and EFL contexts showed that students preferred the correction of surface-level of errors (Chiang, 2004, Lee, 2008; Amrhein and Nassaji, 2010), others demonstrated that students liked feedback that focuses on the content and organisation of their written texts (Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990;

Oladejo, 1993) and a third category reported that students preferred a combination of both form and content feedback (Simpson, 2006; Biber et al., 2011; Chen, S et al., 2016)

Using a qualitative research design, Chiang (2004) analysed senior and junior students' preferences and responses to teacher feedback on their written productions. The results of the questionnaire showed that both senior and junior students preferred to receive feedback that focuses on grammar than on organization and content. Senior students, on the other hand, favoured feedback on organization and content more than junior students did. However, when they were asked, in the interview, about the types of feedback that were more important to them, all the students, senior and junior, expressed the view that comments on content and organization were more important These students gave explanations for the contradiction between their answers in the questionnaire and in the interviews by stating that grammatical mistakes hinder them from expressing the ideas and thoughts they want to convey, and their teachers emphasis that grammar is the most important aspect of writing. Thus, they give more attention to the teachers' comments on grammar. They added that their teachers' comments about content and organisation was not helpful for their development because they were too general so that they did not give great attention to such comment (2004:105-106). Therefore, these findings suggest that the students' experiences with teacher's feedback slightly influence their preferences for the focus of feedback. In addition, Chiang pointed out that the uneffectiveness of teacher feedback may not lie in the feedback itself, but in the way how feedback is delivered to students.

Similarly, Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) investigated how ESL students and teachers perceive the usefulness of different types and amounts of WCF, and also the reasons they have for their preferences. The findings revealed that most learners preferred feedback on writing conventions including grammar, punctuation, and spelling. Whereas, teachers thought that feedback should focus on all writing aspects including form, content and organisation. However, teachers in this study pointed out that learners' preferences were taken into account when they provided them with corrective feedback. These results indicate that teacher's ways of providing corrective feedback could be influenced by their learners' preferences.

Another study by Lee (2008) compared the responses of 36 high proficient students and 22 low proficient students studying at a secondary school in Hong Kong. Lee found that the proficiency level of the students is a variable that affected students' preferences towards feedback. In other words, low proficient students liked feedback to focus on language more than content and organization, while high proficient students preferred feedback to focus on both the form and the content of writing. These led Lee to suggest that "feedback informed by a flexible policy that takes

into their account students' abilities is more likely to help students develop interest, confidence, and self-esteem in writing than rigid policy that requires comprehensive error feedback across the board." (2008: 158).

Along the same line of research, Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) study reported that they want teachers' feedback to address other aspects of writing such as vocabulary, ideas and mechanics that refer to content feedback. Similarly, Oladejo, (1993) identified the preferences and expectations of intermediate and advanced ESL learners regarding error correction and his findings are not different from Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) in the sense that the majority of the learners believe that errors relating to organization of ideas should receive the highest attention for correction.

Other few studies revealed that students preferred a combination of both types of feedback (form+content). For example, Simpson (2006) explored students' attitudes towards two types of feedback (grammar error corrections and content feedback). The students in this study prefer to receive feedback on form as well as feedback on content because this combination motivates them to complete the written assignments. In addition, they acknowledged the positive comments in their teachers' feedback, which help them to become more confident about their writing. Chen, S et al., (2016) investigated the perceptions and preferences of 64 EFL learners across three proficiency levels (intermediate, advanced-intermediate, and advanced) in a university of Mainland China. Chen, S et al. found that although the participants tended to have a neutral opinion on the role of explicit grammar instruction, they expressed a favourable attitude towards error correction. In particular, they held a strong desire for extended comments on both content and grammar of their written work. These results corroborate with what Biber et al. (2011) findings which showed that a combination of both content and grammar comments is more effective for writing development than a focus on one type of feedback.

The studies reviewed above demonstrated that students have varied preferences to the focus of teachers' WCF. These studies have also highlighted some factors that affect these preferences. Among these factors is teachers' ways of providing feedback. That is, some teachers rely very much on grammatical errors in their corrections, which led students to believe that grammar is the most important part in writing. Therefore, they prefer to receive corrective feedback on their grammatical errors. Another factor affecting students' preferences is the proficiency level and the experiences of the learners. The studies above revealed that low proficiency level learners prefer to receive feedback on form; whereas, high proficiency level learners favoured feedback that focuses on the content and organisation as they have an already acquired knowledge of grammar

and vocabulary compared to low proficiency learners who are in the process of building this knowledge.

2.9.1.2 Focused or unfocused WCF?

Whether students prefer focused or unfocused feedback has also been a subject of interest for some researchers. As mentioned in the previous chapter, in focused feedback, teachers target certain types of errors, while in unfocused feedback, teachers address a wide range of errors (Ellis, 2009). It has been suggested that focused feedback is more helpful than unfocused feedback because with focused feedback, learners receive a lower attentional cognitive load, which might facilitate the process of L2 development (Bitchener and Storch, 2016). However, most of the studies on students' preferences towards feedback have reported that students prefer to receive feedback that covers all their errors. For example, Leki (1991) found that a large number of students like their teachers to correct all the errors in their writings. These students want to "perfect their English" (1991:204) and believe that a well-written work should be error-free. Oladejo (1993) study on 500 undergraduate ESL learners regarding their views and attitudes found that all learners preferred all errors to be corrected "in order to enhance their fluency and accuracy in the language" (1993:78). In addition, Zhu (2010) in his study examined learners' attitudes toward error correction of 58 EFL learners. Zhu reported that 70% of the learners wanted their teacher to correct all the errors in their writing, while the rest of learners wanted their teacher to correct specific errors that hinder communication. They justified this with the fact that correcting all errors would lead them to lose confidence. The finding regarding students' preferences to be corrected on all errors is similar to that reached by Diab (2005a), Halimi (2008) and Hamouda (2011).

2.9.1.3 Direct or indirect ?

In response to the importance of different types of feedback, some studies on students' attitudes towards feedback have also explored whether students prefer to receive direct or indirect feedback. As mentioned earlier, direct feedback occurs when the teacher identifies the error and provides the correct form on the student' paper; whereas, indirect feedback occurs when the teacher indicate the location of the error without providing the corrected form. Lee (2005), for example found that learners wished their teachers give them direct corrections to all their errors because they believed that this approach facilitate the correction of their errors. Furthermore, they also preferred to receive error codes because they are used to as their teacher frequently uses it to correct their errors. In addition, they believe that the use of codes would enable them to understand the types of errors they make and they could facilitate the identification of the error as well. Nevertheless, some students find difficulties to understand these codes, as Lee reported,

because they did not know the grammar rules or were unclear about the grammar concepts used (2005:08).

In a similar vein, Diab's (2005a) study showed a great concern to error-free writing. More specifically, most learners preferred their teacher to correct their errors by giving them some clues that help them to make the necessary corrections in the first draft. They also preferred their teacher to correct their final draft by crossing out their errors and provide the correction (direct feedback). These results correspond to the fact that teacher often provides them with indirect correction on the first draft and direct correction on the final draft. Therefore, concluded that "these findings may indicate that teachers seem to be behaving according to students' preferences or, perhaps just likely, that students' preferences for teacher feedback reflect instructional practice." Diab (2005a: 43). Westmacott (2017) also found that most EFL students in his study claimed that indirect feedback was more effective for them because it prompts deeper cognitive processing and learning. Another advantage for indirect feedback, according to the participants, is that it helps them to reinforce grammatical knowledge and encourage autonomous learning behaviour. Westmacott further added that indirect feedback particularly suited those of my students who were generally highly motivated learners (2017:27).

2.9.1.4 Peer feedback

Like many other types of feedback, peer feedback has also been discussed in the literature on students' preferences towards feedback. By definition, peer feedback is described as the type of feedback in which "students typically produce a text on their own, which is then read and commented only by one of their peers who have themselves written a text of their own, sometimes on a different topic, and who may have little interest or time to give considered response to someone else's writing" (Arndt, 1992:101). A number of studies have concluded that peer feedback is a useful practice for learners because it helps them in many ways. Theoretically, peer feedback offers the learners opportunities to read and response to one another s' writing through interacting and exchanging views with each other. This interaction plays an essential role in the development of learning (Schmidt, 1990). Peer feedback has also cognitive and linguistic gains. Cognitively, "peer reviews reflect writing as truly communicative process rather than an artificial" (Lee, 1997:59). This leads to an improvement in students' awareness of their audience (Keh, 1990, Tsui and Ng, 2000). Linguistically, peer feedback help students to identify and become aware of new grammatical structures, new vocabulary, when they reach each others' texts and, thus, they could develop their critical thinking (Keh, 1990; Lee, 1997).

Although researchers have acknowledged the importance of peer feedback in classrooms; however, it seems that some learners believe that feedback should only be given by an expert

(teachers). Zhang (1995), for example, analyzed the questionnaire responses of 81 ESL students who received different styles of feedback and found that L2 writers preferred teacher feedback to peer feedback. Similarly, Zacharias (2007) reported that the students in his study preferred to receive feedback from their teachers because they believe that teachers have much higher language competence than the students. In addition, they consider teacher feedback as the most essential because it provides security for them. In other words, some students feel embarrassed to have their writing corrected by friends and, thus, they feel secured when the teacher correct their texts. The third reason for preferring teacher feedback, as stated by many students, is the belief about teachers as being the source of knowledge. This trust in teacher's feedback, as stated by Zacharias, is the result of their cultural upbringing, based on that information from teachers was always right. The final reason why students preferred teacher feedback was that they were aware of the control teachers have over their grades. That is, students felt that if they did not follow the teacher feedback, teachers might give them low grades.

Other doubts regarding feedback were raised by some researchers such as Connor and Asenavage (1994) who maintained that teacher feedback is more influential and that only 5% of peer feedback helps students improve their writing. Rollinson (2005) claimed that peer feedback is lengthy and time-consuming. Amores (1997) argued that students may find it difficult to accept criticism from their peers and may respond defensively to their feedback. Keh (1990) asserted that peer feedback target surface errors rather than meaning-related errors. Horowitz (1986) claimed that students may find it difficult to identify errors in their peers' writing, thus offering inadequate feedback.

2.9.2 Factors influencing students' preferences

In addition to students' different views regarding their preferences for the types of feedback, it can be noticed from what have been mentioned above that there are a number of factors that could impact students' preferences to teacher written feedback. First, it seems that EFL learners' preferences differ from ESL learners. In other words, while EFL learners favour direct corrective feedback (e.g., Lee, 2005; Diab, 2005a), ESL learners prefer indirect corrective feedback (e.g., Leki, 1991; Oladejo, 1993). This suggests that EFL learners still view teachers as a source of knowledge and they heavily rely on his corrections in order for them to avoid errors in their writings. ESL learners, on the other hand, prefer indirect feedback because they are more autonomous in the sense that they view teachers as mediators of knowledge and it is their task to self-correct their errors.

There is also a growing concern on the impact of the way teachers deliver feedback on students'

preferences. Particularly, some researchers showed interest on the effects of praise and criticism on students' motivation to receive and benefit from feedback. Praise is defined by Hyland and Hyland (2001) as, "an act which attributes credit to another for some characteristic, attribute, skill, etc., which positively valued by the person giving feedback. It, therefore, suggests a more intense or detailed response than simple agreement" (2001: 186). On the other hand, criticism gives "a negative evaluation of the paper or a portion of the paper without improvement suggestions" (Cho et al, 2006: 276). These types of comments are viewed as a significant tools for developing students writing skills (Chiang, 2004).

Most studies on teacher WCF (e.g. Gee, 1972; Lee, 2009; Amrhein and Nassaji, 2010; Zacharias, 2007) reported that teachers considered praise to be more useful in facilitating students' development when compared to criticism. Gee (1972) tested the effects of praise, negative criticism and no comment on the written compositions of 139 high school juniors whom he divided into high, middle, and low ability groups. These groups received no particular instruction but written assignments and teacher's feedback. He found that the praised group had significantly more positive attitudes towards their writing than either of the other groups. Gee concluded that the lack of comment and negative criticism results in less motivation for writing and, thus, less writing.

Correspondingly, Hyland and Hyland (2001) examined the comments of two ESL teachers on six ESL students' written compositions. The results revealed that 44% of the teachers' comments were praise, 31% were criticism, and the remaining ones were suggestions. Comparing between the comments in the first and the final drafts, they found that most comments students received in their first drafts were criticism, and most comments on the final drafts were praise. The teachers explained that by criticising students' writing in their first draft, students will be motivated to develop their writing for getting better grade, and praise their writing in the final draft would motivate them in their next writing. Further to this, Hyland and Hyland (2001) suggested that teachers should be careful when giving praise to the students because the wrong use of praise might affect negatively students' writing i.e., teachers praise should be specific rather than formulaic and closely linked to actual text features rather than general praise (2001:208). They added that criticism is also helpful for students in the sense that it might attract their attention to their weaknesses in writing and motivate them to develop their future written productions.

Another factor affecting sutdents' preferences to teacher's feedback is appropriation. Goldstein (2004) described appropriation as follows:

> *Commentary that ignores what a student's purpose is for a particular text and attempts either purposefully or accidently to shift this purpose is appropriation... commentary where a teacher demands that a student shift a position or a point of view is appropriation... commentary that "corrects" sentences or passages without asking the student about the intending meaning risks changing that meaning and thus risks appropriation*
>
> *(Goldstein, 2004: 68).*

This definition shows that appropriation occurs when the teacher takes over authorship of the student's paper by crossing students words and sentences and put their own words and ideas instead. Therefore, The teacher's voice takes over, and the teacher's meaning is prioritized. Such a practice leads the students to think that what the teacher wants is more important than what they want to express or write (Ferris, 2003). However, researchers have different views regarding appropriation. Reid (1994), for example, questioned the whole idea of text appropriation and cautioned against a "hands-off approach to student writing" (1994:273). She believes that the teacher is viewed as a cultural informant and writing expert and, based on this, the teacher could not appropriate the students' texts but rather empower the students to write for an academic audience. She added, "We must introduce students to ways in which they can learn to gain ownership of their writing while at the same time considering their readers" (1994: 283). With regard to this, Goldstein (2004) distinguished between text appropriation and helpful intervention as summarised in the following table:

Table 2-3 Difference between appropriation and "helpful intervention" (Goldstein, 2004).

Feature of student text	Appropriation	Helpful intervention
Purpose	"Commentary that ignores what a student's purpose is for a particular text and attempts either purposefully or accidentally to shift this purpose"	"Commentary that shows a student where he or she is not achieving her/his purpose(s)"
Point of view	"Commentary where a teacher demands that a student shift a position or a point of view"	"Commentary that suggests a student read about different point of view or interview others with a different point of view in order to know the other side"
Intended meaning	"Commentary that "corrects" sentences or passages without asking the student about the intended meaning"	"Commentary that asks students what they want to say and then helps students find the language to do so"

From the table above, appropriation ignores the student's purpose; whereas, helpful intervention helps the student achieve his/her purpose. In addition, appropriation corrects the text, helpful intervention determines what the student wants to say and then helps her find the best way to say it. Finally, appropriation requires the student to shift a position, helpful intervention suggests to the student to read about different point of view to know about the other side.

On the other hand, other researchers warned teachers against appropriation because it has the potential to frustrate and demotivate students to write more and to revise their written texts

(Sommer, 1982; Zamel, 1985; Keh, 1990; Ferris, 2003; Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005; Ferris, 2007; Mack, 2009). Zacharias (2007) further confirmed this in his study, which revealed that some of the students found that teacher feedback sometimes contradict with their ideas, they went even further saying that when this happens, they did not know how to continue the writing and became confused since they needed to change their ideas to comply with the teacher comments

(2007:50). Therefore, teachers are advised to provide students with suggestions and strategies that assist them to develop the form and content of their written texts (Conrad and Goldstein, 1999; Ferris, 2007).

2.9.3 Students' difficulties with teacher's corrective feedback

Studies on learners' preferences towards teacher's WCF have also uncovered the potential difficulties that learners could confront while dealing with teachers WCF (e.g. Ferris, 1995; Chiang, 2004; Zacharias, 2007; Amrhein and Nassaji, 2010, Hamouda, 2011). Ferris (1995) reported that the students, in his study, confronted a variety of problems in understanding their teachers' comments. Some students complained about their instructor's handwriting, which prevented them to understand the comments of the teacher. Other students related their problems to grammar corrections, particularly, the difficulty to understand specific grammar terms (fragment, verb tense) and symbols used to indicate a grammatical error (abbreviations, arrows, and circles). Additionally, some students mentioned that their teachers' questions about content confused them (too general or too specific), and some reported that although they understood the teachers' comments, they still could not benefit from them.

Similarly, the findings of Chiang's (2004) study revealed that students had problems in understanding teacher's handwriting as well as the corrections that includes codes and symbols, they didn't understand their teacher's comments about ideas and organization as well. The findings also revealed that there was no significant difference between the difficulties that faced junior and senior students. However, "a higher percentage of junior form students had difficulties understanding their teachers handwriting, while more senior form students did not understand their teacher's comments about ideas and organization" (Chiang, 2004: 104).

Zacharias (2007) highlighted some areas where students experienced difficulties in understanding teacher's feedback. First, some students encountered difficulties in reacting to feedback, which contains codes. They found that coded feedback did not facilitate the revision process. Other students reported problems with feedback that include general comments (e.g. "Many mistakes on grammar", "Revise your ideas". "Add more information" etc.). They instead prefer specific feedback, which clearly identify their errors and help them to do the corrections. Another

difficulty was reported with content feedback. Some students in Zacharias' study, found it difficult to follow teachers' content feedback because, according to them, teacher's feedback on form simply points out the students' problems but it does not show how they revise them. The use of complex language when giving feedback is another problem brought up by the students. They found that teacher's use of unfamiliar terms prevented them to make use of teacher's feedback. This led Zacharias to remind tteachers to be careful not to concentrate too heavily on errors, which are beyond the current acquisition level of the students so the students could make effective use of teachers' feedback.

Despite the teachers' time and efforts to provide feedback on the students' writings, Hamouda (2011) found that still a large number of students were unable to revise their papers because they misunderstand the teacher's written feedback. In addition, having too many grammatical and mechanic mistakes to revise and the lack of time were other problems that discouraged students to revise their papers. Other researchers examined the challenges encountered by students with written corrective feedback by analysing teachers' feedback. For example, Zamel (1985) described teachers written comments as "confusing, arbitrary, and inaccessible" (1985: 79) and attributed students' failure to understand their teacher's feedback to these confusing comments. Similarly, Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) related part of students' misunderstanding of teacher written feedback to its nature "which is unclear, inaccurate, and unbalanced" (1990:155). Leki (1992) mentioned that "sometimes students are not sure exactly which part of their text a comment is addressed to. Sometimes the gist of the comment itself is unclear ... Sometimes the comment seems inapplicable to the student." (1992:122). Students also feel demotivated when their teacher feedback "is illegible, cryptic (e.g., consisting of symbols, single-word questions, comments), or confusing (e.g., consisting of questions that are unclear, suggestions that are difficult to incorporate into emergent drafts)" (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005:188-189). Students might also have difficulties in understanding indirect mitigated comment (Hyland and Hyland, 2001).

Given that these difficulties might prevent students to benefit from teachers' corrective feedback, teachers, therefore, should consider their feedback practices in ways that increase the benefits of their written feedback. First, Hahn (1981) maintained that teachers should pay attention to their handwriting and ensure providing clear readable comments. Teachers should also provide the learners with strategies and solutions to overcome the mistakes they commit (1981: 09). Moreover, teachers are recommended to use explicit direct corrective feedback because indirect feedback may not be helpful for learners with low proficiency level (Hyland and Hyland, 2001).

Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) suggested that teachers should encourage their learners to approach

them when they face difficulties in understanding corrective feedback. Chiang (2004) also reminded teachers that they are responsible for teaching their learners the error codes used in their feedback and suggested that teachers provide their learners with a list of these codes at the beginning of the course. Other researchers such as Goldstein (2005) acknowledged oral discussion with the learners regarding the different features of their teachers' feedback, which could make feedback more productive. Mack (2009) added that "effective feedback assesses students' skills and gives them clear guidance to how can improve their essay." (2009: 36).

In addition to the aforementioned suggestions, Shvidko (2021), very recently, discussed other principles that can help teachers deliver supporting and encouraging feedback. Among these principles is to involve students in the revision process. According to Shvidko (2015), revision should not be "just a giver-receiver relationship with the teacher giving the information and the student receiving it" (2015:55) but a collaborative endeavour through which students engage in the revision of their writing. To do this, Shvidko (2021) suggested different methods such as encouraging students to reply to teacher comments in the margins of a paper/writing assignment, holding one-on-one writing conferences and encouraging students to reflect on and analyze their writing. Another principle highlighted by Shvidko (2021) is to respond to students' writing as readers. In other words, teachers should encourage and support student writers by responding to their texts not as evaluators or experts but as an interested reader. This could be done by in different ways. For example, teachers can react to students' experiences by sharing their own. They can relate to students' challenges by describing similar struggles of their own. They can also include affective comments in their responses, such as expressing surprise ("Who would have thought!" "Oh really?"), empathy ("That must have been challenging!" "That would make me sad too."), or disappointment ("That's too bad!" "How disappointing!"). (Shvidko, 2021:66). Showing this interest to the students' writing promotes relationships of trust and mutual respect; increases solidarity and pro-social connection; and makes feedback more authentic and meaningful (Shvidko, 2018). These principles along with others remind teachers that responding to student written work, as Shvidko (2021) asserted, constitutes more than just commenting on content, language, and mechanics. Therefore, teachers should also take the interpersonal dimension of feedback into consideration.

2.10 The research gaps

From what have been discussed in the literature review, it seems that teachers' written corrective feedback is a vibrant field of research to L2 researchers. However, the results from different studies on the effects of different types of WCF and students' attitudes towards WCF showed that there are still open questions that need further investigations. Therefore, the present study aimed

to add to the existing body of research by addressing some of the major gaps previously outlined in several ways.

The first issue with most of early and recent studies on WCF is that the focus was primarily on form-focused feedback (direct/indirect; focused/unfocused) (Semke, 1984; Rob et al., 1986; Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Kepner, 1991; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Chandler, 2003; Bitchener and Knock, 2008, 2009, 2010;Dabboub, 2019) and only few studies addressed content-focused feedback (Olsen and Raffeld, 1987; Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Ashwell, 2000; Hubais and Dumanig, 2014; Shobeiry, 2020). Another issue is that most of these studies have explored the effects of WCF on accuracy development (Semke, 1984; Kepner, 1991; Sheppard, 1992; Ashwell, 2000; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Chandler, 2003; Hyland, 2003; Bitchener and Knock, 2008, 2009, 2010;) with scant attention spared to how it influences other aspects of writing such as writing complexity, and studies that did, (Robb et al., 1986; Sheppard, 1992; Chandler, 2003; Van Beuningen et al., 2012; Cheng and Zhang, 2021) could not reach any firm conclusions, for example, Robb et al., (1986) reported a significant positive effect of indirect feedback on one of their complexity measures. Sheppard (1992), on the other hand, found a negative effect of corrective feedback on structural complexity. Similarly, Chandler (2003), using holistic ratings of text quality, concluded that WCF did not affect the complexity of L2 students' writing. The same holds for Van Beuningen et al., (2012) who found that WCF did not lead to simplified writing in either of their post-tests. More recently, Cheng and Zhang (2021) reported that WCF had favourable effects in terms of increasing the number of words in writing in the short term and the long term. However, the results showed no significant effects of WCF in students' syntactic complexity, lexical density and diversity, or content and organization quality. Given that researchers tend to be divergent over which type of written corrective feedback is more effective for different aspects of writing, the current study shifted the focus from comparing the effectiveness of form-focused and content-focused feedback to comparing these types of feedback to each other in terms of accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity.

Another concern in recent research on WCF is the need for more research on how learners respond to WCF and calls for more ecologically valid and longitudinal studies on individual learners' responses to WCF (Van Beuningen, 2012; Ferris, 2013; Bitchener and Storch, 2016; Goldstein, 2016; Storch, 2018). This study, therefore, responds to this call by using quantitative methods to examine the differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback in terms of the changes of accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity, and then using qualitative methods, which include focus groups and individual interviews to provide insights on how individual EFL learners differently respond to their teacher's WCF (form/content); identifying the factors that may affect learners preferences; the difficulties that may occur when handling

teacher's WCF with a consideration of the students' wants and needs about the way they want teachers deliver WCF. The study is also conducted in a real-classroom setting to ensure ecological validity and examined students' writing changes longitudinally (14 weeks).

In addition, this study addressed different writing aspects (accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity) in order to test the potential trade-off relationship among these variables. According to Skehan's Trade-off Hypothesis (1998), L2 learners' attentional resources are limited and they can only attend to one specific dimension of language in performing a task (e.g. complexity, accuracy). That is, any improvement in one area of language production occurs at the expense of others. Skehan (1998) also argued that L2 learners might find it difficult to pay equal attention to language and meaning of L2 production; as a result, they might prioritize one over the other. From this perspective, it could be predicted that learners who receive form-focused feedback, for example, may allocate their attention to the accuracy of their production and they probably have a restricted capacity to process linguistic complexity and content complexity. Conversely, learners who receive content-focused feedback may direct their attention to the content of their production and may induce little attention to other aspects of language (accuracy, syntactic complexity).

Finally, this study, as Van Beuningen et al., (2008; 2012) studies, also tested Truscott's (2001; 2007) claim that learners are more responsive to non-grammatical errors than grammatical errors by categorizing students' errors in this study to grammatical and non-grammatical errors.

2.11 Conclusion

This chapter reviewed and discussed some early and recent works on written corrective feedback. It also addressed the major issues that have been considered by corrective feedback researchers from both pedagogical and SLA perspectives. This includes the relative effects of different types of written corrective feedback-, the factors influencing written corrective feedback, the potential negative side-effects of written corrective feedback. Furthermore, this chapter presented the core of this study, considering further issues such as the influence of form and content WCF on different aspects of writing mainly accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity. In addition, the chapter analyzed learners' preferences and views towards feedback, the factors influencing their preferences and the difficulties students' encounter while processing feedback.

In the next chapter, there will be a discussion on the current research methodology, where the research design, methods and procedures for the data collection and analysis will be explained in details.

Chapter 3 Research methodology

3.1 Chapter overview

This chapter describes, explains and justifies the research design and the specific procedures employed in this study. It starts by identifying the objectives and the research questions. Then, it describes the research design, the participants and the research instruments (writing tasks, focus groups, individual interviews). Next, it gives detailed information about the intervention. This includes the teaching and the feedback procedures along with the teaching approaches used in the intervention. After that, the chapter outline the ethical procedures followed by a detailed discussion of the quantitative and the qualitative data analysis.

3.2 Objectives and research questions

The primary aim of this study is to explore the difference between two types of feedback on L2 writing. Particularly, it aims to compare form-focused feedback and content-focused feedback in terms of students' grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity over time. In addition, this study will also try to find out students' attitudes to the types of feedback they received and identify any difficulties students encounter as they handle their teacher's feedback. The second aim is to investigate the learners' preferences towards the types of feedback they received. In particular, it also aims to explore whether students experience with teacher's feedback assisted them to reduce the pitfalls they face with writing. Furthermore, the study aims to explore the type of feedback students preferred the most. In order to achieve these objectives, the study is guided by the following research questions:

1) Are there differences in grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?

2) Are there differences in syntactic complexity between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?

3) Are there differences in content complexity between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?

4) What are students' attitudes towards these different types of feedback?

   d) Did the students face any difficulties when processing teacher's feedback?
   e) Which type of feedback do they prefer?
   f) What do students want from the teacher's feedback?

3.3 Research design

Research designs are “procedures for collecting, analysing, interpreting and reporting data in research studies” (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007:58). In other words, it is an overall plan, which outlines how an investigation will take place. Particularly, it shows how data will be collected, what instruments will be employed, how these instruments will be used and the intended means for analysing the collected data. Accordingly, Durrheim (2002) defines a research design as “ a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research” (2002:29). In educational research, there are different types of designs that are commonly used by researchers: quantitative, qualitative or what is variously called multi-methods (Brannen, 2017), multi-strategy (Bryman, 2006), mixed methods (Creswell, 2003; Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003) or mixed methodology (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 1998). The quantitative method relies on statistical procedures for data analysis; whereas, the qualitative method relies on the descriptive narrative for data analysis (Berrios and Lucca, 2006). With a mixed method design, however, researchers combine methods from the quantitative and qualitative research approaches in a single research study (Creswell, 2003; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Johnson et al., 2007; Dörnyei, 2007; Bryman, 2008) in order to reveal a comprehensive picture and “to develop a strong understanding of the research problem or questions and, as well, to overcome the limitations of each ” (Creswell, 2014:215).

Since the purpose of mixed methods research is to develop an in-depth understanding of a complex phenomenon from different angles and to provide elaborate and comprehensive findings that are triangulated from multiple methods (Dörnyei, 2007), mixed methods research is deemed to be the most appropriate research design for the present study because it helps the researcher to address the objectives of the study. In other words, the use of the quantitative data offers a comprehensive understanding of teachers’ feedback when considering the differences between form and content focused feedback in terms of the changes in students’ accuracy and complexity. On the other hand, the qualitative data (focus groups/individual interviews) helps to gain insights into students’ responses, attitudes and perceptions towards the different types of feedback. This combination of multiple data sources, analysis and processes ensures that the researcher have greater evidence to address a research question of interest than if the researcher uses mono-method. Moreover, the ability to associate quantitative and qualitative methods allows triangulation. The latter, therefore, will strengthen the findings of the study (Jack and Raturi, 2006).

The following section will provide further details about this research design and the reasons why it is more appropriate in this study in comparison to other research designs.

3.3.1 Mixed method design

In recent years, combining quantitative and qualitative methods in the same study has gained a considerable attention in research (Bryman, 2006). This methodological approach is recognized as the third methodological movement (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009) or the 'third research paradigm' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Several definitions for mixed methods have emerged over the years. The earliest definition came from writers in the field of evaluation and it has emphasized the use of at least one quantitative method and one qualitative method, where neither type of method is inherently linked to any particular inquiry paradigm. (Greene et al., 1989: 256). Recently, however, mixed method design has developed to the point where it becomes a stand-alone methodology with its own worldview, vocabulary, techniques and strategies (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010). With regard to this, Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) suggested an elaborated definition for mixed methods research.

> *Mixed methods research is a research design with philosophical assumptions as well as methods of inquiry. As a methodology, it involves philosophical assumptions that guide the direction of the collection and analysis and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases of the research process. As a method, it focuses on collecting, analysing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches, in combination, provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone*
>
> (Creswell and Plano clark, 2007: 05*)*

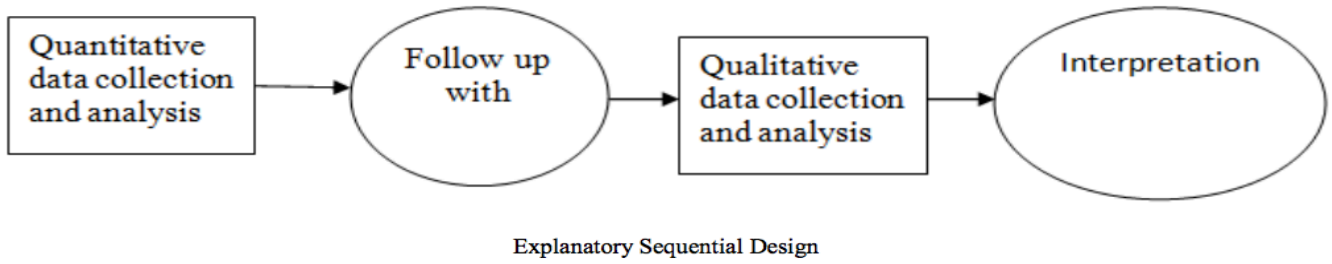
This definition suggests that mixed method research involves both collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. However it is not enough to just collect and analyse quantitative and qualitative data; they need to be combined or mixed in some way so that together they form a more complete picture of the problem than they do when standing alone. The basic premise behind this is that combining more than one approach offers a better understanding of the research problems (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2007) because researchers are given permission to use all of the tools of data collection available rather than being restricted to the types of data collection typically associated with qualitative research or quantitative research (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Moreover, there is a wide consensus among researchers that this combination enables researchers to 'offset' the respective weaknesses of these two analytical methodologies by taking advantage of their joint strengths to provide a 'complete [ness]', and 'comprehensive' picture" (Bryman, 2008: 91). This means that in quantitative research, for example, the voices of participants are not directly heard. Further, quantitative researchers are in the background, and their own personal biases and interpretations are seldom discussed. Therefore, qualitative research makes up for these weaknesses. On the other hand, qualitative research is seen as

deficient because of the personal interpretations made by the researcher, the ensuing bias created by this, and the difficulty in generalizing findings to a large group because of the limited number of participants studied. Quantitative research, it is argued, to not have these weaknesses (Creswell and Creswell, 2017). Furthermore, “mixed methods approach has a unique potential to produce evidence for the validity of research outcomes through convergence and corroboration of the findings” *(*Dörnyei, 2007: 45).

Creswell (2011) suggested six types of mixed method design: the convergent parallel design, the explanatory sequential design, the exploratory sequential design, the embedded design, the transformative design and the multiphase design. First, the convergent parallel design occurs when the researcher uses concurrent timing to implement the quantitative and qualitative strands during the same phase of the research process, prioritizes the methods equally, and keeps the strands independent during analysis and then mixes the results during the overall interpretation. Second, the explanatory sequential design occurs in two distinct interactive phases. This design starts with the collection and analysis of quantitative data, which has the priority for addressing the study’s questions. This first phase is followed by the subsequent collection and analysis of qualitative data. The second, qualitative phase of the study is designed so that it follows from the results of the first, quantitative phase. The researcher interprets how the qualitative results help to explain the initial quantitative result. Third, the exploratory sequential design also uses sequential timing; however, the exploratory design begins with and prioritizes the collection and analysis of qualitative data in the first phase. Building from the exploratory results, the researcher conducts a second, quantitative phase to test or generalize the initial findings. The researcher then interprets how the quantitative results build on the initial qualitative results. Fourth, The embedded design occurs when the researcher collects and analyzes both quantitative and qualitative data within a traditional quantitative or qualitative design. In an embedded design, the researcher may add a qualitative strand within a quantitative design, such as an experiment, or add a quantitative strand within a qualitative design, such as a case study. This supplemental strand is added to enhance the overall design in some way. Fifth, The transformative design is a mixed methods design that the researcher shapes within a transformative theoretical framework. All other decisions (interaction, priority, timing, and mixing) are made within the context of the transformative framework. Finally, The multiphase design combines both sequential and concurrent strands over a period of time that the researcher implements within a program of study addressing an overall program objective. This approach is often used in program evaluation where quantitative and qualitative approaches are used over time to support the development, adaptation, and evaluation of specific programs. (2017:70-72).

The current study, as presented in figure 3-1, followed an explanatory sequential design, which consists of two phases. The first phase consists of collecting quantitative data and the second phase consists of collecting qualitative data to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results. A sequential explanatory design was used so data from the focus groups could help explain the quantitative results for the purpose of complementarity (Greene et al., 1989). The data were connected and the quantitative phase helped inform the qualitative phase. This connection happened in two places. The first connection of the quantitative and qualitative phase was the use of the quantitative results to create the focus group questions. The second connection was the mixing that happened after the qualitative data were collected and analysed.

Figure 3-1 A visual illustration of explanatory sequential design



Creswell and Creswell (2017:69)

3.3.2 Rationale behind mixed method design

A number of rationales justify why a mixed method approach was used in this study. A primary justification is its potential to generate an enriched and enhanced understanding of the research problem through explanation, elaboration, illustration because “the quantitative or qualitative approach, each by itself, is inadequate to best understand a research problem” (Creswell, 2014:20), For instance, highlighting the differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback and the changes in different aspects of students’ writings, in this study, is not sufficient to figure out learners’ responses and attitudes towards the feedback they received over this period; therefore, using focus group and individual interviews would help to refine, extend or explain the general picture of the investigated phenomenon (Subedi, 2016). Second, triangulation is another reason for adopting a mixed methods approach in this study. Cohen et al., (2002) defined triangulation as “an attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behavior by studying it from more than one standpoint’’ (2011:195). Denzin (1970) outlined four different forms of triangulation: 1. Data triangulation: involves time, space and persons. 2. Investigator triangulation involves multiple researchers working on an investigation. 3. Theory triangulation involves using more than one theoretical scheme to interpret a phenomenon. 4. Methodological triangulation involves using more than one tool to gather data, such as combining the use of a survey, interviews and documents in a single piece of

research. The current study opted for the methodological and the data triangulation. The methodological triangulation, as mentioned earlier, draws on the use of quantitative and qualitative approaches for the data collection and analysis in order to answer different questions; whereas, the data triangulation involves the use of different data resources such as focus groups and individual interviews.

3.4 Participants and sampling

The participants of the study were two intact classrooms (N=69) of first year undergraduate students who were attending the Written Expression course during the first semester of the academic year 2019-2020 at the department of English (University of Ghardaia, Algeria). The students in class one received feedback on form (N=37) whereas the students on the other class received feedback on content (N=32). These students have been learning English as a second foreign language for seven years. Formally, they started to study English at the middle school for four years and for three years at the secondary school. According to students' previous transcripts of records, all of them have been taught English under the same teaching approach (CBA) *(See section 1.4.2),* the same books and the same circumstances. Moreover, English is not the students' natural communicative environment. Therefore, they had little opportunities to use it outside the classroom compared to French, the first foreign language, which is widely used in daily life conversations.

3.4.1 The participants' educational background

The Algerian pre-tertiary educational system consists of three cycles, notably primary (lasting for 5 years), middle (lasting for 4 years) and secondary (lasting for three years). The first nine years of schooling, comprising the basic education cycle, is mandatory for all children (usually age six and above). During this period, pupils are taught mainly in standard Arabic, while French is introduced as a foreign language in the third year of primary education. English, as a second foreign language, however, is introduced only in the first year of middle school and continues till the third year of secondary school as a compulsory subject.

In the middle school level, English is taught for three hours and half per week; whereas, French, is taught for four hours and half per week. This could be due to the fact that French is the first foreign language, while English has the status of second foreign language. Moreover, French is part of daily life conversations as it is used by most of people in their ordinary speech compared to English, which is restricted to classroom use only (Chelli, 2012). In the secondary school level,

however, the time allotted to teaching English varies between literary and scientific streams and their sub-branches as demonstrated in the following table:

Table 3-1 Time allotted for English language teaching in Algerian secondary schools

Level	Common core	Stream	Weekly time load
1AS	**Literary**	/	4 hours
	Scientific	/	3 hours
2AS	**Literary**	Literature and philosophy	4 hours
		Foreign Languages	5 hours
	Scientific	Experimental/Math/TM/Economy and Management	3 hours
3AS	**Literary**	Literature and philosophy	4 hours
		Foreign Languages	4 hours
	Scientific	Experimental/Math/TM/ Economy and Management	3 hours

With regard to the teaching of writing, developing learners' written competences, both in middle and secondary school levels, is one of the major goals of the CBA as described by the National Curriculum (interact orally in English, interpret oral and written messages, produce oral and written messages) (*Teacher's Book Getting Through*, 2006:04)

Although these competences give primacy to the oral skills because they are stated as the first competencies that the CBA seeks to develop; however, the writing competencies are also important under this approach and are developed progressively from middle school to secondary school. In the middle cycle, for example, learners are trained in their first years to acquire spelling and syntactic knowledge and are taught writing strategies based on suggested models. In their final year (4th year) in middle school, learners are expected to have attained a degree of writing competence which allow them to produce written messages in terms of length and complexity sufficient to express their ideas and opinions; to use correct punctuation, capital letters; to use a correct language, free of errors, respecting coherence and cohesion; to produce a coherent message and to organize their ideas according to a plan, chronology and logic *(Document d'Accompagnement Du Programme de 4ème Année Moyenne,* 2005: 77). In the secondary cycle, learners continue to develop their writing competence through a number of tasks and activities which enable them to express their opinions, give reasons and present arguments in real-life tasks, such as writing reports, brief articles, formal and formal letters and the ultimate focus is learning – doing outcome, namely the project which shows students' competencies such as the command of language and strategies acquired throughout the units- using different genres necessary in real-life situations (Chelli, 2012: 195).

In light of the above, the reason why first year undergraduate students were selected as subjects of this study is because they are expected to have received an adequate instruction of writing,

which enable them to produce an acceptable piece of writing using different genres. Besides, first-year writing courses introduce students to some of the requirements of paragraph and essay writing, and place emphasis on the development of writing techniques of paragraph and essay writing such as (outlining, cohesion, word order, organization of ideas, topic sentences). Yet, the participants were asked to produce an initial piece of writing, which will serve as a baseline measure to their overall writing quality.(See the next chapter)

3.4.2 Sampling

To collect quantitative data and gain insights about students' overall writing quality before the intervention takes place, all the students in the two intact classrooms participated in this study (N=69). These students were asked to produce one piece of writing per week during the intervention (14 weeks) and have all received either feedback on form or feedback on content during this period. However, only thirty students from the total of the 69 students participating in this study were selected as a sample for the detailed analysis of students' writings. According to Creswell (2012), the estimate number of the sample in educational research is approximately 15 participants in each experimental group (2012:146). Although larger samples give larger power; however, for practical considerations, it was unmanageable for the researcher to analyse different aspects of writing (grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity) of all the texts produced by 69 students because of time constraints. Moreover, the data gathered was taken from those students who completed the tasks and whose written texts were relevant for the detailed analysis (i.e., good handwriting, non-plagiarized essays).

To collect qualitative data, two focus groups and four individual interviews were conducted using a purposeful sampling. This type of sampling is commonly used in qualitative research to identify and to select information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). This involves the selection of groups or individuals that are especially knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2011) and are also able to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate, expressive, and reflective manner (Bernard, 2002).

Twenty students from the thirty students who were initially recruited for the quantitative data were selected for the two focus groups (each group consists of ten participants and has received either feedback on form or feedback on content). The selection of these students was based on the following criteria: (a) students whose initial writing contains different types of errors; (b) students whose writing showed negative change during the intervention (i.e., error rate increased

between pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test; (c) students whose writing showed positive change during the intervention (i.e., error rate decreased between pre-test, mid-test and post-test; (d) students whose error rate did not change between pre-test, mid-test and post-test. These criteria were selected to gain a detailed analysis of the students' responses and attitudes towards form and content-focused feedback; to identify the difficulties (if any) the students encountered when processing teacher's feedback, to explain the potential factors behind these difficulties and to highlight the students' preferences and their suggestions for the ways teachers should deliver feedback.

However, although the focus groups helped me to get insights about students' experiences with teacher's feedback from different perspectives, I have noticed that some of these students provided more interesting details than the others. Therefore, I decided to select four students from each focus group to take part of individual interviews. These students engaged actively in the discussion, they showed either positive or negative change in their writing and they provided the researcher with more details about their experiences with the provided feedback. These criteria enable the researcher to be thoroughly immersed in the data by showing these students samples of their written texts.

3.5 Research instruments

3.5.1 Written tasks

Different writing tasks were administered to the students in this study. This includes collaborative written activities in the classroom following the process genre approach as well as individual homework tasks which contribute to the assessment of the writing course. Therefore, all the tasks were not designed particularly for the purposes of this study, but rather for their appropriateness to the teaching context. (See sample of the tasks in *Appendix B*).

The students in both intact classrooms were clearly informed that these tasks are part of the curriculum and that homework written tasks are part of the final assessment of the writing course. As mentioned in the first chapter, teachers have the choice to decide which methods to use for the evaluation of this module. This includes: oral feedback only (no mark), providing a grade in the test scores of both semesters or asking students to prepare a research portfolio or written essays. In this study, the teacher evaluated the students' progress in this module using intensive written essays which were provided as homework due to time restrictions. In other words, the writing course is taught twice a week and each session lasts for one hour and half, which is not sufficient for the teacher to fulfill his lesson objectives and to follow the students

throughout the different stages of the writing process. Nevertheless, to reduce the risk of bias, the students in both classrooms were given identical short tasks in the classroom which reinforce their understanding about the process of producing a piece of writing and prepare them for the homework. Moreover, one third of the total instruction time in each second session of the writing course was spent on preparing the students for the next week's assigned composition to ensure that they have fully understood the task requirements.

The students were also well informed that their homework tasks are used for my research only if they agree and sign the consent form. I have also explained to them that my role is not an examiner only but also an assistant (helping the students along), a resource (being available when students need information or guidance) and an evaluator (saying how well things are going so far). The purpose of these homework tasks is to compare students' writing changes between the group who received form-focused feedback and the group who received content-focused feedback.

As far as the selection of the topics of the written tasks, the tasks were varied but they were based on, students' interest in the topic, students' level of knowledge about the topic and their familiarity with the topic (Benton et al., 1995). In fact, this is an important factor that L2 researchers should consider when selecting tasks especially in pre-post tests research designs. In other words, if the writing task in the pre-test is considerably different from the post-test in terms of overall structure, vocabulary, and topic, it would not be meaningful to compare the students' writing of different types of texts (Mackey and Gass, 2005).

Although the students were taught different types of genres (Argumentative, narrative, descriptive) during the intervention; however, the homework tasks were mainly argumentative based on students' choice. The students through a classroom discussion with the teacher preferred to write argumentative essays because they are familiar with compared to other types of essays (narrative, descriptive, etc.). In addition, students were given the freedom to suggest topics of their interest and were given the necessary instruction and guidance on how to write and organize an argumentative essay. The written tasks were collected, photocopied, and the original ones were returned to the students. It is important to mention that for the purpose of the study, students were asked to produce a different type of essay in the post-test (narrative essay) in order to find out whether any changes can be noticed in students' writings when the genre is different.

In the pre-intervention essay (week one), students were asked to write about the reasons for choosing English as a major at university and this task was used, as mentioned earlier, as a baseline measurement of the overall writing quality of the entire population (Students in both

classrooms), in the second pre-test (week two, beginning of the intervention), students chose to talk about this topic: *"Some people think that using internet has more advantages than disadvantages. By contrast others think that Internet has more disadvantages than advantages. Which part of people do you agree with? Why?".* In the post-test (week 6), students were asked to write about this topic *"recall a moment that made proud of yourself?".* In the delayed post-test *(week 14),* the students chose to talk about this topic *"Some people think that the government should be responsible for solving the pollution which results from heavy traffic, to what extent do you agree?"*

3.5.2 Focus groups

Focus groups are one of the valuable tools for collecting qualitative data (Dilshad and Latif, 2013). It involves "a small group of people, usually between six and nine in number, who are brought together by a trained moderator (the researcher) to explore attitudes and perceptions, feelings and ideas about a topic" (Denscombe, 2007:115). In focus groups, the participants interact with each other rather than with the interviewer while the researcher plays various roles, including that of moderator, listener, observer, and eventually inductive analyst (Krueger and Casey, 2000). Further to this, focus groups also allow researchers to explore issues in more depth, and to collect large amount of data in a short period of time. In other words, one participant has responded to a question, the rest of the group can respond to the same question by expressing their agreement, adding comments or explaining why they disagree, rather than each responding to the question individually (Lederman 1990). However, data can be challenging to analyse at times with a number of participants talking and potentially talking at the same time. Another drawback with focus groups is that the interaction between participants, could lead to non-participation or dominance of some individuals (Cohen et al., 2011). In this case, the moderator, as mentioned before, plays an important role by giving equal opportunities to the participants instead of the group discussion being dominated by one individual.

As mentioned earlier, twenty students from the total of the 69 students participating in this study were selected as a sample to participate in two focus groups. These participants were selected based on the criteria mentioned in *(See section 3.4.2).* The participants were informed before the interviews take place to express their ideas with the language they feel comfortable with in order to facilitate more open responses and to ensure that the participants will feel comfortable when speaking to each other. The same procedures were applied to the students in the individual interviews.

3.5.3 Individual Interviews

There are three fundamental types of interviews that are widely used in qualitative research: structured interviews; semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews (Patton, 2002; Dörnyei, 2007). These types are generally differentiated by the way questions are prepared. In the structured interview, questions are planned in advance and during the interview, there is no deviation from the questions that are in the interviewer's list. On the other hand, the unstructured interview questions are not planned in advance and they offer a degree of freedom to the interviewer to develop questions related to the research themes and to the emerged issues during the interview. The semi-structured interview questions occupy the middle ground because they are neither fixed like the structured interview nor free like unstructured interview (Patton, 2002; Dörnyei, 2007) According to Patton (2002), semi-structured interview "provides topics or subject areas within which the interviewer is free to explore, probe, and ask questions that will elucidate and illuminate that particular subject. Thus, the interviewer remains free to build a conversation within a particular subject area" (2002: 343).

The individual interviews conducted in this study were semi-structured. The reason for using this type of interviews is to collect in-depth data about the issues investigated in this study (Cohen et al., 2007). Moreover, It allows the exploration of issues beyond the answers of the interviewees by asking questions about the emerged ideas and thoughts during the interview (Dörnyei, 2007; Bryman, 2008). To gain further insights about the issues investigated in this study, guided questions were prepared (*See Appendix J* for student interview guides). All of these questions were open ended to allow "the respondents to say what they think and to do so with great richness and spontaneity" (Oppenheim, 1992:81). In addition, the questions were not evaluative and they focused on the issues explored in the study (Cohen, et al., 2007; Dörnyei, 2007). For example, how students responded to the types of feedback they received, what difficulties students faced with the provided types of feedback, what type of feedback they preferred, and how students want to receive feedback. During the semi-structures interviews, the students were also provided with samples of their written texts so they could further explain the errors they made.

3.5.4 Researcher's and teacher's diaries

In addition to the above mentioned research instruments, researcher and teacher diaries are used in this study not to answer specific research questions but rather to serve as a memory aid which help the researcher in the observation and analysis. Overall, research diaries can be seen as an integral part of the development of the researcher and the construction of research knowledge (Engin, 2011). They are often described in research methodology literature as a way to log

decisions made and write down reflections on the research process (Gibbs, 2007; Silverman, 2005). According to Richards and Lockhart (1995), there are two purposes for keeping a diary. The first is to record ideas and events so as to reflect on them later. This supports the author's memory and can inspire new ideas for use in future lessons. The second purpose is that “the process of writing itself helps trigger insights about teaching. Writing in this sense serves as a discovery process” (Richards and Lockhart, 1995:07). Similarly, Dörnyei (2007) points out several advantages for using a research dairy. First, it helps researchers unobtrusively to access a way of tapping into areas of people lives that are otherwise inacccessible. Second, dairies help researchers to elicit participants’ own descriptions and interpretations of events and behaviours. Third, researchers can receive ongoing background information which is an important point in clarifying ambiguous aspects. Finally, providing a self-report by using a diary helps decrease inaccuracy in the memory of researchers, keeping the important aspects in a systematic way, so it subsequently easy to retrieve and recount events afterwards (2007:156).

3.6 Pre-intervention phase

Before the treatment takes place, the students in both intact classrooms (N=69) were asked to complete a short written task about their reasons for choosing English as a major at university. The output of this task serves as a baseline measurement for the students’ overall writing quality and was selected for three major reasons. First, it was a short text and students can complete within the limited time. Second, the topic of the task was based on students experience so the problem of students’ lack of background knowledge about a topic was minimized. Lastly, this type of writing (autobiographical), According to Smoke (2005), is an effective way to begin the course because it helps teachers to identify the strengths and the needs of their students (2005: 03).

Some researchers in L2 writing tended to use pre-tests (e.g. Robb et al., 1986; Semke, 1984) to assess students’ proficiency level before proceeding with the data collection, However, researchers such as (Guo, 2015; Van Beuningen et al., 2012) argued that these tests (pre-test) does not give a complete picture of the participants’ overall proficiency level because it targets only the structures which are the focus of the study. Bearing these in mind, I decided to use Hamp-Lyons and Henning (1991) multiple traits marking scheme to examine the students’ overall writing quality before the intervention takes place. This scoring method included the following criteria:

a. *Communicative Quality:* The writer's skill in communicating the message to the reader. This corresponds to ‘an overall impression’ judgment in holistic scoring
b. *Interestingness:* Creativity and novelty.
c. *Referencing:* Use of concrete examples and relevant illustrations showing cultural awareness.

d. *Organization*: Structure of the message.
e. *Argumentation:* How convincing the writer is.
f. *Linguistic accuracy*: Correctness of grammar, spelling, and punctuation so as not to impede communication.
g. L*inguistic appropriacy*: Strength of grammatical and lexical features chosen.

(Hamp- Lyons and Henning, 1991: 344)

In addition to the fact that this multiple-trait scoring scheme does not particularly target the aspects addressed in this study, this scoring scheme was also used because it is appropriate for L2 language learners. Furthermore, based on the underlying concept of this scheme "context-appropriate and task-appropriate criteria" (Hamp-Lyons, 1991:247), it gives an opportunity for teachers to investigate writing aspects related to content (communicative quality, interestingness, referencing, argumentation, organization) without ignoring form-related aspects (linguistic accuracy, linguistic appropriacy).

3.7 The intervention: Teaching and feedback procedure

3.7.1 The teaching procedure

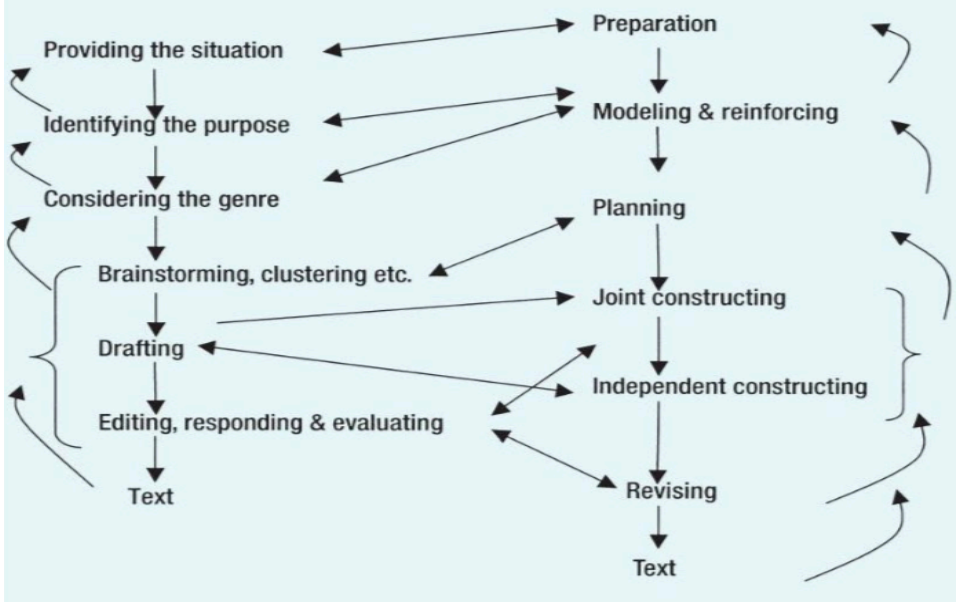
The teaching procedure, in this study, followed the process–genre approach. This approach acknowledges that learning can take place in a social situation and reflects a particular purpose, and that learning can happen consciously through imitation and analysis which facilitates explicit instruction (Badger and White 2000). The purpose of following the Process-Genre Approach in this study is to enhance collaboration and interaction between the students and to give them equal opportunities to engage actively with the writing tasks through pair and group works. In addition, this approach is compatible with the principles of the Competency Based approach and the LMD system in the sense that both of them are based on social constructivism i.e., learning occurs through social interaction and learners are encouraged to be creative by using newly constructive knowledge through the process of social interaction (Chelli, 2012).

The use of the process genre approach in this study involves six stages. First, the teacher starts preparing the students to write by asking them to set up a social situation or context for the writing and placing it within a specific genre (argumentative, narrative, descriptive). For example, in one of the sessions, I provided the students with a situation: "Modern technology" and I asked them talk about the impact of modern technology on people's lives. Students, then, started to provide me with information about the positive and the negative impact of modern technology. In this way, the information provided helped the students to get involved in the topic that will be presented to them next. Then, the teacher suggests a model of the genre (eg.an argumentative written text about the impact of modern technology on people's lives) and gives the students the

opportunity to consider the social purpose of the text in order to raise their consciousness that writing occurs in a social context and situation, and that a piece of writing is to achieve a certain objective. It should be noted that these two stages focus on developing students' awareness of genre (narrative, descriptive, argumentative) and are part of the genre approach. However, the following stages are part of the process approach and it starts with planning. In the planning stage, the teacher discusses how the text was structured and how its organization develops to accomplish its purpose using meaningful activities which help the students to activate their schemata about the topic. This includes brainstorming, discussing and reading related materials. Having planned their writing, both the teacher and students work together to start composing a text. While doing so, the teacher helps the students with the writing processes such as brainstorming, drafting, and revising, whereas, the students contribute information and ideas. The teacher, then, writes the generated text on the blackboard to use it as a model for students to refer to when they work on their own compositions. At this point students have examined model texts and have jointly constructed a text in the genre. They now undertake the task of composing their own texts on a related topic. The teacher in this stage can either set a class time to help the learners in the process of writing or can be continued as homework assignment. Before publishing, the students should acquire feedback either from their peers or from their teacher and do revision and editing to finalize their writing. The final activity would, then, be publishing in which the students submit their writing to the teacher as the final product (Ghufron, 2016; Belmekki and Sekkal, 2018). (See sample of the lesson plan in *Appendix A*)

In the following, Badger and White (2000), illustrates how these six steps interact in a recursive way with themselves and with other writing skills.

Figure 3-2 Application of the process genre approach (Badger and White, 2000)



By following the stages described above, I aimed to draw students' attention to the different aspects of writing in general and academic writing in particular in order to help students develop their writing skills and become better writers. Moreover, it is important to mention that

researchers in some teaching contexts are not allowed, under any circumstances, to change or modify the content of the Department's modules. However, in the context of this study, I was allowed, after a negotiation with the head of the department and other teachers, to suggest some changes in some sections of the content of the writing module. The reason why I decided to modify these sections is because most of them were grammar oriented while there is another course for the teaching of grammar. Teaching grammar lessons both in the writing module and the grammar module might be boring for the students. Moreover, it might distract students' attention from the different aspects and processes of writing.

3.7.2 The feedback procedure

The students involved in this study received two types of feedback treatment. The first group received indirect, coded feedback which meant that their errors were underlined or circled on their pieces of writing using codes to indicate the type of the error. In addition, the form-focused feedback in this study did not target particular grammatical errors but it covers all the grammatical and non-grammatical errors found in the written texts (i.e., unfocused). On the other hand, the second experimental group received feedback on content (Organization, communicative quality, interestingness, referencing, argumentation). I have also supplemented these types of feedback with comments in the margin, and generalized comments at the end of the essay. These comments often praise students and motivate them to write. For example, at the bottom of the text sometimes I write expressions like *"In this assignment, I see that you successfully have managed to develop a good essay, well done!"; "This week you were able to reduce many grammar errors, terrific progress".* According to L2 researchers (e.g. Gee, 1972;Lee, 2009;Amrhein and Nassaji, 2010; Zacharias, 2007) praise is useful in facilitating the students' writing development when compared to criticism. However, it should be noted that the praise used in this study was closely linked to actual text features, as suggested by Hyland and Hyland (2001) who believed that the wrong use of praise may affect negatively students' writing.

The procedure followed in delivering both types of feedback to the students was that every time the written assignments were collected, I went through all papers and read them carefully. After that, form focused feedback or content focused feedback was provided. Students in the form-focused group were corrected on all the errors of their writing (unfocused feedback). The reason for not targeting specific grammatical features is based on our assumption that the participants of this study have already a sufficient linguistic background that they can draw upon for understanding the feedback they receive given that they have been studying English grammar for seven years. According to Bitchener and Ferris (2012) unfocused feedback can be more efficient and effective for learners who have already developed relatively high level of accuracy, because

they allow for the treatment of a greater range of errors in a short period of time. Student in the content-focused group, on the other hand, were corrected on content related features using selected traits from the multiple-trait marking scheme of Hamp-Lyons (1991) and Hamp-Lyons and Henning (1991). The traits are: i). Communicative Quality: The writer's skill in communicating the message to the reader. This corresponds to an "overall impression" judgement in holistic scoring. ii) Interestingness: Creativity and novelty. iii) Referencing: Use of concrete examples and relevant illustrations showing cultural awareness. iv) Organization: Structure of the message. v) Argumentation: How convincing the writer is. Each of these traits was scored on a nine-band scale with one being the lowest score and nine the highest *(the complete list of band descriptors are reproduced in Appendix F).*

To ensure that students have understood the teachers' feedback on form as well as content, the teacher-researcher distributed in the first class small papers for both classrooms. The form-focused classroom received small papers which included a description of the list of codes used in the correction of their writing (e.g., WW: wrong word; SV: subject-verb agreement, etc.). In addition, they were invited to access resources (dictionary, grammar book, Internet) to look up for their errors and to find out why this word or that phrase was underlined or circled. Similarly, the content-focused classroom received small papers which explain the areas that have been assessed on. These small papers were explained and discussed with the students in the class and were used mainly to help the learners during the process of drafting outside the classroom. Nevertheless, to guarantee that the students understood the feedback provided by the teacher, the teacher-researcher also dedicated five to ten minutes before each class to highlight the form and content mistakes that occur recurrently in students' essays in order to make students aware of them when they produce new pieces of writing. In addition the students were asked to approach the teacher either in the classroom or via email whenever they find difficulties to understand the teacher's feedback

Table 3-2 The intervention and the data collection procedures

Weeks	Session one	Session two
Pre-intervention stage		
Week 1	Consent and information	Pre-writing (overall writing quality)
The intervention		
Week 2-13	• Students in both groups received identical instruction and identical tasks in the classroom using the process genre approach • 5 minutes discussion at the beginning of each instruction about the common mistakes found in students' essays • No revised draft are required	**Pre-test selected for analysis (week 2)** Regular instruction continuous Homework tasks are provided Feedback on form or feedback on content are provided **Post-test selected for analysis (week 6)** Regular instruction continuous Homework tasks are provided Feedback on form or feedback on content are provided
The end of the intervention		
Week 14	Focus groups +Individual interviews	
	A delayed post-test selected for analysis	

3.7.3 The researcher's role

The researcher's role in this study could be seen as "being a teacher and being a researcher" (Brumfit and Mitchell, 1989:10). Considering the quasi-experimental design used in this study, the researcher's role in this study seems to contradict with the typical role of the experimental researcher, i.e., the researchers set up and control situations but they do not participate in the activities they are studying. However, the roles of being a teacher and a researcher have several advantages for data collection and analysis. Anderson (2002) agreed that "for practitioners, who act daily in the setting . . . [their] knowledge is deeper, more nuanced, and more visceral" (2002: 23).

Although being a teacher and a researcher may seem challenging; however, it helped me to gain critical insights about the intervention from an insider perspective. First, given that I have studied and taught under the same educational system, I became familiar with the context of the study in terms of the university regulations, the teaching approaches, and the general practices linked to teaching and assessment. This helped me to carefully design the data collection procedures and to select appropriate tasks relevant to the participants' educational context. Second, this dual role enabled me to become fully involved with the participants about whom the information is being collected and for whom the outcomes become a benefit and justification for the research (Gregson and Jeffery, 2004).

To avoid any potential bias during the intervention, I attempted to teach both classrooms in the same way to ensure that, apart from the different types of feedback they received, the writing instruction was as similar as possible. Moreover, I employed different teaching strategies to

reinforce course content and to promote collaborative working. Also, the decision to use both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, triangulation of the research instruments and the careful procedures for data collection and data analysis were intended to minimize any potential researcher bias in the analysis of the findings. Therefore, I think that approaching this research from both an insider and outsider perspectives was beneficial to the data collection and analysis without causing tension between the role of the researcher and the teacher.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Adhering to various ethical guidelines in the literature (Dörnyei, 2007; Cohen et al., 2011; Creswell, 2012; Thomas, 2013), ethical considerations were addressed at an early stage of research. This was done by gaining access approval from the targeted university and applying and uploading all the essential forms through University of Southampton ERGO online system. Upon my first contact with the students, I introduced myself as a researcher and a teacher at the department. I also explained my research and the motivation of carrying out this study. The students were informed that intensive written tasks are part of the assessment of the writing course and that their written texts will be used for my research only if they agree and sign the consent form. As mentioned in the first chapter, intensive written tasks are tools for continuous control and assessment of students' progress in the writing course. Therefore, students were asked to produce these tasks not for the research purposes only, but because they are part of their final assessment. In addition, the students were also given the Participant Information Sheet to read and were asked to approach me if they require any further explanation or clarification before signing the Consent Form. Participants' privacy was maintained and secured through two forms; anonymity and confidentiality which require researchers to separate their identity for their responses (Neuman, 2014). During the focus group, the participants were shown the recording device that would be used to record the interviews and were informed that their answers would be recorded only for research purposes and that only the researcher would have access to them. The participants also were assured that all the data gathered would be destroyed once the research had been completed. Furthermore, in cases, where any amendments were necessary to the module's content, this was done after consulting and negotiating this with the head of the department and obtaining the necessary approval.

3.9 Quantitative Data analysis

To analyze the quantitative data of the study, three writing samples from each student participating in this study were selected for analysis (total: 3 x 30= 90 samples). This was mainly

done through conducting a pre-test, a post-test and a delayed post-test as previous research such as Bitchener et al., (2005) and Bitchener and Knoch (2009). The length of the students' texts ranged from 250- 540 words. All of them were originally handwritten and were, then, transcribed to a word processor document. Then I created three files in the computer under the names: accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity. Then, students transcribed essays were copy pasted in these files to analyze each aspect of writing separately.

Given that the selected samples of writing were read multiple times during the feedback procedure and during the analysis of students' overall writing quality prior the intervention, I became familiar with these texts and this, in turn, helped me to easily go through the students' texts and identify students' errors. Nevertheless, to avoid the subjectivity of marking, I collaborated with another teacher from the same department who is already familiar with this type of feedback, to perform an inter-rater reliability check for grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy. The results obtained from Cohen's kappa test indicated that there is a high inter-reliability between the researcher/teacher and the second rater's marking (0.94; 0.87; 0.97) for the form-focused group's pre-test; post-test and delayed post-test and (0.93; 0. 80; 0.81) for the content-focused groups' pre-test; post-test and delayed post-test respectively. These results represent a perfect agreement (Landis and Koch, 1977).

For syntactic complexity, Lu (2010) reported that the L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyzer (L2SCA) has a reported correlation ranging from .834 to .1.000 between the automated syntactic complexity measures and those produced by human raters. Finally, for content complexity, the teacher researcher randomly selected and recoded 15% of the data after two months from the first correction in order to determine inter-reliability. The reason for not collaborating with another teacher in this measure is based upon Silva and Kei Matsuda (2008) assumption that teachers need to code feedback according to their intentions. In other words, when feedback is coded by someone other than the instructor who gave the feedback, the second rater may misinterpret the intention of the instructor. This is particularly the case of content feedback in this study which might not be clear for some teachers as opposed to form-focused feedback which is a common practice among EFL teachers. The results of the inter-rater reliability revealed almost a perfect agreement between the first and the second corrections with (1.00; 0.96; 0.97) for the form-focused group's pre-test; post-test and delayed post-test and (1.00; 1.00; 0.98) for the content-focused groups' pre-test; post-test and delayed post-test respectively.

3.9.1 Grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy

Following previous research that used error ratio to measure accuracy (e.g., Chandler, 2003;

Truscott and Hsu, 2008; Van Beuningen et al., 2012), The grammatical measure was calculated by counting the number of errors in grammatical categories divided by the total number of words in a text. The results were, then, multiplied by 100 (i.e., Number of grammatical errors/ total number of words x 100). Grammatical errors included are as follows:

Grammatical errors	**Examples**
Incorrect verb tenses *Wrong use of the tense*	When I was in high school, I study English every week.
Subject-verb agreement. *Wrong structure of subject- verb agreement.*	Technology help people to be connected to the world.
Preposition *Wrong use or missing preposition*	…and her experience was different than mine.
Possession *Wrong or missing use of "S"*	The governments's efforts to reduce the pollution……
Articles/determiners *Wrong use or missing of (a/an/the/this / that/these and zero article).*	The difference I have found between school and university is the independent learning.
Singular/ plural pronouns *Wrong use of singular or plural pronouns*	There are many way to prevent this.

Similarly, non- grammatical measure was calculated by counting the number of non-grammatical errors divided by the total number of words in a text. The results, then, were multiplied by 100 (i.e., Number of non-grammar errors/ total number of words x 100). Non-grammatical errors included are as follows:

Non-grammatical errors	**Examples**
Misspelled words	However, despite its benifits and positive aspects, it has its dark side.
Unclear sentences (Wordiness)	Those are the people that get that life doesn't please go the way we plan.
Punctuation. • *Overuse of commas* • *Punctuation in Compound/ Complex Sentences* • *Closing Punctuation* • *Capitalisation*	• **It** helps a lot, and socialize people, and encouraging them to express themselfes, and connect them together. • Although its expansion is guiding us many people think that its just a waste of time. • The first step for me is to start using the language • At University, group projects are required…
Word choice	Internet effected our life in several ways.

3.9.2 Syntactic complexity

As mentioned in the previous chapter, this study used L2 Syntactic complexity analyzer (L2SCA) developed by Lu (2010) to measure the syntactic complexity of students' written texts. This

software calculates the frequencies of 9 distinct units of linguistic analysis: words (W), sentences (S), verb phrases (VP), clauses (C), T-units (T), dependent clauses (DC), complex T-units (CT), coordinate phrases (CP), and complex nominals (CN). Based on these linguistic units, 14 syntactic complexity measures are produced. All of which have been suggested by previous research as relevant to L2 writing proficiency. As Lu (2010) pointed out, each of these measures focuses on the following categories: Length of production, sentence complexity, subordination, coordination, particular structures. (See the full descriptions of these measures in table 2.1). However, Norris and Ortega (2009) warned against the redundant use of measures that indicate very similar or the same complexity subtypes. In other words, they believed that using measures which fall under the same quality of language might lead to redundancy in measurement. For example, if the researcher wanted to measure the amount of coordination, it is sufficient to choose only one coordination sub-type such as coordinate phrases per clause (CP/C) or coordinate phrases per T-unit (CP/T) or sentence coordination ratio (T/S). Although these measures represent different denominators; however, they fall under one umbrella, i.e., they all reflect coordination. Therefore, employing all these measures in one study might lead to redundancy.

Following the recommendations of Norris and Ortega (2009), only distinct and non-redundant measures that capture different dimensions of L2 writing were employed. This include the three length measures; the sentence complexity measure; one measure of subordination; one measure of coordination and one measure of structure as illustrated in the following table:

Table 3-3 The measures of syntactic complexity used in this study

Measure	Code	Formula
Length of production units		
Mean length of Sentence	MLS	#of words/#of sentences
Mean Length of T-unit	MLT	#of words/ #of T-units
Mean Length of Clause	MLC	#of words/ #of clauses
Sentence complexity		
Clause per sentence	C/S	#of clauses/#of sentences
Amount of subordination		
Dependent Clause per Clause	DC/C	#of dependent clauses/#of clauses
Amount of coordination		
Coordinate Phrases per Clause	CP/C	#of coordinate phrases/ #of clauses
Particular Structures		
Complex nominals per Clause	CN/C	#of complex nominals/ #of clauses

The use of an automated text analysis to measure the differences of syntactic complexity between the form-focused feedback group and the content-focused feedback group, in this study, is relevant to the participants (university students) because it was originally developed and tested using writing samples produced by second language learners who have little or no difficulty with

producing grammatically complete sentences. Therefore, its usefulness cannot be readily extended to writing samples that contain a large portion of grammatically incomplete sentences, such as those produced by beginner-level learners (Lu, 2010). Moreover, it provides a detailed analysis of syntactic complexity as it incorporates different syntactic complexity measures, allowing us to gain an in-depth understanding of the changes in students' syntactic complexity over the course of the study.

Before the analysis of syntactic complexity takes place, I have thoroughly scrutinized the students' written texts and checked punctuation issues. Run-on sentences (sentences which include two independent clauses but are joined improperly) were revised and those missing a final punctuation mark were punctuated. Essays were then converted to plain text format (txt: a type of text that is free of computer tags, special formatting, and code) then zipped and put into two files; each file comprises the set of essays belonging to each group (Content feedback /form feedback). After that the two files were uploaded one by one to the batch mode interface in the online syntactic complexity analyzer software, and the received output was a CSV file containing the 14 syntactic complexity measures computed. Finally, the results obtained from the software were imported into a spreadsheet for the selection of the appropriate measures for the study and for further statistical analysis.

3.9.3 Content complexity

Given that content complexity in this study refers to the topical progression and also covers the development of coherence through the development of Rheme and Theme in a written discourse, content complexity in this study was analysed based on Lautamatti's Topical Progression (1987), which includes four patterns of topical developments: a parallel progression, a sequential progression, an extended parallel progression, and an extended sequential progression *(See section 2.1.3.1)*. According to Schneider and Connor (1991), the use of topical progression in L2 writing is a promising step, which helps L2 researchers and teachers to examine student writing by going beyond the sentence to the discourse level. This has, in turn, encouraged the evaluation of coherence based on textual features and the revision of texts with faulty or inappropriate topic progression (1991: 423).

To analyse content complexity using Lautamatti's (1987) framework in this study, Schneider and Connor's (1990) coding guidelines were employed. These coding guidelines include the following:

I. T-units (T):

- Any independent clauses and all its required modifiers.
- Any non-independent clause punctuated as a sentence (as indicated by end punctuation).

- Any imperative.

II. Parallel Progression (PP):

- Any sentence topic that is exactly repeated, is a pronominal form, or is a synonym of the immediately preceding sentence topic.
- Any sentence topic that is a singular or plural form of the immediately preceding sentence topic.
- Any sentence topic that is an affirmative or negative form of the immediately preceding sentence topic (e.g., artist, no artists).
- Any sentence topic that has the same head noun as the immediately preceding sentence topic (e.g., the ideas of scientists, the ideas of artists; the contributions by scientists, the contributions made by artists).

III. Sequential Progression (SP):

- Any sentence topic that is different from the immediately preceding topic, that is, not (1)-(4) in PP.
- Any sentence topic in which there is a qualifier that so limits or further specifies an NP that it refers to a different referent (e.g., a nation, a very small, multi-racial nation, referring to two different nations).
- Any sentence topic that is a derivation of an immediately preceding sentence topic (e.g., science, scientists).
- Any sentence topic that is related to the immediately preceding sentence topic by a part whole relationship (e.g., these groups, housewives, children, old people).
- Any sentence topic that repeats a part but not all of an immediately preceding sentence topic (e.g., science and art, science, art).

IV. Extended Parallel Progression (EPP):

- Any sentence topic that is interrupted by at least one sequential topic before it returns to a previous sentence topic. (Schneider and Connor, 1990: 427).

Based on Schneider and Connor's (1990) guidelines, students' essays were divided into T-units. After dividing the texts into T-units (indicated by slashes), they were numbered and topics were identified and underlined in each T-unit. Then, the progressions were charted according to the guidelines. The following table is an example of a progression plot.

Table 3-4 Plot of progression of a sample essay

T-unit No	Depth Topic No.	Topic No
1	Internet	1
2	Some people	2
3	Internet	1
4	Internet	1
5	Internet	1
6	Parameter	1
7	Some of the advantages of Internet	3
8	it	1
9	social media	4
10	Internet	**1**
11	People	**5**
12	one of the main disadvantages of Internet	**6**
13	They	**6**
14	The problem of spanning	**7**
15	people	**5**
16	Internet	**1**

The table shows that T-unit 1 has the word "Internet" as the idea being talked about. "Internet" is then labelled as Topical Depth 1 and also Topic 1. Throughout the essay there are other instances in which

"Internet" or its equivalent idea is mentioned, so words such as "parameter" and pronouns such a "it", "its" fall under Topical Depth 1. T-unit 2 has "Some people" as its topic, so it is labelled as Topical Depth 2 and indented to the right of Topical Depth 1. It also serves as Topic 2 since it is a different topic from "Internet". T-units 3, 4, 5 all have one and the same theme or topic in three consecutive clauses, and utilize **parallel progression** in thematic development. T-unit 7 has "Some of the advantages of Internet" as its theme or topic, which falls under Topical Depth 3 and Topic 3. It is indented to the right of Topical Depth 2. T-units (3,4,5,6,8,10,16) have the same topical depth but Topical Depth (2,3,4,5,6,7) come in between them. This is coded as **extended parallel progression**. Following Lautamatti's topical progression framework, there is one instance of parallel progression (T-units 3, 4, 5), one extended parallel (T-units 8,10, and 16) and **no clear incidences of sequential or extended sequential progressions.** There are seven new topics introduced in the paragraph: "Internet", "Some people", "Some of the advantages", "social media", "people especially children", "one of the main disadvantages", "the problem of spanning".

3.9.4 Statistical procedures

In order to provide accurate answers to the research questions, a number of statistical procedures were followed using IBM SPSS VERSION 26. These include descriptive statistics, repeated measures ANOVA and MANOVA and independent t-tests. According to Lowie and Seton (2013), "The choice of the statistics relies on the number and the type of variables as well as on the relationship between the variables" (2013: 22). Therefore, the first step was to identify the variables of the study (the dependent and the independent variables). The independent variables are the two feedback treatments (feedback on form and feedback on content); whereas, the dependent variables are the aspects of writing that were addressed in this study (grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity). However, it is worthy to mention that although the relationship between these variables may appear as a cause-effect relationship i.e., dependent variables are the variables which can be tested and measured in an experiment, the independent ones are variables that have the effect on the dependent ones (Lowie and Seton, 2013). Yet, in this study, the aim is to compare the differences that occur in grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity between students who received feedback on form and those who received feedback on content (i.e., no cause-effect relationship is intended).

Although the descriptive statistics are appropriate in identifying the changes that occur in the aspects of writing addressed in this study; however, they cannot determine the relative importance of the differences between the two feedback groups (form vs. content). Thus, using parametric tests such as repeated measures ANOVA and MANOVA was inevitable. According to Lowie and Seton, (2013) the parametric tests are very restrictive and require a number of assumptions before applying them. Therefore, a series of statistical procedures were performed

in order to meet these assumptions and check the appropriacy of the tests chosen. Checking the assumptions for this study included tests of normal distribution, as well as the tests of Sphericity (Lowie and Seton, 2013; Pallant, 2014). First, parametric tests assume that the data approximately follows a normal distribution. Repeated measures ANOVA and MANOVA require his assumption to be met. If the assumption of normality is not valid, the parametric tests results will be unreliable.

There are various methods for normality testing, but given that the sample size in this study is small (n <50), the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and the Shapiro-Wilk's ***W*** test were appropriate for this data set size (Lowie and Seton, 2013). These tests assess the normality distribution of scores, where a non-significant result (p>.05) indicates normality (Pallant, 2014). *Appendices J, K, L* show that the population was normally distributed, as the level of significance was p > .05, which means the data was approximately normal distributed and the repeated measure ANOVA and MANOVA parametric tests can be performed.

Another substantial assumption in repeated measure ANOVA and MANOVA is Sphericity assumption. Sphericity is the condition where the variances of the differences between all combinations of related groups (levels) are equal (i.e., no difference within and between variables). Mauchly's test was performed to test the assumption of sphericity in which the null hypothesis was rejected if *p value* was *< .05*. This means that the assumption of Sphericity was met for the data set of this study and that the *F- statistic* is reliable and can be used to determine statistical significance. However, if data violate the Sphericity assumption, corrections must be applied to the degrees of freedom (df), so that that a valid critical F-value can be obtained. One way to do that is by multiplying the degree of freedom by one of the Sphericity estimates such as Greenhouse-Geisser. This adjustment tool could make the degrees of freedom smaller, then the *value F* becomes more conservative (Lowie and Seton, 2013; Pallant, 2014).

Repeated measures ANOVA and MANOVA were used in this study to explore the differences between students who received form-focused feedback and students who received content-focused feedback. While it would appear possible to run repeated measures ANOVAs instead of MANOVA, however, given that the syntactic complexity and content complexity in this study were measured on several subscales; the set of syntactic complexity measures and content complexity measures were considered as different variables with the group condition (i.e., form and content feedback groups) formed the "between-subject factor"and the three-time stages (pre-rest, post-test, and delayed post-test) formed "within-subject factor".

It is important to consider that repeated measures ANOVA and MANOVA are omnibus tests for statistics that only detect whether there is a difference but does not provide information about the source of these differences (i.e., which group within each factor was significantly different

from the other). Thus, running a post hoc test such as *Bonferroni Correction*, is necessary to determine where the difference were located, However, given that this study includes only two independent groups (form vs. content), it was not possible to run this post hoc test because it is used with more than two independent groups. Alternatively independent t-tests were used whenever a significant difference is found in the repeated measures ANOVA and MANOVA.

3.10 Qualitative data analysis

As mentioned earlier, 20 students (ten from each class) were selected from the entire population (N=69) to conduct focus groups and other 4 students (two from each class) to conduct the individual interviews. These students were selected based on the criteria mentioned in *(See section 3.4.2).* Therefore, a thematic analysis method was used to analyse the obtained data from the focus groups and the individual interviews. This method "is based on the creation of themes that are described in terms of categories. The category or code is a concept that describes some recurring feature of the data" (Gibson, 2010:303). Applying this method would help to generate codes, categories and themes from the students' interviews data, and these themes and categories are related to answer the questions of the study (Mile and Huberman, 1994).

Before conducting the focus groups as well as individual interviews, each participant was asked to sign a consent form showing that he/she agreed to participate in the interview. In addition, each participant was told that he/she had the right to stop the interview whenever they felt uncomfortable. Moreover, the participants were asked for their permission to audio record the interview, and were informed that all the data gathered from the interviews would be treated confidentially and used for the study purposes only (Flick, 2007; Dörnyei, 2007). The participants were also given the freedom to use the language they felt comfortable with to answer the interview questions in-depth given that they speak more than one language (Algerian Arabic, standard Arabic, French and English).

The audio-recorded data of the focus groups and the individual interviews were organised by creating files for each student in my laptop. Next, I listened carefully to the data recorded from each focus group and each individual interview to ensure that the interviews' written transcriptions corresponded accurately the actual words, phrases and sentences of the participants (Rubin and Rubin, 2012). Then, the data were transcribed to help me gain more details about the interviews and start analysing the ideas generated by the interviewees about their experience with the feedback they received during the term. For the purpose of this study, I used what Elliott (2005) called 'cleaned transcripts', which means that the focus is only on "content of what was said…[to] make the material easy to read" (2005: 52). The transcripts were carefully stored into word files (Dörnyei, 2007) which were anonymously named by using letters

and numbers i.e., participants' names were anonymised by labelling them according to their groups of feedback type and numbering them according to their performance during the interview. For example, ***SF1*** referred to a student from the form-focused who initiated the discussion. **SC 1** referred to a student from the content-focused group who initiated the discussion (Gibbs, 2007). However, students in the individual interviews where given random names to avoid confusion.

The next stage in the qualitative data analysis is the translation of data**.** Translation is required in this study because all the interviews of this study were conducted in different languages (English, French, Algerian Arabic). The participants, as mentioned earlier, were informed to express their ideas with the language they feel comfortable with in order to elicit as much information from them as possible. The translation of the data also enables me to become familiar with the data and to start the initial stages of the analysis process (Gibbs, 2007; Flick, 2007). After the translation of the transcripts into the English language, I have read transcripts more than one time. This process helped me to immerse myself with the data and become familiar with the content (Braun and Clarke, 2006). During reading and rereading the transcripts, notes were taken about key issues and ideas and thoughts were written. All these processes made the researcher aware of the data content and assisted him "to develop tentative ideas about categories and relationships" (Maxwell, 2005: 96).

After generating a list of initial ideas and notes from the data set, I started the coding data phase. According to Boyatzis (1998), "Codes are the most basic segment, or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon"(Boyatzis, 1998: 63). Coding data is the most significant phase of qualitative data analysis (Mile and Huberman, 1994). It "involves attaching one or more keywords to a text segment in order to permit later identification of statement" (Flick, 2007:105). During this phase, all the data of the interviews was explored and coded deductively based on some themes derived from the literature review and the research questions, as well as, inductively based on the data itself. The data was coded by highlighting the extracts and segments, and the codes were written in the margin as shown in Table 3.5. Some of the extracts were assigned with more than one code because they were relevant to those codes. In the final stage of coding, the whole data set was coded and organised, and a list of codes was made. These codes were the underpinning for creating the themes and subthemes.

Table 3-5 Sample of coding

Profile	Data	Initial codes
SC2	**I:** Do you think that teacher's corrective feedback helped you to develop your writing skill? **SC1**: "I wished the teacher gave me feedback on my grammatical mistakes" I: can you tell me why? **SC1**: " I don't think feedback on content helps me in this stage because I still have difficulties to write correctly"	Sudent likes form feedback student doesn't like feedback on content Student has difficulties
SC1	**I:** How did you find feedback on content? I think feedback on content is more important thing, content feedback helps me to write long essays"	Student prefers feedback on content **content feedback is beneficial**

After coding all the data set, themes and subthemes were identified."A theme is a pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organises the possible observations and at maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (Boyatzis, 1998: 04). It "captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun and Clarke, 2006:83). The codes generated in the previous phase were assembled together. Then these codes were analysed, and the relationship between them was identified. After that, a set of themes and sub-themes was devised and the coded data extracts were collated within these themes as demonstrated in the following tables.

Table 3-6 Sample of creating themes (Example one)

Participant	Coded Text	Initial code	Interpretation	Themes
Nihad	"I know my writing is terrible and I have many mistakes because in secondary school we didn't study English a lot because we study it only one or two time in the week….When the teacher shows and corrects our mistakes it is better than just underline the error and let the student waste time to go and look for how to correct his errors….I think it is good if we revise our mistakes and write another essay and the teacher corrects it because if we do not correct it then we repeat it again…..I Think if classmates correct each other, we do not feel shy because we are all students"	Lack of English instruction direct feedback Suggested strategy Suggested strategy	The student made many mistakes because they did not receive enough instruction of English The student find direct correction of errors more helpful The student wants the teachers correct her revised drafts The student wants her paper to be corrected from her classmates	Students' prior experience with teacher's feedback Students' preferences to different types of feedback What the students want from their teachers What the students want from their teachers

Table 3-7 Sample of creating themes (Example two)

Participants	Coded text	Initial codes	Interpretation	Themes
Nadji	When I receive your feedback, I put it in front of me and I re-read my essay and then I produce another one with no mistakes.	Suggested strategy	Students produced a revised draft after they received teacher's feedback	How students responded to teacher's feedback
Zouhir	I preferred if the teacher gave me feedback on my grammatical mistakes, I don't think feedback on content helps me at this stage	Preference	Students prefer to receive feedback on form	Which type of feedback do students prefer
Bouchra	The feedback of the teacher sometimes mention the mistakes that I don't know how to correct because we did not really study them	Difficulties	She faced difficulties with form-focused feedback	Students face difficulties when processing teacher's feedback
Nihad	if teachers were providing us with feedback in the middle and the secondary school, we can write very essays now	Preferences	Students prefer to receive feedback in their early years of English learning	What the students want from their teachers

3.11 Concluding remarks

This chapter presented and discussed the methodology followed in this study. It began with the objectives and the research questions. Then, it described the research design, the participants and the research instruments (writing tasks, focus groups, individual interviews, teacher's and researcher's diaries). Next, the chapter presented detailed information about the intervention. This includes the teaching and the feedback procedures along with the teaching approaches used in the intervention followed by a discussion of the ethical procedures. Finally, the chapter fully discussed the quantitative and qualitative data analysis procedures. The following two chapters will present the results and the findings of the quantitative and qualitative data

Chapter 4 Results of the quantitative data

4.1 Chapter overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results obtained from the quantitative data. These results would help to understand the findings of the qualitative data. The chapter first starts with the results obtained from the students' prewriting scores. Then, it identifies the differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback in terms of the changes in grammatical, non-grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity and the content complexity of learners' new pieces of writing over time. This chapter ends with a summary of the main findings.

4.2 Pre-intervention results

As discussed in the methodology chapter, students in both classrooms (N=69) were asked to produce initial writing tasks in order to check that the participants in both groups begins the treatment with the same writing proficiency level. These tasks were analysed using the multiple traits marking scheme of Hamp-Lyons and Henning (1991). This multiple-trait scoring of writing allows a focus on overall writing quality because it covers content and form related features. The scale is based on the following sub-scales: communicative quality, interestingness, referencing, organization, linguistic accuracy and linguistic appropriacy. Each of these sub-scales was marked on a nine-band scale, with one being the lowest and nine the highest score (See *Appendix F*). The sores obtained from the data were, then, analysed through SPSS using an independent t-test. According to the results of the independent t-test in table 4-1, the mean score for each of the traits in the content-focused group varied from 4.44 to 5.63**.** The highest mean scores were gained in communicative quality and organization. The students' lowest mean scores were on linguistic appropriacy (4.44) and linguistic accuracy (4.78). On the other hand, the pre-test scores of each of the traits in the form-focused group ranged from 4.62 to 5.30.The highest mean scores were gained in organization and linguistic accuracy and the lowest mean scores were on interestingness (4,62) and linguistic appropriacy (4,62).

The results from the independent samples test show that there was no significant difference between the mean scores on any of the seven traits in the pre-test ($p>0.05$). This suggests that the two groups of students were at the same writing proficiency before the treatment takes place.

Table 4-1 Independent t-test of pre-writing scores of the two classrooms.

	Groups (Pre-test)					
	CG (N=15)		FG (N=15)			
Traits of marking	**M**	**SD**	**M**	**SD**	**t**	**P**
Communicative Quality	5.63	.83	4.89	.93	3.41	.67
Interestingness	5.22	.75	4.62	.79	3.19	.52
Referencing	5.38	.83	4.92	.89	2.18	.45
Organization	5.53	1.04	5.30	1.02	.93	.92
Argumentation	5.31	.73	4.81	.96	2.39	.19
Linguistic accuracy	4.78	1.09	5.22	.94	.20	.76
Linguistic appropriacy	4.44	1.04	4.62	.86	.15	.80

4.3 Results of measuring grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy

RQ1: *Are there differences in grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?*

The first research question was to determine whether there were any differences in the grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy of students who received form-focused feedback and students who received content focused feedback before, during and after the intervention (pre-test, post-test, post delayed test).

4.3.1 Grammatical accuracy

Based on the criteria used for the selection of participants *(See section 3-4-2),* 30 students (15 students from each group) were chosen to compare the differences in the grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy. Three essays (Pre-test-post-test-delayed post-test) from each student were selected for analysis. Then, a two way repeated measures ANOVA was performed to examine the differences between the two groups.

4.3.1.1 Descriptive statistics

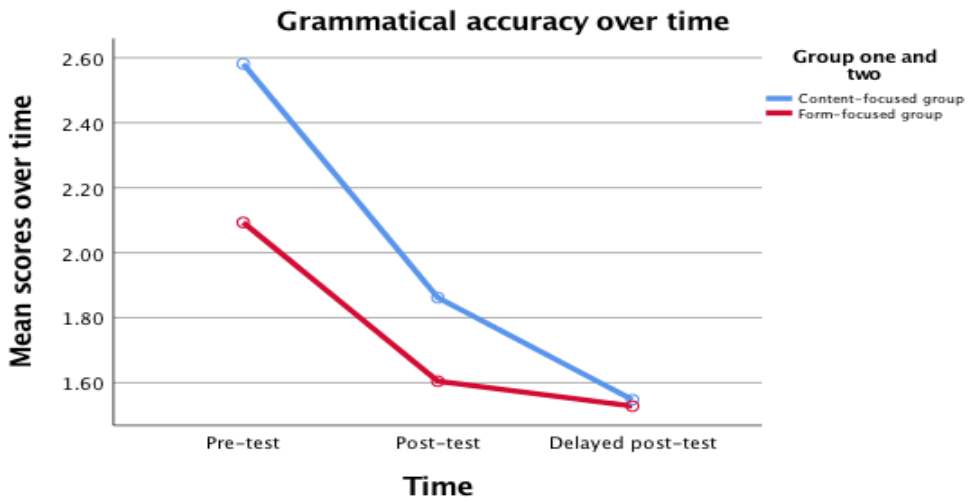
The descriptive statistics of the grammatical accuracy for both group conditions (content, form), classified per time of testing (pre, post, delayed-post tests) are illustrated in table 4-2. It can be understood from the data in the table 4-2 that students' overall grammatical accuracy of both group conditions varied over time, the mean scores were high in the pre-test (*M = 2.33, SD = 1.02),* which indicated that students' grammatical accuracy was low. On the post-test of the treatment, the mean scores reduced, and students' grammatical accuracy improved *(M = 1.73, SD = .56)*. Correspondingly, in the delayed post-test, the mean scores continue to reduce (*M= 1.53, SD = .58),* suggesting that students' grammatical accuracy is changing over time. However, a closer look at the table shows that the change in the grammatical accuracy is particularly noticeable with

the content-focused group who showed better changes in grammatical accuracy over time compared to form-focused group. The comparability is further displayed in figure 4-1, which better exhibit the differences between the form-focused group and the content-focused group feedback.

Table 4-2 Descriptive statistics of grammatical accuracy

	Groups	**M**	**SD**
Grammatical accuracy (Pre-test)	Content group Form group Total	2.58 2.09 2.33	1.27 .64 1.02
Grammatical accuracy (Post-test)	Content group Form group Total	1.86 1.60 1.73	.59 .52 .56
Grammatical accuracy (Delayed post-test)	Content group Form group Total	1.47 1.52 1.53	.66 .52 .58

Figure 4-1 Performance by the two groups in grammatical accuracy over time



4.3.1.2 Checking for Sphericity Assumption

Before running the repeated measure ANOVA, the Sphericity Assumption was checked, the data revealed that the assumption of Sphericity was violated, *X (2) = 17.08, p<.* 05. This means F statistics are positively biased rendering it invalid and increasing the risk of a type I error (i.e., the rejection of a true null hypothesis). The violation of Sphericity is serious for the repeated measures ANOVA tests, with violation causing the test to become too liberal (i.e., an increase in the Type I error rate). Therefore, determining whether Sphericity has been violated is very important. Luckily, to overcome the violation of Sphericity assumption, corrections have been developed to produce a more valid critical *F*-value (i.e., reduce the increase in Type I error rate). This is achieved by estimating the degree to which Sphericity has been violated and applying a correction factor to the degrees of freedom of the *F*-distribution . The correction that encountered to combat the violation of Sphericity assumption was Greenhouse Geisser. The results from adjustment was that *p = .68.*

Table 4-3 Assumption of Sphericity of the grammatical accuracy

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity[a] Grammatical accuracy					
Within Subjects Effect	**Mauchly's W**	**Approx.Chi-Square**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Eplison [b]**
					Greenhouse-Geisser
Time	.531	17.085	2	.000	.681

4.3.1.3 Grammatical accuracy differences between the two groups (form vs. content)

As described in the previous chapter, a two way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there is a significant difference between the grammatical accuracy of the content-focused feedback group and that of the form-focused feedback group over time. The results of the two way repeated measures ANOVA in table 4-4 revealed that there was no significant difference in grammatical accuracy between the two groups over time, [F (1, 28) = 1.38 p < .25; partial eta squared= .04] neither a significant time x Groups interaction [F (2, 56) = 1.30 p < .28; partial eta squared= .04]. This indicated that the form-focused feedback group and the content-focused feedback group performed similarly in grammatical accuracy in the pre-test, the post-test and the delayed post-test. In contrast, there was a significant main effect of time, [F (2, 56) = 16.48 p < .00; partial eta squared= .37], suggesting that there are differences among the three time intervals (pre, post, delayed-post test). From the means in table 4-2, it appears that the error rate was high in the pre-test (*M = 2.33, SD = 1.02),* then dropped in the post-test *(M = 1.73, SD = .56*) and the delayed post –test (*M= 1.53, SD = .58).* Figure 4-1 further explains these differences

Table 4-4 Two ways repeated measures ANOVA for grammatical accuracy

	Df	**Mean Square**	**F**	**P**	**Partial eta squared**
Between subjects					
Content vs. Form	1	1.46	1.38	.25	.04
Error	28	1.06			
Within subjects					
Time	2	5.21	16.48	.00	.37
Time x Groups	2	.411	1.30	.28	.04
Error	56	31			

4.3.2 Non-grammatical accuracy

4.3.2.1 Descriptive statistics

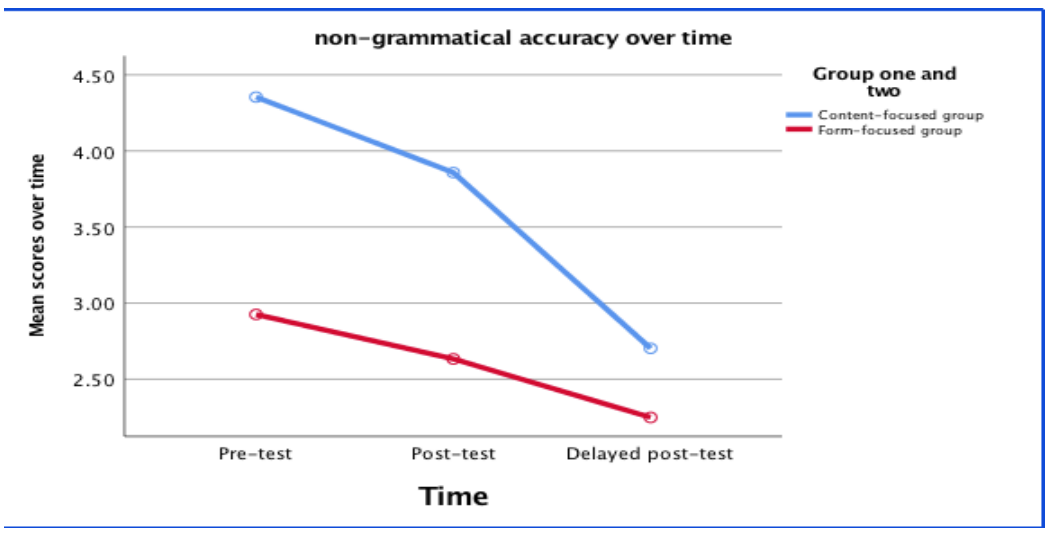
Table 4-5 displays the descriptive statistics obtained from the analysis of non-grammatical accuracy specified by group conditions (content/form) and time of testing (Pre, post, delayed

post). Overall, the table shows that the non-grammatical accuracy of the students differed over the three time points as the error rate of non-grammatical accuracy in the pre-test were high **(***M= 3.63, SD = 1.61)*, then, in the post-test, it became less than it was in the pre-test (*M= 3.24, SD = 1.57).* Similarly, in the post-test, the error rate reduced (*M= 2.47, SD = 1.07)*. However, it seems that content-focused group showed better changes over time compared to form-focused group.

Table 4-5 Descriptive statistics of non-grammatical accuracy

	Groups	M	SD
Non-grammatical accuracy (Pre-test)	Content group	4.35	1.88
	Form group	2.92	.85
	Total	3.63	1.61
Non-grammar accuracy (Post-test)	Content group	3.85	1.82
	Form group	2.63	.99
	Total	3.24	1.57
Non-grammatical accuracy (Delayed post-test)	Content group	2.70	1.17
	Form group	2.24	.95
	Total	2.47	1.07

Figure 4-2 Performance by the two groups in non-grammatical accuracy over time



4.3.2.2 Checking for Sphericity Assumption

The Sphericity assumption for non-grammatical accuracy was achieved. Table 4-6 shows the results of Mauchly's Test of Sphericity[a] which revealed that the assumption of Sphericity had not been violated, *X (2) = 2.143, p= .343.* The test revealed that the variances of differences were about the same and were not significantly different. Therefore, the F ratio can be reliable.

Table 4-6 Sphericity Assumption of non-grammatical accuracy

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity[a] **Non-grammar accuracy**					
Within Subjects Effect	**Mauchly's W**	**Approx.Chi-Square**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Eplison [b]**
					Greenhouse-Geisser
Time	.924	2.143	2	.343	.929

4.3.2.3 Non-grammatical accuracy differences between the two groups (Form vs. content)

Similar to grammatical accuracy, a two-way repeated measures ANOVA was performed In order to find out whether there is a difference in the non-grammatical accuracy of both groups (Form vs. content) over time. The results of the analysis show a statistically significant difference between both groups [F (1, 28) = 5.44, p > .02; partial eta squared= .163]. This suggests that both groups feedback (content vs. form) performed differently in the non-grammatical accuracy over time. The results also indicated a significant main effect of time suggesting that there was a change in learners' non-grammatical accuracy across the three time intervals [F (2, 56) = 20.59, p > .00; partial eta squared= .424] and a significant time x groups interaction [F (2, 56) = 3.88, p > .02; partial eta squared= .122], indicating that the groups performed differently from each other over time.

Table 4-7 Two ways repeated measures ANOVA for non-grammatical accuracy

	Df	**Mean Square**	**F**	**P**	**Partial eta squared**
Between subjects					
Content vs. Form	1	24.13	5.44	.027	.163
Error	28	4.43			
Within subjects					
Time	2	10.51	20.59	.00	.424
Time x Groups	2	1.98	3.88	.02	.122
Error	56	.511			

Given the significant results of the repeated measures ANOVA regarding the changes in non-grammatical accuracy over time, a post hoc pair wise comparisons with Bonferroni adjustment was required to determine where these differences truly came from; however, since this study has two groups only, post hoc pairwise comparisons, as mentioned in the previous chapter, were not possible. Alternatively, an independent t-test was performed. The results of the independent t-test revealed significant results between both groups in the pre-test and the post -test; however, no significant differences were detected in the delayed-post test.

Table 4-8 Results of independent t-test for non-grammatical accuracy

Independent Samples Test for non-grammatical accuracy

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
									95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Non-grammatical errors (Pre-test)	Equal variances assumed	12.331	.002	2.668	28	.013	1.42867	.53554	.33165	2.52568
	Equal variances not assumed			2.668	19.541	.015	1.42867	.53554	.30986	2.54748
Non-grammatical errors (Post-test)	Equal variances assumed	2.498	.125	2.284	28	.030	1.22467	.53624	.12622	2.32311
	Equal variances not assumed			2.284	21.619	.033	1.22467	.53624	.11143	2.33791
Non-grammatical errors (Delayed post-test)	Equal variances assumed	.203	.656	1.160	28	.256	.45400	.39152	-.34799	1.25599
	Equal variances not assumed			1.160	26.856	.256	.45400	.39152	-.34954	1.25754

4.4 Results of measuring syntactic complexity

RQ2: *Are there differences in syntactic complexity between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?*

The second research question addresses another aspect of writing that is syntactic complexity and it aims to analyze the differences in syntactic complexity performance among students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback across three time points. To do so, three essays (pre- post, delayed-post) were selected from each student from the same sample (15 students from each group). These essays, as explained in the previous chapter, were first read and reread multiple times to check punctuation and structural issues. This is an important step so that the software performs successfully. The essays, then, were converted to a plain text format (txt) and uploaded to the online Syntactic Complexity Analyser software. This software first generates sentences and identifies their constituent parts using the Stanford parser (a software that works out the grammatical structure of sentences) (Klein & Manning, 2003) then counts a number of syntactic units utilizing the Tree regular expression or Tregex (a software for matching patterns in trees) (Levy & Andrew, 2006). The analyzer primarily relies on the occurrences of the relevant production units generated from the parsed sample in order to compute 14 syntactic complexity measures.

To analyze the selected measures of complexity in this study, descriptive statistics were used to gain preliminary data about the various syntactic complexity measures (SCMs) used in the current study. Second, repeated measures MANOVA, was performed because the dependent variable (syntactic complexity) was measured on seven subscales; the set of SCMs were, therefore, considered as different dependent variables. Furthermore, the use of repeated measures MANOVA would help to determine whether there are significant differences between the groups over the pre, post and delayed post- tests.

4.4.1 Checking the Sphericity Assumption

Table 4.9 provides the results on the assumption of Sphericity of the syntactic complexity. The data revealed that the assumption of Sphericity had been violated with ***MLS*** (*X (2) =6.52, p>.* 05); ***MLC*** (*X (2) =10,07, p>.* 05), ***MLT*** (*X (2) =13.76, p>.* 05); ***CP/C*** (*X (2) =7.57, p>.* 05). This means F statistics are positively biased rendering it invalid and increasing the risk of a type I error (i.e., the rejection of a true null hypothesis). To overcome the violation of sphericity assumption, there was a need to modify the degrees of freedom *(df)* in order to obtain valid critical *F-values*. The correction that encountered to combat the violation of sphericity assumption was Greenhouse Geisser. The results from adjustment was that (MLS, *p = .82); (MLC, p = .76); (MLT, p = .71); (CP/C, p = .80) and* the *F* value became reliable.

Table 4-9 The Sphericity Assumption of syntactic complexity

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity[a]						
Syntactic complexity						
Within Subjects Effect	**Measures**	**Mauchly's W**	**Approx.Chi-Square**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Eplison[b]**
						Greenhouse-Geisser
Time	**MLS**	.785	6.526	2	.038	.823
	MLC	.689	10.072	2	.006	.763
	MLT	.601	13.766	2	.001	.715
	C/S	.962	1.055	2	.590	.963
	DC/C	.983	.471	2	.790	.983
	CP/C	.755	7.576	2	.023	.803
	CN/C	.953	1.286	2	.525	.956

4.4.2 Descriptive statistics

Table 4-10 summarises the descriptive statistics for syntactic complexity, listed by group conditions and time of testing (Pre-post-delayed post). In general, students' syntactic complexity rates of the two groups changed over time. According to the table, the mean score of the measures related to the length of production (MLS, MLC, MLT), subordination (DC/C), coordination (CP/C) and structure sophistication (CN/C) increased from the pre-test to the post-test. In contrast, the measure related to sentence complexity (C/S) showed a decrease in the mean score from the pre-test to the delayed post-test. The table also explains that there was a reduction in all the measures of syntactic complexity in the post-test. In addition, the table gives information about the performance of each group during the intervention. It can be seen that the syntactic complexity of the content and form feedback groups was approximately the same at the beginning of the experiment. However, there was a difference between both groups in the post-test and the delayed post-test.

Table 4-10 Descriptive Statistics for Length Measures across the groups

Length measures		Group A (Content)	Group B (Form)	Total
MLS (Pre-test)	M	30.85	30.99	30.92
	SD	16.23	8.97	12.88
MLS (Post-test)	M	31.03	27.22	29.12
	SD	16.86	6.83	12.79
MLS (Delayed Post-test)	M	39.07	30.27	34.67
	SD	26.20	16.92	22.13
MLC (Pre-test)	M	22.74	20.66	21.70
	SD	11.46	4.60	8.64
MLC (Post-test)	M	30.51	22.38	26.45
	SD	23.40	8.15	17.71
MLC (Delayed Post-test)	M	10.85	10.51	10.68
	SD	3.12	2.23	2.67
MLT (Pre-test)	M	10.85	10.51	10.68
	SD	3.12	2.23	2.67
MLT (Post-test)	M	9.91	8.66	9.28
	SD	2.89	2.78	2.68
MLT (Delayed Post-test)	M	13.92	11.52	12.72
	SD	7.49	4.65	6.25

As clearly seen in Table 4-10, content-focused group outperformed form-focused group in MLS from the pre-test to the delayed post-test. The difference is particularly noticeable between the two groups in the delayed-post test (Content G: *M*= 39.07, *SD*= 26.20; Form G: *M*= 30.27, *SD*= 16.92;). This suggests that content-focused group managed to produce longer sentences through time than the form-focused group.

Once again content-focused group outperformed the form-focused group in MLC throughout time (pre-post-delayed-post); the mean difference, nonetheless, is especially noticeable between both groups in the post-test (Content G: *M*= 30.51, *SD*= 23.40; Form G: *M*= 22.38, *SD*= 8.15). However, it can be observed from the table that both groups produced shorter clauses over time as the mean differences in both groups was large in the pre-test and reduced dramatically in the delayed post- test.

With regard to MLT a pattern of values similar to that of MLS was observed except that the mean differences between both groups was not large. Again content-focused group T-units were relatively longer than the ones written by students in the form-focused group. However, it can be noticed, that both groups produced shorter T-units from the pre-test to the post-test, but the mean of both groups increased in the delayed-post test.

Figure 4-3 Length of production units (MLS) over time

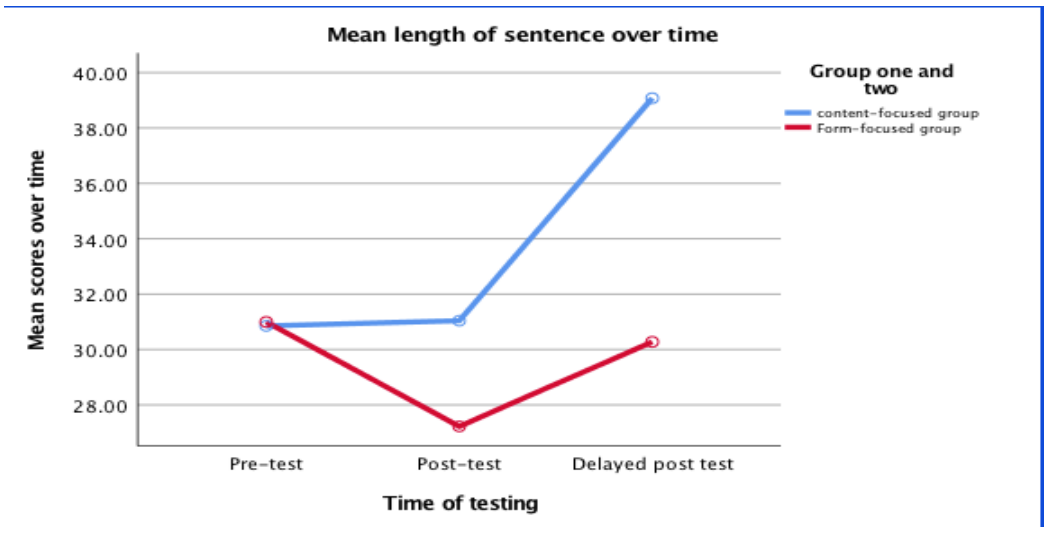


Figure 4-4 Length of production units (MLC) over time

Figure 4-5 Length of production units (MLT) over time

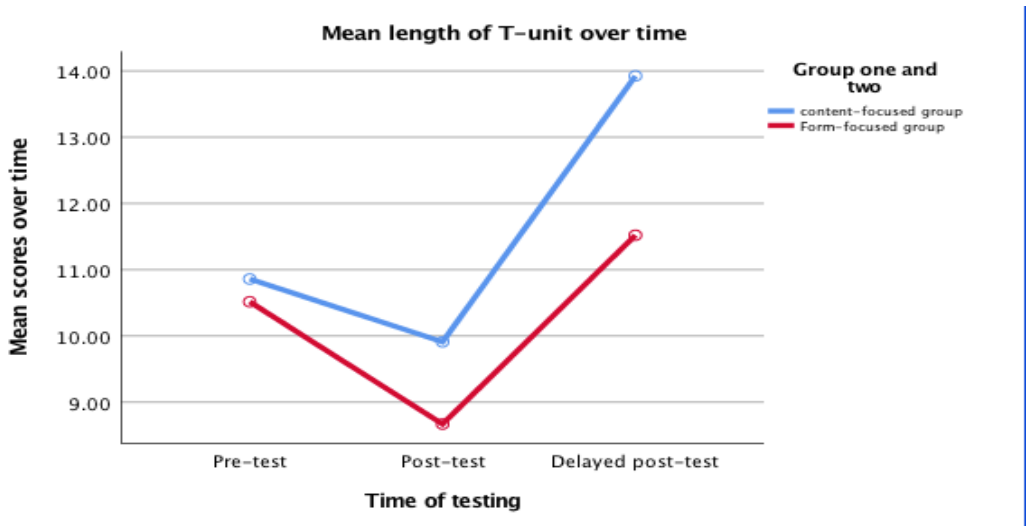


Table 4-11 Descriptive Statistics for Sentence Complexity Measure across the groups

Sentence complexity measure		Group A (Content)	Group B (Form)	Total
C/S (Pre-test)	M	2.57	2.88	2.72
	SD	1.17	.83	1.01
C/S (Post-test)	M	2.71	2.94	2.82
	SD	1.26	.63	.99
C/S (Delayed Post-test)	M	2.57	2.55	2.56
	SD	.96	.66	.81

Table 4-11 clearly shows that the mean difference between both groups was not large over time. Unexpectedly, form-focused group produced more complex sentences than content-focused groups from the pre-test to the post-test though the difference was not a big one, however, in the delayed post-test, it could be noticed that content-focused group managed to produce more complex sentences than the form-focused group (Content G: *M*= 2.57, *SD*= .96; Form G: *M*= 2.55, *SD*= .66) but, clearly, the mean difference was not large.

Figure 4-6 Sentence complexity (C/S) over time

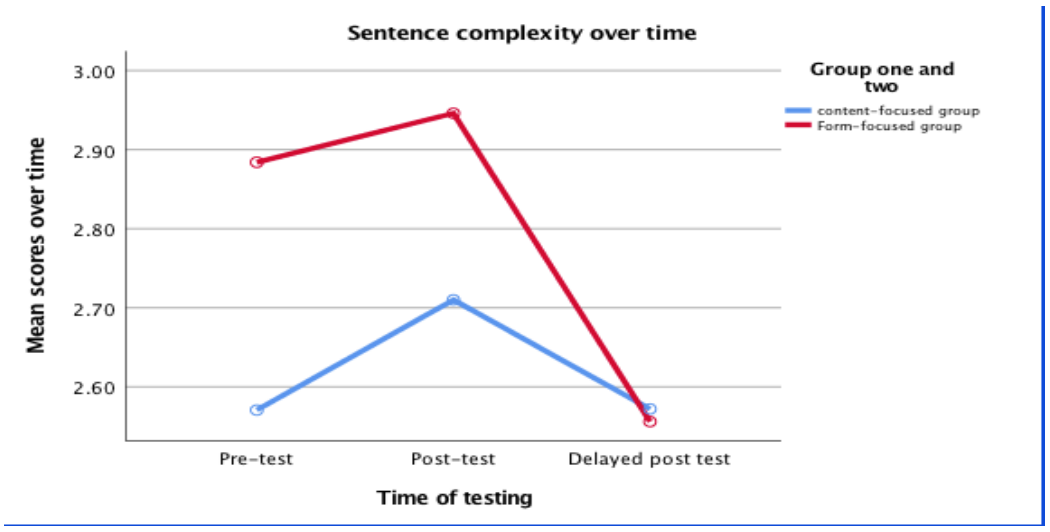


Table 4-12 Descriptive Statistics for Subordination Measure across the groups

Subordination measure		Group A (Content)	Group B (Form)	Total
DC/C (Pre-test)	M	.40	.46	.43
	SD	.11	.10	.11
DC/C (Post-test)	M	.46	.48	.47
	SD	.13	.08	.11
DC/C (Delayed Post-test)	M	.39	.50	.45
	SD	.09	.09	.10

A tangible increase in the mean of DC/C was detected in both groups over time. However, it seems that the mean of the form-focused group increased steadily from the pre-test to the delayed post-test. In contrasts, the mean of subordination of the content-focused group

noticeably increased from the pre-test to the post-test and, then decreased in the delayed-post test. This suggests that form-focused group produced more dependent clauses over time than the content-focused group.

Figure 4-7 Amount of subordination (DC/C) over time

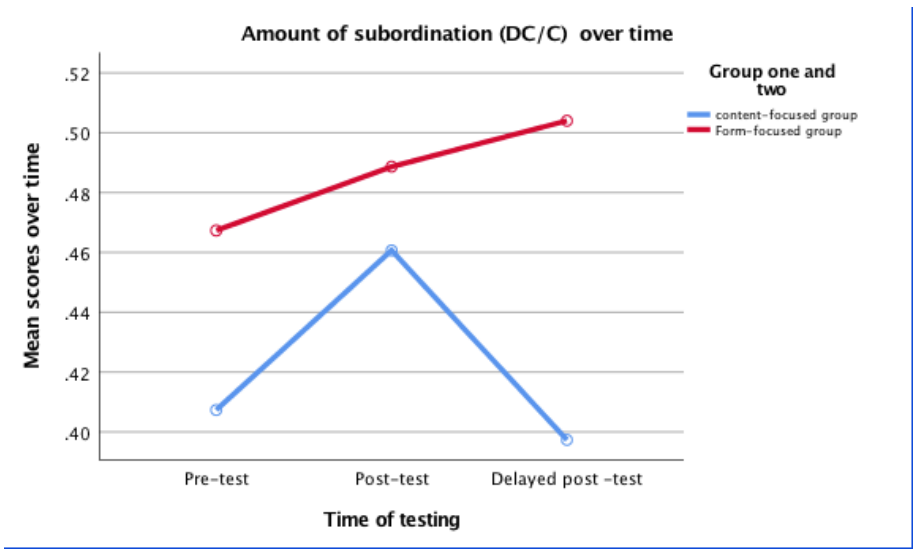


Table 4-13 Descriptive Statistics for Coordination Measure across the group

Coordination measure	Group A (Content)		Group B (Form)	Total
CP/C (Pre-test)	M	.34	.30	.32
	SD	.19	.17	.18
CP/C (Post-test)	M	.28	.29	.28
	SD	.14	.17	.15
CP/C (Delayed Post-test)	M	.35	.32	.28
	SD	.14	.17	.15

As it is demonstrated in table 4-13, CP/C means obtained by content-focused group exceeded CP/C means of form-focused group but the mean differences are trivial. It can also be noticed that both group means were almost identical in the post-test and the delayed post-test (*M*= 0.28, 0.29); (*M*= 0.35, 0.32)

Figure 4-8 Amount of coordination (CP/C) over time

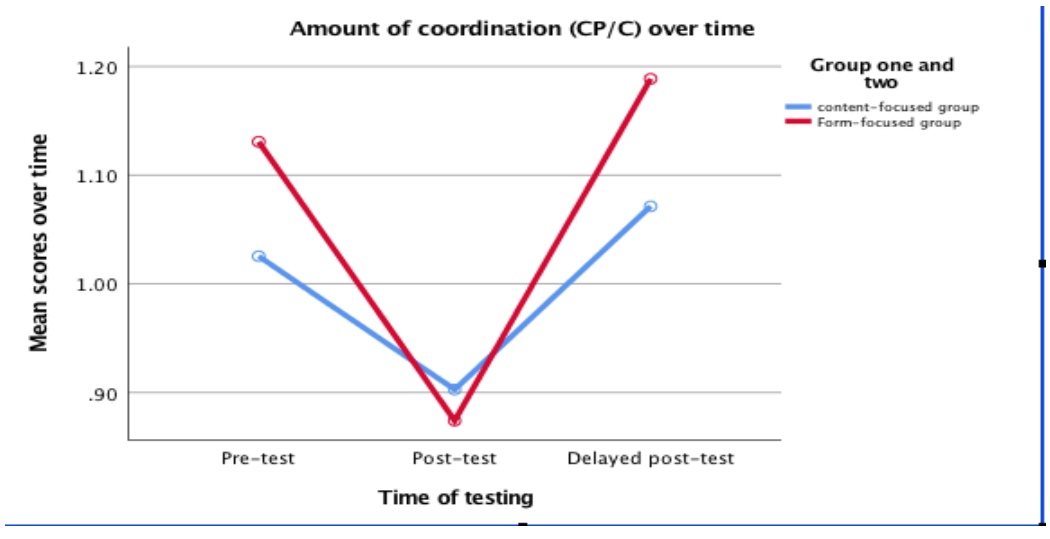
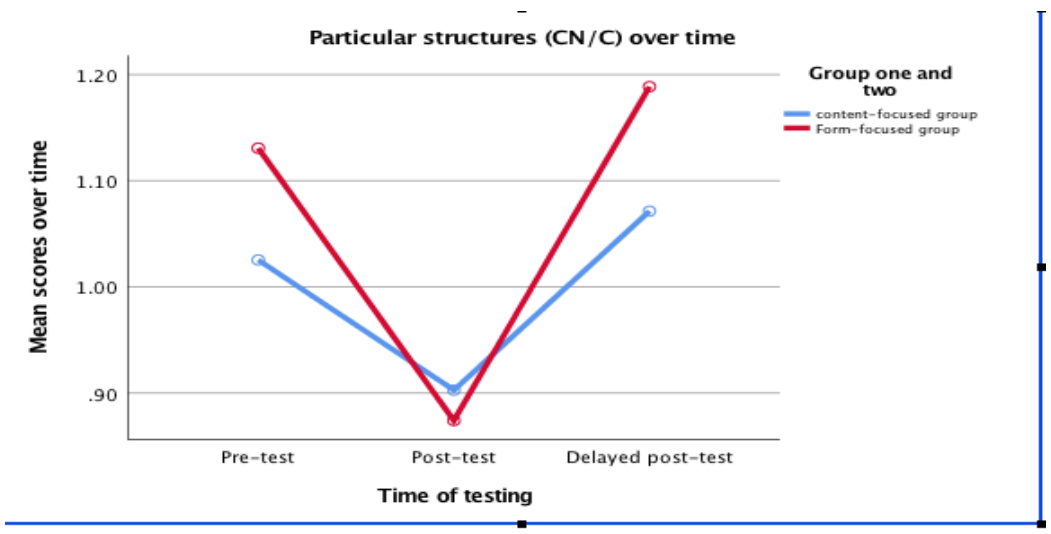


Table 4-14 Descriptive statistics for Particular Structure Measure Across the groups

Particular structure	Group A (Content)		Group B (Form)	Total
CN/C (Pre-test)	M	1.02	1.13	1.07
	SD	.36	.25	.31
CN/C (Post-test)	M	.90	.87	.88
	SD	.22	.30	.26
CN/C (Delayed Post-test)	M	1.07	1.18	1.13
	SD	.34	.43	.39

From table 4-14, it can be seen that the mean scores across both groups were almost identical across the three time intervals with slight differences in the pre-test and the delayed post-test. In addition, it can be noticed the means of both groups decreased in the post-test and then slightly increased in the delayed post-test; yet, the form-focused group seems to outperform the content-focused group over the intervention.

Figure 4-9 Particular structures (CN/C) over time



4.4.3 Syntactic complexity differences (Form vs. content)

As mentioned in the previous chapter, students' essays were analyzed through L2 Syntactic Complexity Analyzer (L2SCA) for syntactic complexity in terms of five dimensions such as length of production, subordination, coordination, structure sophistication and sentence complexity. The results of two-way repeated measures MANOVA, as demonstrated in table 4-15 indicated no significant difference between the two groups [Wilk's Λ= .59, F (7, 22) = 2.15, p < .08, partial eta squared = .40], no significant Time x Groups interaction [Wilk's Λ= .50, F (14,15) = 1.04, p < .46, partial eta squared = .49]. However a significant main effect of Time was detected [Wilk's Λ= .26, F (14,15) = 2.93, p > .02, partial eta squared = .73]. In other words, the results of syntactic

complexity showed that there was a change in learners' syntactic complexity across the three time intervals. However, no significant difference was detected in syntactic complexity between the form-focused group and the content-focused group.

Table 4-15 Results of Two-way Repeated-Measures MANOVA for Syntactic Complexity

Effect	Wilk's Lamba Value	F	Hypothesis Df	Error Df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Groups	.59	2.15	7.00	22.00	0.8	.40
Time	.26	2.93	14.00	15.00	.02	.73
Time x Groups	.50	1.04	14.00	15.00	.46	.49

4.5 Results of measuring content complexity

RQ3: *Are there differences in content complexity between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?*

The third research question aims at examining the differences in content complexity performance among students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback in three time occasions. Following the same criteria of selecting participants in grammatical, non-grammatical accuracy and syntactic complexity, 15 students from each group were chosen to test the differences between content-focused and form-focused feedback in terms of content complexity, Three essays (Pre-post-delayed-post) from each student were used for analysis. The analysis of content complexity involved a number of statistical tests. First the descriptive statistics were used to gain a preliminary analysis on how students' content complexity changed over time. Second, repeated measures MANOVA, was performed to find out whether there are significant differences between the groups over the pre, post and delayed post tests.

4.5.1 Checking the Sphericity Assumption

Table 4-16 gives information on the assumption of Sphericity of the content complexity. The data revealed that the assumption of Sphericity was met with all the measures of content complexity. ***NT*** (*X (2) =3.35, p>.* 05); ***PP*** (*X (2) = .96, p>.* 05), ***EP*** (*X (2) =3.85, p>.* 05); ***SP*** (*X (2) =.56, p>.* 05). This means that the variances of differences were about the same and were not significantly different. Therefore, the F ratio can be reliable.

Table 4-16 The Sphericity Assumption of content complexity

Mauchly's Test of Sphericity[a]						
Content complexity						
Within Subjects Effect	**Measure**	**Mauchly's W**	**Approx.Chi-Square**	**Df**	**Sig.**	**Eplison [b]**
						Greenhouse-Geisser
Time	**NT**	.883	3.353	2	.187	.895
	PP	.965	.967	2	.617	.966
	EP	.867	3.850	2	.146	.883
	SP	.979	.566	2	.754	.980

4.5.2 Descriptive statistics

Table 4-17 Descriptive statistics for the use of new topics

Descriptive Statistics for the use of new topics				
	Groups	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
New topic (Pre-test)	Content-focused group	11.06	7.35	15
	Form-focused group	9.86	4.62	15
	Total	10.46	6.06	30
New topic (Post-test)	Content-focused group	10.46	5.68	15
	Form-focused group	13.60	6.08	15
	Total	12.03	5.99	30
New topic (Delayed post-test)	Content-focused group	12.93	6.56	15
	Form-focused group	12.73	7.22	15
	Total	12.83	6.78	30

Table 4-17 provides a description of the means differences between the content-focused group and the form-focused group with regard to the use of new topics (NP). As can be seen from the table, the two groups followed quite opposite patterns in this measure as the mean differences between both groups are very large. While the form-focused group students improved substantially from the pre-test to the delayed post-test, the content-focused developed more topics from the pre-test to the delayed post test, followed by some regression in post test results. The figure below further illustrates these differences.

Figure 4-10 The use of new topics over time

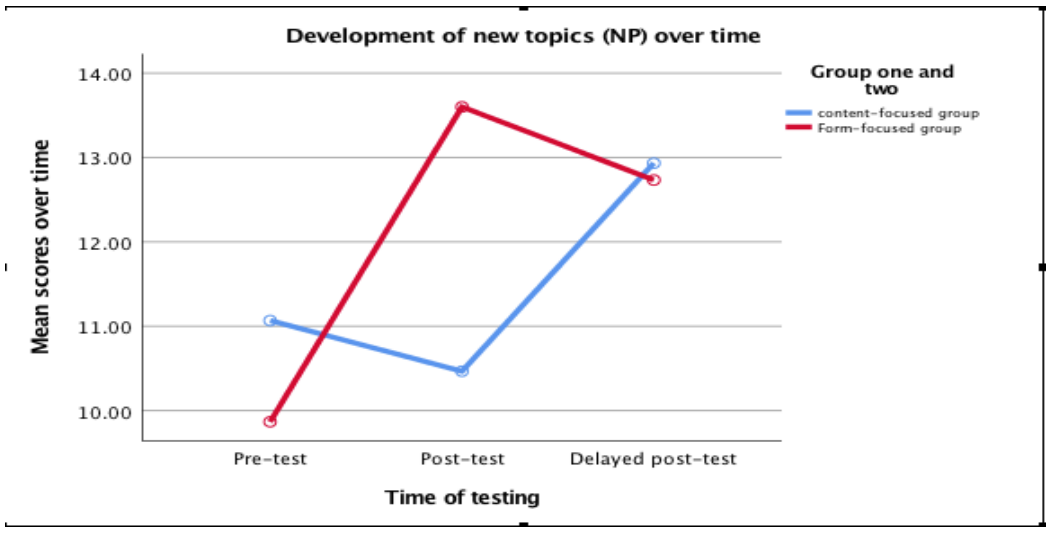


Table 4-18 Descriptive statistics for the use of parallel progression

Descriptive Statistics for the use of parallel progression				
	Groups	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
Parallel progression (Pre-test)	Content-focused group	2.20	1.56	15
	Form-focused group	3.73	1.70	15
	Total	2.96	1.79	30
Parallel progression (Post-test)	Content-focused group	3.46	3.15	15
	Form-focused group	3.93	1.75	15
	Total	3.70	2.52	30
Parallel progression (Delayed post-test)	Content-focused group	3.00	2.48	15
	Form-focused group	3.06	2.15	15
	Total	3.03	2.28	30

It is shown in table 4.18 that students' use of parallel progression was almost identical across the groups over three time occasions. The means of both groups increased from the pre-test to the post-test then slightly regressed from the post-test to the delayed post-test. However, a closer look at the table revealed that content-focused group experienced a significant increase in PP in the post-test compared to the form-focused group. This comparability is further illustrated in the following graph.

Figure 4-11 Parallel progression over time

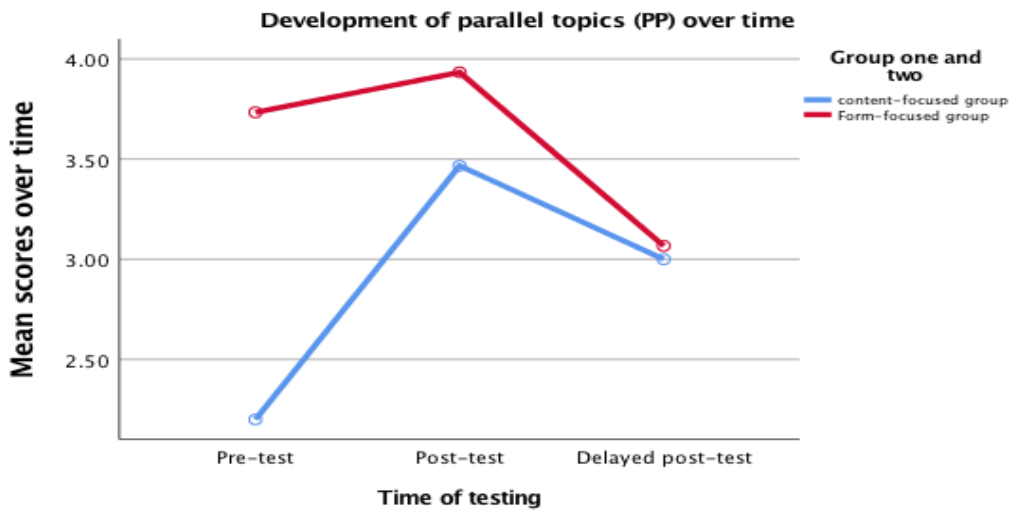


Table 4-19 Descriptive statistics for the use of extended parallel progression

Descriptive Statistics for the use of extended parallel progression				
	Groups	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
Extended parallel (Pre-test)	Content-focused group	2.80	2.30	15
	Form-focused group	2.73	1.16	15
	Total	2.76	1.79	30
Extended parallel (Post-test)	Content-focused group	2.46	1.72	15
	Form-focused group	3.13	2.58	15
	Total	2.80	2.18	30
Extended parallel (Delayed post-test)	Content-focused group	2.06	1.86	15
	Form-focused group	2.80	2.88	15
	Total	2.43	2.41	30

According to the descriptive data in table 4-19, there are slight differences in use of extended parallel progression across both groups. While the use of EP in the content- -focused group decreased gradually from the pre-test to the delayed post-test, the students in the form-focused students, however, experienced an increase in EP in the post-test but their use of EP regressed in the delayed post-test as shown in the following graph

Figure 4-12 Extended parallel progression over time

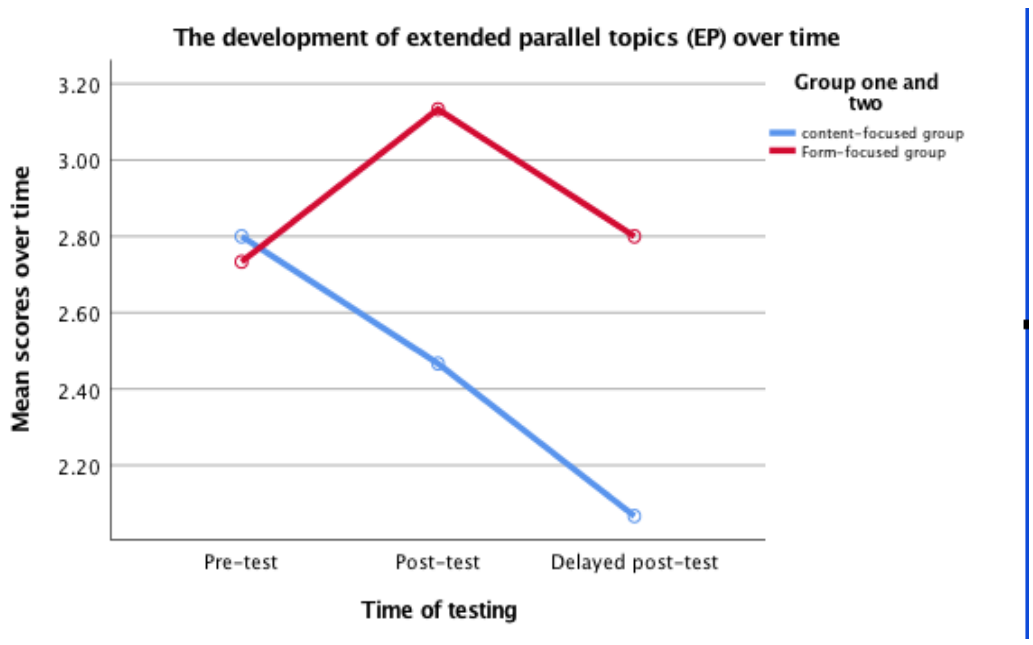
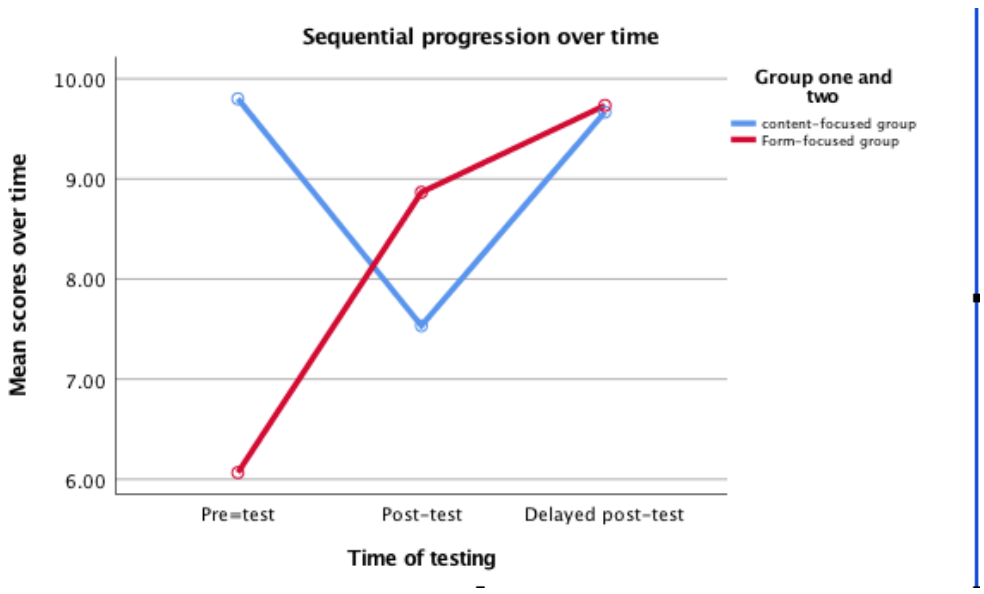


Table 4-20 Descriptive statistics for the use of sequential progression

Descriptive Statistics				
	Groups	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**N**
Sequential progression (Pre-test)	Content-focused group	9.80	6.89	15
	Form-focused group	6.06	3.08	15
	Total	7.93	5.58	30
Sequential progression (Post-test)	Content-focused group	7.53	3.70	15
	Form-focused group	8.86	4.25	15
	Total	8.20	3.97	30
Sequential progression (Delayed post-test))	Content-focused group	9.66	5.77	15
	Form-focused group	9.73	4.60	15
	Total	9.70	5.13	30

Table 4-20 displays how the changes in the mean scores of sequential progression of the content-focused and the form-focused groups over three time points. In the post- test, both groups showed opposite patterns in the use of sequential progression. While the content-focused group decreased in the post-test in in the use of SP, the students in the form-focused students improved, however, in the delayed post test, both groups of students experienced an increase in SP. The figure below further illustrates these changes.

Figure 4-13 Sequential progression over time



4.5.3 Content complexity differences (Form vs. content)

Following Lautamatti's (1987) TSA framework and Schneider and Connor's (1990) coding guidelines which were explained in the previous chapter, students' essays were divided into T-units (indicated by slashes), then, they were numbered based on Schneider and Connor's (1990) guidelines and all the topics were identified and underlined in each T-unit. Then, the progressions

were charted according to the guidelines (See a sample of the analysis in *Appendix E*). After that, the data obtained were analysed using a two-way repeated measures MANOVA.

As it can be seen in table 4.21, the results revealed that there was no significant differences between content-focused and form focused feedback in terms of content complexity, [Wilk's Λ= .84, F (7, 4) =1.11, p = .37, partial eta squared = .15]. The results also indicated no significant time x groups interaction [Wilk's Λ= .67, F (8,21) =1.28, p = .30, partial eta squared = .32] and no significant main effect of time, [Wilk's Λ= .65, F (8,21) = 1.38, p = .25, partial eta squared = .34.]. In other words, the results of content complexity showed that there was no change in learners' content complexity across the three time intervals. This indicated that the form-focused -group and the content focused group performed similarly in content complexity over time. Nevertheless, it was noticed that students in the content group, as demonstrated in table 4-22, managed to produce longer essays through time than the students in the form-focused group. This could indicate that feedback on content help students to produce long compositions because they are not restricted with the correction of grammar errors as it is the case with the form-focused group.

Table 4-21 Repeated measures MANOVA of syntactic complexity

Effect	Wilk's Lamba Value	F	Hypothesis Df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Groups	.84	1.11	4.00	25.00	.37	.15
Time	.65	1.38	8.00	21.00	.25	.34
Time x Groups	.67	1.28	8.00	21.00	.30	.32

Table 4-22 Physical structure of the general data

	Content-focused group			Form-focused group		
Tests	**Pre-test**	**Post-test**	**Delayed post-test**	**Pre-test**	**Post-test**	**Delayed post-test**
Total number of words	6299	7329	10297	5637	6989	5449
Average number of words per-essay	353	442	632	286	331	265

4.6 Summary of the quantitative data results

4.6.1 Research question one

Are there differences in grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?

From the above analysis, it was found that there are differences between form focused group and content focused group with regard to grammatical accuracy over the three time intervals (Pre-test, post-test, delayed-post test). In other words, the descriptive statistics showed that the error

rate of students' grammatical accuracy in the content-focused group and the form-focused groups regressed from the pre-test to the delayed post-test. The results also revealed that students in the content-focused group reduced more grammatical errors over time than the students in the form-focused group did. However, the repeated measures ANOVA results showed that although there was a significant time effect [F (2, 56) = 16.48 p < .00; partial eta squared= .37], no significant difference was detected between the two groups (form vs. content) [F (1, 28) = 1.38 p < .25; partial eta squared= .04]. In contrasts, the two-way repeated measures ANOVA showed that there was a significant difference between the form-focused and the content focused groups in terms of non-grammatical accuracy measure [F (1, 28) = 5.44, p > .02; partial eta squared= .16] across the pre-test, the post-test and the delayed post- test [F (2, 56) = 20.59, p > .00; partial eta squared= .42]. Particularly, these differences between both groups were found in the pre-test and the post -test; however, no significant differences were detected in the delayed-post test

4.6.2 Research question two

Are there differences in syntactic complexity between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?

The aim of this research question is to highlight the differences between the content focused-group and the form-focused group with regard to the changes in syntactic complexity over time. Overall, the results revealed that students in the content-focused group had higher syntactic complexity over time than their counterparts in the form-focused group. In particular, the students in the content-focused group outperformed form-focused group in MLS and were able to produce longer sentences from the pre-test to the delayed post-test (Content G: *M*= 39.07, *SD*= 26.20; Form G: *M*= 30.27, *SD*= 16.92;). However, the results showed that both groups produced shorter clauses over time as indexed by MLC because the means differences of both groups were high in the pre-test and reduced remarkably in the delayed post-test (See table 4-10). Similarly, students' t-units (MLT) in both groups were relatively short from the pre-test to the post-test and, then increased in the delayed post-test. The results also demonstrated slight differences between both groups in sentence complexity ratio C/S with the form-focused group producing more complex sentences over time than the content-focused group but the means still indicate that the difference between both groups in this measure is not large. Additionally, form-focused group managed to use more dependent clauses in their writing from the pre-test to the delayed post-test compared to the content-focused group. However, both groups were found to employ less coordination as gauged by CP/C over time and the means of both groups were almost identical. As far as particular structures are concerned, sentence sophistication ratio CN/C showed almost

identical patterns in both groups. However, form-focused group tend to elaborate more sentences and clauses compared to the content-focused group. However, although the descriptive statistics provided an enriched understanding about the differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback groups in terms of syntactic complexity, the results of the two ways repeated measure MANOVA indicated no significant difference between both groups but a significant main effect of time was detected.

4.6.3 Research question three

Are there differences in content complexity between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?

Similar to the previous research questions, this question aims to identify the differences between form-focused and content focused feedback groups regarding content complexity across three time occasions. Using Lautamatti's topical progression framework, the analysis revealed that both groups have developed coherence by employing new topics in their written texts. However, the two groups followed quite opposite patterns in this measure. For example, the content-focused group regressed in the use of new topics from the pre-test to the post-test (Pre-test: M=11.06; Post-test: M=10.46) then improved in the delayed post-test (M=12.93). By contrasts, the form-focused groups improved the use of new topics from the pre-test to the post-test (Pre-test: M=9.86; Post-test: M= 13.60) then regressed in the delayed post-test (M=12.73). Additionally, the results revealed that both groups were almost identical in the use of parallel progression and showed similar pattern in the development of this measure because the means of the two groups increased from the pre-test to the post-test then slightly decreased from the post-test to the delayed-post test. In the use of extended parallel progression, the content- -focused group decreased gradually from the pre-test to the delayed post-test, the students in the form-focused students, however, experienced an increase in EP in the post-test but their use of EP regressed in the delayed post-test. Finally, the results also revealed differences between the two groups in terms of the use of sequential progression in their writings. While the content-focused group decreased in the post-test in in the use of SP, the students in the form-focused students improved, however, in the delayed post test, both groups of students experienced an increase in SP.

Similar to syntactic complexity, the two ways repeated measures MANOVA showed no significant difference between both groups on the content complexity neither a main time effect. This suggests that the form-focused -group and the content focused group performed similarly in content complexity over time. Nevertheless, the physical descriptions of the students' essays revealed that in the content group produce lengthier essays through time than the students in the

form-focused group as the number of words written by the students in this groups was larger than the form-focused group. The following chapter provides a detailed analysis of the qualitative data to better understand these outcomes.

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Chapter 5 Qualitative results

5.1 Chapter overview

This chapter presents the results obtained from the focus groups and individual interviews administered to a selected group of participants. In the previous chapter, the results obtained from the descriptive statistics revealed that there were differences in the grammatical/non-grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity of students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback over time; however these differences were not statistically significant. Therefore, qualitative data (focus groups, individual interviews) was used to further understand these outcomes. First, the purpose of the focus group, in this study, is to gain a broad range of viewpoints and insights about students' responses and attitudes towards teacher's feedback. This will, in turn, help us to understand the similarities and the differences between opinions, giving venue to better understand how teacher's feedback helps/or not students in their writings from different perspectives. Second, individual interviews were employed to gain in-depth insights about the participants' different experiences, which were superficially discussed in the focus groups. This was done by considering two different sets of cases: students whose writing after receiving teacher's feedback developed over time; and students who failed to develop their writing accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity during the experiment. The chapter begins with the general findings regarding students' attitudes including their opinions and their preferences towards teacher's feedback. Then, it presents the findings obtained from the individual interviews along with some concluding remarks at the end of the chapter.

5.2 Results of focus groups

As has been explained in chapter 3, there were 20 participants who took part in the focus groups. Ten students were from the form-focused group and the other ten were from the content-focused group. They were selected based upon the criteria explained *(See section 3.4.2).* Overall, the results revealed that most of the students held positive opinions towards teachers' feedback and most of them agreed that teacher feedback is important for the development of the writing skills. The following are some of the themes generated from the focus groups.

5.2.1 Students' prior experience with teacher's feedback

At the beginning, the participants in both focus groups were asked about their previous

experiences with teacher's feedback. The purpose of this is to find out whether students are used to receive feedback from their teachers and the type of feedback teachers used frequently. During the focus group discussion, some students mentioned that teachers give feedback to students occasionally if never, and that most of them provide grades only. Students from both focus groups are labelled as **SF (**form group) and **SC** (content group).

SF1: *" I never remember my teacher gave me feedback"*

SC1 "عمرو أستاذ عطانا feedback، يعطونا نقاط برك ويقولولنا راك خارج الموضوع والا محترمتش واش هوا المطلوب" (original quote)

SC1 *"I have never received feedback from my teachers. We did receive grades only. In addition to sentences like you are out of the subject, you did not respect the task requirements"* ***(My translation)***

SC2: *"I used to receive marks only"*

SF2: " *Teachers just used to complain, they were giving just words, they were saying like you have faults and give bad marks. I have someone to motivate me at home but I want a teacher to give me feedback to improve my level"*

SF3: " *My teacher used to give some feedback only when he corrects my exam paragraph"*

While some teachers never provide students with feedback, others, used to provide the students with feedback but it was mainly grammar-focused.

SC3 " كانت استاذه في eLycé تمدلنا mais feedback موش كيما الي مدتيهالنا، تركزلنا ياسر على أخطاء grammar et jamais تشجعنا" (Original quote)

SC3 *"I used to receive feedback from my teachers at secondary school but it was not like this one. She gave us feedback on grammar only and there were no motivational comments"* ***(My translation)***

SC4: *"Teachers used to give feedback on grammar. How we should conjugate verbs and the form but not on our ideas. This made us not creative people. We are limited, we cannot write free"*

The participants also reported that some teachers used a negative approach while giving feedback to their students, which seem to negatively affect their self-confidence as mentioned by **SF4**

SF4: *" The only thing my teacher says is negative things " you are weak", "your writing is poor", this made me doubt myself"*

SC5 added that despite her love to the English language but such comments from her teacher prevented her from improving.

SC5 "Malgre que نحب نقرى mais anglais استاذه toujours تقولي معندكش niveau,niveau تاعك هابط خلتني نكره la matière" (Original quote)

SC5 " *Although I like English but the teachers comments like for example "you are not at the level"; "your level is very low" made me hate studying English"* ***(My transaltion)***

This comment suggests that teachers should pay attention to the language they use with their students by avoiding comments that might destroy their self-confidence.

5.2.2 The benefits of teacher's corrective feedback

During the focus group discussion, the students' in both groups were asked whether the feedback provided by the teacher was helpful. Unsurprisingly, many of them reported that teacher's feedback was helpful in different ways. Here are some examples:

> **SF5** *" Personally, I used to write essays like for fun or randomly essays, but I did not find someone to give me feedback on it, now thanks to feedback, I am just improving in my essays, learning new skills, new information about it"*
>
> **SF6:** ***"****I think feedback helped in vocabulary, it added many vocabulary that we have not seen before or even heard about. So, it helped a lot especially in grammar for example spelling mistakes"*
>
> **SC6:** *" Feedback helped me even in my diaries. When I write my diaries .I used to write my diaries in Arabic but now after your feedback. I am getting interested on how verbs and words are combined together to form sentences and statements in English"*

The participants were further asked which aspects of their writing they think improved after receiving feedback. They commented as follows

> **SF5:** *"At the beginning I had a problem with the word "which" I always write it in a wrong way, but with feedback I learned to write it correctly "*
>
> **SF7:** *"I benefited a lot from the feedback I received for example now I learned that with the third person singular I need to add s to the verb which I used to forget before"*
>
> **SC7***: "Feedback helped me not only in my writing course but also helped in note taking in other modules. It helped me also to write long essays while I used to write short ones"*
>
> **SF8***:"I think my writing and my grammar are better now, I can write long essays, I make few mistakes"*
>
> **SC8:** *"I want to write but grammar is still a hard task for me, I think it will take time to improve it, but content feedback helped us to write our ideas freely, to become critical in our writing"*

These comments show that form-focused and content-focused feedback helped the students to overcome grammar related errors, to increase the length of their writing and to become critical.

5.2.3 Types of teacher's feedback

As for the type of feedback that the students preferred the most, the students' views varied.

Some believe that feedback on form is more helpful while others favoured feedback on content. A third category of students, prefer to receive feedback on both form and content.

Regarding students who prefer feedback on form, they claimed that direct comments on students writing helps the student to become aware of his/her mistakes as mentioned in the following examples:

> **SF9***: "I prefer feedback on form, it shows me exactly what are my mistakes"*

> **SF10:** *" I think feedback on grammar mistakes helped you to control yourself when you write, because each time your write you remember the mistake you made and you try to avoid it".*

Students who preferred feedback on content have a different point of view. Here are some examples:

> ***SC9:*** *"Content feedback helped me to feel free, to write my ideas"*

> ***SC10:*** *"I think the content feedback is more important thing, if you focus on grammar, you will write few ideas with correct sentences but the content helps me to produce long essays and become creative"*

> **SC5:** *"Content feedback made me more confident about my writing, now I can write more with less mistakes"*

The third category of students believe that each type of teacher's feedback complements the other because each has its own benefits as mentioned by **SF8** and **SC6**

> ***SF8:*** *"I think we need feedback on both grammar and content because if we focus on content, our ideas become unorganized but if we are focusing on form, we may produce good sentences but meaningless"*

> ***SC6****" Each feedback is helpful, feedback on grammar helps us to write correctly, and feedback on content helps us to write creatively"*

From the comments above, it seems that both types of feedback have equal importance. While feedback on form helps the students to become aware of their mistakes, thus, produce free error texts, content feedback improve their confidence about writing and helps them to write creatively. Therefore, language teachers should be encouraged to provide both form and content feedback in their classrooms.

5.2.4 Students' preferences towards teacher's feedback

As far as students' preferences are concerned. Most of the students reported their need to be encouraged to write as demonstrated in the following examples:

> ***SF2*** *"When I read books, I wonder how the writer can write all these ideas and I cannot do that. After your feedback, I found that we only need someone to encourage us to do the writing, someone to support us, yes that's all we need support"*

> ***SC6*** *" I hope teachers use good feedback when he corrects our papers, I mean show our mistakes encourage us to write better, not just say " you are bad in writing", " your writing is horrible"*

Furthermore, one of the students mentioned that she needs a feedback on the content of writing rather than her handwriting

> ***SF2*** *"I remember a teacher used to tell me your hand-writing is very small, I need feedback on my writing content not the way I write"*

Another student suggested that it is better if teachers provide them with a table by the end of each correction, which include the mistakes that the student encountered.

> ***SC8*** *"I hope teachers provide us with a table by the end of the essay which include our mistakes. This will help us to develop"*

Some students also highlighted the importance of giving specific feedback to the students.

> ***SC10*** *" Teachers should focus on specific feedback like for example, in the introduction students should not give arguments, this type of feedback helps you to control yourself when writing"*
>
> ***SC3****" General feedback like your essay is good or your essay is bad do not help to improve my writing because I can't find my mistakes"*

These comments show that students have different views regarding the way they want their teachers to provide feedback. It seems that teachers should pay a good attention to the feedback they deliver to students. In other words, using negative, vague feedback does not seem to help the students. Therefore, students want to receive motivating feedback from their teachers. They also want specific feedback, which highlights the students' mistakes.

5.3 Summary of the focus groups results

To sum up, the students in focus groups showed generally positive views towards teachers' feedback. However, it seems that most of them had little or no prior experience with teachers' feedback because the majority claimed that they did not receive any feedback other than grades. Moreover, the results showed that some students *(SF2, SC3, SF4, SC5)* appear to be upset and hurt because of their teachers' negative comments, which made them doubt themselves and prevented them from improving.

Regarding the benefits of teachers' feedback, the students agreed that feedback on content and on form benefited them in many ways. Students in the form focus group, for example, found that feedback on form helped them to enrich their vocabulary, to reduce their spelling mistakes and to develop their grammar, while students in the content focus group mentioned that feedback on content helped them to freely express their ideas, to develop their critical thinking and to write long essays.

Concerning the type of feedback students preferred the most, most students in the form focused group favoured feedback on form because it clearly points at the learners' mistakes, while others in the content focus group prefer to receive feedback on content because it helped them to write confidently and creatively. A third category of students from both focus groups, favour a combination of form and content because, according to them, each type of feedback complements the other.

At the end of the focus groups discussion, the students discussed their need to receive constructive feedback from their teachers. In other words, students want from their teachers the feedback that contains motivational comments, which encourage them to learn. In addition, some other students reported that specific feedback is more helpful for them because it helps them to identify their mistakes instead of general feedback, which only highlights if the written text is "good" or "bad".

In the following section of the chapter, a detailed discussion about the above-mentioned points is presented with real examples from students' written texts.

5.4 Results of individual interviews

To gain in-depth details regarding the differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback, four participants (two from each group), based on the criteria discussed in the methodology chapter, were selected for the interview. The interviews consider two different sets of cases: students whose writing after receiving teacher's feedback developed over time; and students who failed to develop their writing accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity during the experiment.

5.4.1 Case of students whose writing improved in accuracy, syntactic complexity, content complexity

5.4.1.1 The case of Bouchra

Bouchra was one of the participants who showed sustained improvements in all the addressed areas of this study (accuracy, syntactic complexity, content complexity). During the course, she received feedback that focused on form, which, according to the analysis of her essays, helped her to develop different aspects of writing at different time points. In the interview, a number of themes emerged regarding her writing progress; her attitudes towards teacher's feedback, and her preferences on the way teachers should provide feedback.

5.4.1.1.1 Areas of change in Bouchra's writing

According to the analysis of her essays, Bouchra made a number of errors in her initial text (pre-test), these errors varied between grammatical errors such as incorrect verb tense, subject-verb agreement, articles, prepositions, and non-grammatical errors such as misspelled words, wrong word choice, unclear sentences.

In the interview, Bouchra explained the reasons behind these errors:

> *"I am not used to writing in English because I studied in a scientific branch in secondary school and English was not an important subject and the coefficient was low"*.

She added that their teachers followed a product-oriented approach in which learners are assessed for their writing only in the day of the exam.

> *" We are asked to write a short paragraph of 150 words in the day of the exam only"*

Furthermore, Bouchra mentioned that due to the fact that English is not given a deserved importance in scientific classes that her vocabulary repertoire is poor.

> " My English vocabulary is very poor, and when you asked us to write an essay, it was difficult for me to find words so I used Google translate".

However, it was noticed that her writing was improving in the post-test and the delayed post-test because most of the errors committed were reduced over time. For example, in her first essay, she has issues mainly with the third person singular form. In other words, Bouchra often forgets to add "s" on third person singular verbs like this example *(Internet play and important role in our life).* In addition, she managed to reduce the number of her spelling mistakes from 25 in the pre-test to 9 in the delayed post-test. In the interview, Bouchra attributed this development to the feedback she received during the course.

> " showing me where my mistakes are helped me to become aware of them when I write another essay, now, for example, I know very well that we should add "S with he she and it".

Furthermore, she consistently acknowledged the motivating comments she received from the teacher:

> " When you write in my paper for example "I like your essay", you encouraged me a lot to write and develop my skill".

This suggests that including motivating comments when giving feedback to students might have an impact on the development of their writing.

As for her syntactic complexity and content complexity progress, Bouchra managed to develop complex essays through time. For example, the word length of her essays increased noticeably from 230 in the pre-test to 604 words in the delayed post-test. Another aspect of complexity is her uses of complex t-units, dependent clauses, coordinate phrases, verb phrases in the post and

the delayed post-test. Regarding this, she mentioned in the interview that she is able now to produce long essays with confidence:

> " In secondary school, when my teacher asks to write a paragraph in the exam of 100 words it was something big for me, now it is very very normal to write even 500 words essays".

She added that feedback not only helped her to produce long essays but she managed to produce long complex sentences:

> " In the past I used to write very short sentences with s+v+o, I feel now happy that I can expand this to write sentences with independent and dependent clauses".

During the interview, she was asked if at any point felt that she needs to write short essays to reduce the number of errors, she noted that she initially felt a bit unsecured to write long essays because she assumed that she would get a low grade for her mistakes, but later she recognized the more mistakes she makes, the more she learns from them.

> *" To be honest, at first I was a bit scared to write long essays because I thought it will reduce my mark, but by time I recognize that feedback is for our benefit so I started writing long essays to know other mistakes and avoid them"*

5.4.1.1.2 Bouchra's opinion of teacher's corrective feedback

When Bouchra was asked about her opinion of the feedback on form and whether she faces any difficulties with this type of feedback, she reported that feedback on form is helpful because:

> *" it tells me directly what are my mistakes and help me to not repeat them again when I write again, not like before I find only crossings in my paper and I don't understand them"*.

Furthermore, she felt happy to receive feedback on her writing because this, according to her, shows how the teacher cares about his students' development.

> "*I really appreciate when the teacher read my essay word by word and correct my mistakes, I feel really that my teacher wants me to develop my writing and motivate me to learn".*

Nevertheless, she stated that sometimes, it is confusing for her to correct the mistake highlighted by the teacher because she has no prior knowledge about its rules. However, she finds that the time the teacher dedicates to explain common errors in students' essays at the beginning of each session helpful. She reported:

> " The feedback of the teacher sometimes mentions mistakes that I don't knowhow to correct because we didn't study them before. For example, I was confused when to use (the, a, and zero article), but with the teacher explanation

> at the beginning of each session in addition to other research I made, I started to make the difference between them with time*".*

5.4.1.1.3 Bouchra's preferences towards teacher's feedback

During the interview, Bouchra was asked about her preferences towards teachers' feedback. Particularly, her preferences about the amount of errors that should be corrected, the frequency of feedback and whether she prefers to receive feedback from other correctors (self-correction, peer-feedback). Bouchra prefers that teachers give her feedback on all the errors because this will enable her to become a better writer in English

> "I like when my teacher give me feedback in all my mistakes, like this I can learn and develop myself and I become a good writer, why not"

She added that regular feedback not only help students to develop their writing but also helps them to improve their confidence. She commented

> "Feedback when it is always, for example, weekly, it is helpful, because when the teacher gives us the feedback only on the day of the exam. May be this topic I am asked to write in I don't have enough ideas or something and when the teacher give me crossings on my paper, I feel like I am not good or something,maybe I am good but just the topic is not good".

Moreover, Bouchra prefers, like many other students, to receive feedback from her teacher because she/he is more knowledgeable, however, she was aware of the fact that the teacher may not be able to correct huge amounts of students' papers because of time constraints and other engagements. Therefore, she did not mind to receive feedback from her classmates

> "I personally prefer my teacher to correct my papers because she knows better about my mistakes….., but I know that the teacher has many classes to teach and it is impossible to correct all these papers so yes if my classmate is good in English why not correcting our papers".

5.4.1.2 The case of Nadji

Nadji is another participant in the study who was provided with feedback on content. According to the analysis of the essays, he is one of the students who showed improvements from the pre-test to the delayed post-test in accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity. During the interview, Nadji explained the changes that occurred in his writings over time, and discussed his attitudes towards teacher's feedback including his opinions, the difficulties he encountered and his preferences.

5.4.1.2.1 Areas of change in Nadji's writing

Nadji showed better writing abilities in the pre-test compared to Bouchra. In addition he engaged very well with the interview. Nadji explained the reasons behind this:

> " English was my cup of tea since my childhood, I remember I used to watch English movies with Arabic subtitles, so I learned many vocabulary, phrases, grammar and people start telling me "oh man you speak like an American" I also have some native friends from USA and UK with whom I am improving my English".

Nevertheless, the data obtained from his initial written text, showed that he made some grammatical and non-grammatical errors. For example, he used extensively abbreviations such as (cuz /because; ppl/ people; nd /and). He also made wrong spelling, particularly with words like (believe/believe; nowledge/knowledge) and, in some parts of his texts, he misused or failed to use punctuation marks and capitalization. When we discussed this, during the interview, Nadji related these errors to the fact that he initially learned English through listening. He explained:

> " When I first started learning English, I developed my listening by watching movies, I was listening very carefully to what they say and I tried to understand the meaning of the words with the help of the Arabic subtitles. I didn't bother about writing because all I wanted is to become fluent in English".

He added that he becomes aware of the importance of writing when he started studying English at school; he reported an incident that happened to him with his classmates and his teacher

> " I remember one day in middle school, all my classmates were surprised when I got a bad mark in English because they all know how good I speak English, I felt embarrassed when my teacher told me speaking good English does not mean you get a good mark, from that day I recognized that I have to develop my writing as well".

During the period of the experiment, I have noticed that Nadji managed to write texts, which are more accurate and more complex in terms of syntax and content. According to the interview, this is because he developed his own strategies to enhance the form and the content of his writing after he received the feedback from the teacher.

> " When I receive your feedback, I put it in front of me and I re-read my essay and then I produce another one with no mistakes...for grammar mistakes I used to use Grammarly, it is a very helpful app for me to improve grammar".

He further explained that he used to save his revised drafts in a file to develop his writing as well as his self-confidence:

> " I gather all my essays in a file perhaps I come back to it when I write other essays…I feel more confident about myself when I see how many papers I have written, it shows how much my writing is developing".

Nadji also developed some aspects of syntactic complexity and content complexity over time. For example, his final text exhibited more clausal complexity in comparison to his initial text.

In other words, Nadji produced more dependant clauses in his sentences as demonstrated in the following examples:

An example from the initial essay: *"Technology is a good invention. It connects people from over the world"*

An example from the final essay: *"[As has been discussed earlier,] Learning a foreign language is an important life skill [that has changed the way people experience many aspects of life] [because of the countless advantages it provides]"*

As can be seen, in his initial essay, Nadji wrote simple, independent sentences. However, in the final essay, the structure of his sentences appears to be more complex. In the example given, he employed an adverbial clause (yellow), a relative clause that modifies the noun phrase (green), and a subordinate clause (blue).

As for his content complexity, it was noticed that Nadji's ideas in his initial paragraph were not coherent and he showed a limited ability to communicate his message to the corrector. However, his final text revealed a logical structure of the ideas, which enables the corrector to move through paragraphs easily. He also presented his arguments in an interesting way with main ideas prominently presented and frequent use of examples and illustrations to back up his arguments.

5.4.1.2.2 Nadji's opinions about teacher's corrective feedback

Unlike Bouchra, Nadji responded favourably to feedback on content. He commented,

> " I guess students need feedback on the content of their essays because we live in globalization and there are many apps which can correct grammar and spelling mistakes without teacher but it cannot correct our ideas".

Moreover, he believes that students at the tertiary level are in need to develop their critical thinking not grammar.

> *" I think now we are at university, we need to learn how to write critically".*

Nevertheless, Nadji found out that sometimes it is difficult to follow teacher's feedback on content because of some reasons. First, he believes that content feedback does not indicate a clear way to correct the content of his writing.

> " Well, I understand from feedback that I have problems of for example my arguments or a lack in creativity, but you know when I work on these problems I sometimes I cannot because I don't know how, feedback does not show me how"

Another reason is that the ideas of the students in a written text might contradict with the teacher's corrections, particularly, with argumentative essays.

> “ When the teacher asks us to write an argumentative essay sometimes I talk about an acccident that happened to me in my life and the teacher in the feedback asks me to change the argument in order for my essay to look coherent, but If I change it, the meaning also change because that’s what I think”.

This shows that teacher’s feedback on content becomes an issue for the learners when it does not comply with their ideas.

5.4.1.2.3 Nadji’s preferences towards teacher’s feedback:

From the interview, it could be learnt that Nadji, like many other students, acknowledged that praise and motivational feedback may play a role in helping learners develop their writing skills and that teachers should use a constructive approach while giving feedback to their students. He commented

> “ Teachers used just to complain, they were just throwing words like “ good” “bad”, it was not a feedback to improve myself, we want from our teachers to encourage us for example they can say ‘your next essay will be better’, ‘you can write better essays if you read my feedback’ sentences like that…. it is more psychological, voila”.

Nadji also mentioned that feedback should be a mandatory practice in teaching before students reach university.

> “ I think we should be trained to get feedback from our teachers since middle school, because when we are at university we should be good at writing*”.*

In addition he believes that writing is better learnt when integrated with grammar rather than studying each subject separately.

> “ We study grammar module at university and it is very boring for me I hope teachers combine writing and grammar in one module I think we can study grammar through writing”.

When he was asked for further details about the way students want grammar and writing to be integrated, he responded:

> “ for example, if the teacher asks to write an essay about our experience in the past, we can learn how to conjugate the verbs in past simple, or when we write we can learn how to write long and complex sentences”.

This suggests that students prefer less focus on explicit grammar teaching, and favour implicit methods of instruction.

5.4.2 Case of students whose writing declined in accuracy, syntactic complexity, content complexity.

5.4.2.1 The case of Nihad

Nihad was one of the participants in this study who received feedback on form. However, her writing accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity did not improve over time. According to the analysis of her essays, the errors she made increased from her initial to the final text. The following sections present the data obtained from the individual interview. It presents the decline of her writing over time; her attitudes towards teacher's feedback, and her preferences on the way teachers should provide feedback.

5.4.2.1.1 Areas of change in Nihad's writing

Nihad has different types of errors in her first essay. For example, she has problems with grammar in addition to poor content and poor organization of ideas. When we discussed this issue in the interview, Nihad declared that she is aware of her weaknesses in writing:

"les fautes تاعي كارثة زيد عندي بزااف writing علابالي"

*" I know my writing is terrible and I have many mistakes**". (My translation)***

This is because she finds that the time allotted to writing instruction in secondary school education is insufficient and impedes learners to develop their writing competences

"في lycée مقريناش Anglais بزاف parce que نقراوها une fois ou deux par semaine، زيد la plupart de temps، أستاذ غايب منقدرش نطور من writing تاعي هاك"(Original quote)

" in secondary school we didn't study English a lot because we study it only one or two time in the week and most of the time the teacher is absent we can't develop like this**" .(My translation)**

She further explains that writing is a complex task compared to other skills such as speaking and due to this complexity, composing a good piece of writing remains arduous for her

" نقدر نتكلم Anglais ، نقدر نكتب des petites phrases نكتب بصح منقدرش نلم هاد les phrases ونحطهم في paraghraph تجيني صعيبة، نظن لازملي وقت طويل باه نولي نقدر نكتب مليح"(Original quote)

*" I can speak but when I write I can write short sentences only but I can't put them together to write a paragraph because it is difficult for me, it will take me a lot of time to write good and long essays**". (My translation)***

In fact, the data gathered from her essays confirm what she said. Most of her essays have inappropriate structure where ideas are in a list format rather than put together in a paragraph. In addition, she had a relatively large number of verb tenses underlined on her essays. Particularly,

the past tense of irregular verbs as demonstrated from the following examples (write, writed, go, goed) articles, prepositions, spelling mistakes, wrong words and un-appropriate word choice. This is because she was taught to learn irregular verbs only with memorization *" I hate memorization"*.

Another error pattern recurrently used in Nihad's texts was subject/ verb agreement in her first texts. However, this was the only grammar error that has reduced over time. During the interview and in discussing this, she mentioned that this was the easiest rule she could apply in her writing after receiving feedback on form. In addition, Nihad also managed to slightly reduce some spelling mistakes in the post-test and the delayed post-test. This could suggest that teacher's corrective feedback might help students to reduce non-grammar errors but not grammar errors.

> " I know some grammar rules but I cannot use them in my writing, but to add " s"to she, he, is very easy rule"

As for her syntactic and content complexity, Nihad did not improve in these two aspects of writing. Her final essay shows a lack of mastery in constructing syntactically complex sentences. With regard to this, Nihad mentioned that she attempted to use complex sentences in her writing because she believes that this will result in a piece of writing full of mistakes; thus, her grade will be reduced

> "I avoid to use sentences which are complex, because if I do so I will make so many mistakes and my writing will be terrible and I can't get a good mark"

In terms of content complexity, Nihad did not display an ability to communicate ideas because the major parts of her writing lack a clear organizational structure and was completely void of an interesting content.

5.4.2.1.2 Nihad's opinion of form-focused feedback

Although the data showed that form-focused feedback did not help Nihad to develop her writing over time, however, she seems to hold a positive view about teacher's feedback in general and form-focused feedback in particular. According to her, teacher's feedback is helpful as long as it highlights students' problems with writing but she believes that it can be effective only when applied in early stages of English learning

Original)" درك tres bienلوكان رانا نكتبو Lycée والا CEM في feedback "لوكان كانو أساتذة يعطونا
(quote

> " if teachers were providing us with feedback in the middle or secondary school, we could write very good now". **(My translation)**

She further explained that feedback, which underlines the error and provides the correct form saves time for the students to correct their mistakes and speed up the process of the learning

"كي prof يكوريجي les fautes تاعنا ويوريهوملنا خير من نديعو الوقت وحنا نحوسو كيفاه نصحوهم، يعاونا هاد feedback باه نتعلمو بالخف"(Original quote)

> " when the teacher shows and corrects our mistakes it is better than just underline the error and let the student waste time to go and look for how he corrects his errors, it also helps the students to learn fast". ***(My transaltion)***

During the interview, Nihad mentioned an interesting point about the amount of errors that students expect to receive from their teachers. She mentioned that teachers' feedback should target certain errors and give the student time to work on them because, according to her, correcting all the students' errors might leave the student confused or unwilling to improve.

5.4.2.1.3 Nihad's preferences towards teacher's feedback

In the interview, a number of points were discussed with Nihad regarding her preferences towards teacher's feedback. She mentioned that while extensive writing is good for students' writing development. However, it is time-consuming and sometimes boring.

يمل الواحد, essay each week باه نكتب mais sincerement حابنا نطورو من رواحنا ofI agree que pr
parce que عندنا assignments في other modules"(Original quote)

> " I agree that the teacher want to develop our writing but to be honest writing an essay each week is boring for me because we have other assignments for other modules**". (My translation)**

This suggests that students' motivation to write and time play a role in the development of their writing. From the interview, it seems also that Nihad prefers she was given an opportunity to be corrected on a second draft in order to avoid repeating the same mistakes in later drafts

"في راي من الاحسنprof كي يعطينا feedback يخلينا نعاودو نكتبو le meme essay باه منعاودوش نفس الأخطاء"(Original quote)

> " I think it is good if we revise our mistakes and write another essay and the teacher correct it because if we do not correct them we repeat them again**".(My translation**)

When she was asked if she prefers to receive feedback from other correctors, she responded favourably to peer feedback because it makes her feel confortable and less embarrassed. She commented

" Sincerementنحشم بزاف كي نشوف prof تاعي دير في les effo باه تعاوني وانا مانيش نطور،
je pense لوكان الطلبة يصحو لبعضهم احسن منحشموش مين بعضنا parce que كامل رانا نتعلمو"(Original quote)

> "Honestly, I feel shy when the teacher makes efforts to help me but I cannot develop, I think if classmates correct each other, we do not feel shy because we are all learning". **(My translation)**

This also highlights that peer feedback is important in EFL classrooms and teachers should give it attention.

5.4.2.2 The case of Zouhir

Unlike Nihad who received feedback on form, Zouhir was one of the participants in this study who was provided with feedback on content. Over the time of the experiment, he didn't show any improvement in his accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity. In following sections, there will be a presentation of the themes generated from an individual interview with him in order to understand how and why Zouhir writing showed no improvement over time and to explore his attitudes towards corrective feedback, This includes his preferences, the difficulties she faced and the strategies he suggested for teachers while providing feedback for students.

5.4.2.2.1 Areas of change in Zouhir's writing

According to the analysis of his essays, Zouhir had some persistent language and content errors in texts, which reflected the weaknesses he has in the writing skill. Right from his first text, it seems that Zouhir has absolutely no idea about the writing process. His first essay was a short paragraph with poor structure and content in addition to several grammatical and non-grammatical errors. These weaknesses can be due to many reasons one of which is the lack of adequate language background. Zouhir mentioned that English should be integrated in the educational sector in the primary school because he believes that learning a language at an early age is better for language development

" انا نظن الواحد ميقدرش يكون مليح في اللغة ادا قراها برك في college لازم يقروهالنا مين الابتدائي باه نولو نتمكنو فيها""(Original quote)

> " I think it is hard to be good in English if we study it only in middle school, they should teach us English in the primary school to learn it better **"(My translation).**

He added that the type of instruction he received in his previous levels did not help him to develop his writing

> *" I never learn to write, the teacher sometimes give us homework and she never correct it, we used to read the texts in the class and then write the lesson".*

Such a claim suggests that teachers are still following traditional teaching methods despite the reformulations taking place in the academic sector. According to the analysis of the essays, subject-verb agreement seems to be the most prevailing error in Zouhir's writing. For example, he wrote " *Internet help people to communicate…". During* the interview he was asked to explain what the problem was and try to suggest changes, but he obviously has no idea about this rule. As

for the non-grammatical words such us the use of wrong words like in this sentence "Internet is ***efficase*** for students ". This sentence is a clear example of L2 interference because *efficase* is a French word, which means " effective".

Regarding the syntactic complexity of Zouhir's writing, He showed less ability to produce syntactically complex sentences in most parts of his post and delayed post written texts. Regarding this, Zouhir reported that the type of feedback influenced his writing performance. In other words, he believes that if he was provided with feedback on form, he would pay more attention to the complexity of his sentence structures. Nevertheless, Zouhir managed in some parts of his texts to produce complex sentences. In the interview, when he was provided with examples of complex sentences from his essay: He honestly confessed:*" This was with the help of internet".*

As for his content complexity, he stated that he has ideas about the topics but he could not communicate them through writing because of his poor language repertoire.

"عندي بزاف des idees نحب نهدرعليهم بصح قي نجي نكتب نبلوكي"(Original quote)

" I have many ideas in my mind about the topics but when I start writing I feel stuck**" (My translation)**

5.4.2.2.2 Zouhir's opinions about content-focused feedback

The data gathered from the interview revealed that Zouhir found difficulties to follow teacher's feedback on content because he believes that content feedback could be helpful with students with good writing abilities

نفضل لوكان teacher عطاني feedback on form، نظن feedback on content مايعاونيش درك لاخطرش مازال عندي صعوبات في الكتابة"(Original quote)

" I preferred if the teacher gave me feedback on my grammatical mistakes, I don't think feedback on content helps me at this stage because I still have difficulties to write correctly*".**(My translation)***

This shows that teachers should take the students' level into consideration while providing feedback. Furthermore, he faces difficulties to understand the language of content feedback despite the teacher' attempts to clarify the meaning of the feedback

"كي نقرى feedback ونلقى كلمات كيما communicative quality نحسهم كلمات صعاب عليا ومنفهمهمش meme si شرحتيهملنا بصح مازال مانفهمهمش"(Original quote)

" When I read in your feedback words like interestingness and communicative quality It is big words for me I can't understand them…. I know you explained them but still I cannot understand them". **(My translation)**

He added although feedback on content motivated him to write, but he does not find this helpful because he knows this will result in an essay full of mistakes.

malgre que content feedback" يخليني نكتب بحرية mais writing تاعي معندها حتى معنى لاخطرش فيها بزاف mistakes"(Original quote)

> "Content feedback makes me write freely but my writing has no meaning because I know it contains many grammatical mistakes".(My translation)

Zouhir concern's to language related problems rather than the content is probably related to the fact, that many students are governed by a false notion based on that writing is nothing but only a task which needs proper spelling and grammar, however, writing involves more than the accurate use of grammar, syntax, and good range of vocabulary (Carroll, 1990).

5.4.2.2.3 Zouhir's preferences towards teacher's feedback

In the interview, Zouhir mentioned an interesting point regarding teachers' motivational comments. He agrees that teachers' praise and encouraging feedback have indeed a powerful impact on students' writing. However, he believes that it might not be helpful for some students. He explained

"انا نظن اذا كان l'etudiant ماعندوش مع writing، علاه prof ميقولوش direct، نظن كي يقولو prof راك مليح في الكتيبة تاعك وهو خاطيه، يأمن روحو وميقدرش يطور"(Original quote)

> " I think if the student is bad in writing why not the teacher tell him that, I think when he tell him you are good and he is not, he will believe that he is really good and he can't improve**"(My translation)**

This contradicts with most of the participants in the study who insisted on the importance of teachers' encouraging comments in developing their writing skills. In addition, he suggested that it is better if the students are asked to produce the written text in the classroom rather than home-work because of many reasons. First, it gives an opportunity for the learner to discuss his/her piece of writing during and after he /she finishes. Second, it will reduce cheating from the Internet and other sources of plagiarism, and, finally, he believes that writing in the classroom will create a competitive environment among the students and allow them to exchange ideas.

5.5 Summary of individual interviews results

In summary, the individual interviews provided further insights regarding students' writing changes over time and their attitudes towards teachers' feedback. These interviews targeted two

cases of students. The first case focused on students who showed improvements in different aspects of writing over time while the second case focused on students who failed to do so.

The students in both cases highlighted the reasons behind their progress or failure in writing. For example, in the first case, one of the students attributed her development to the feedback on form and to the motivational comments she received from the teacher, while the other student related this improvement also to other strategies he followed such as the use of Grammarly application and redrafting after receiving teacher's feedback. On the other hand, students who failed to improve their writing in the targeted areas believe that the major reasons behind their failure are the complexity of the writing skill, the lack of the writing practice and the inadequate writing instruction they used to receive in middle and secondary school.

Students in both cases have also stated some of the difficulties they encountered with the teacher feedback. Although students in the first case have improved in their writing over time, Bouchra, for example, found feedback on form sometimes confusing because it highlights grammatical errors that she has not studied before. On the other hand, Nadji faced difficulties to follow feedback on content because it does not clearly show how to correct the content of his writing. Similarly, students who failed to improve their writing over time reported that feedback on form or on content could be more effective with students with good writing abilities. In addition, Nihad stated that feedback on form which highlights large amount of errors may leave the student confused and unwilling to improve. However, Zouhir mentioned that the teachers' use of complex language, which contains unfamiliar words in delivering feedback on content was the major difficulty he experienced.

Finally, the students in both cases provided some suggestions, which they believe to be helpful for them. For example, Bouchra preferred to receive feedback regularly because she thinks it will help students to develop their writing as well as their confidence. In addition, she finds that feedback from peers is helpful especially in cases were teachers are limited by time constrains and other engagements. Nadji suggested that teachers should use a constructive approach while giving feedback. He added, that writing is better learnt when integrated with grammar rather than studying each subject separately. Similar to Bouchra, Nihad also favoured peer feedback because it makes her feel confortable and less embarrassed. In addition, she preferred if the students are given an opportunity to redraft their text in order to avoid the repetition of the same errors. Finally, Zouhir recommended that teachers give written assignments in the classroom because this will enable the student to discuss areas of his will enable the students to discuss his piece of writing with the teacher through student-teacher conference, it will reduce unethical academic practices such as cheating and create a competitive atmosphere in the classroom.

5.6 Concluding remarks

This chapter presented the findings obtained from the focus group and the individual interviews. The focus group findings highlighted the students' attitudes towards teacher's feedback and explained how teacher's feedback helped students in their writings. On the other hand, individual interviews findings provided detailed insights about areas of growth and failure in students' writing over time with real examples from the students' written texts.

Overall, most of the participants seem to have unsatisfactory writing experiences in middle and secondary school. In addition, most of them believe that feedback is a useful strategy for the development of their writing skills. The participants of this study also see the value of having feedback on form and feedback on content and they prefer to have either feedback on language errors or content or a combination of both. Besides, they reported the powerful impact of praise and motivational feedback on students' self-confidence and motivation. The findings also highlighted the common difficulties encountered by students when dealing with either feedback on form or on content corrective feedback and presented some students' suggestions regarding students preferences towards their teachers' feedback

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Chapter 6 Discussion of the results

6.1 Chapter overview

This study compared the differences between form-focused and content focused feedback in terms of EFL learners' writing accuracy (grammatical/non grammatical), syntactic complexity and content complexity over different time intervals. In addition, the study also explored the learners' responses and attitudes towards teacher's feedback. In particular, it identified their opinions about the benefits of the feedback they received, the type of feedback they preferred the most and their suggestions regarding the way their teachers' should deliver feedback. These objectives were achieved by gathering quantitative data (quasi-experimental) and qualitative data (focus groups and individual interviews) from first-year undergraduate students of the English department at Ghardaia University, in Algeria.

This chapter discusses the quantitative and the qualitative results and gives answers to the research questions of the study. First, it highlights the key findings of both the quantitative and the qualitative data. Second, it gives answers to the research questions with reference to other studies from the literature.

6.2 An overall discussion of the key findings

Overall, the results showed that there were no significant differences between content-focused and form-focused feedback groups in grammatical accuracy, which demonstrates that learners in both groups performed similarly. However, the findings of this study also showed that there were changes in the mean scores of grammatical accuracy of both groups over the three time intervals (pre-test, post-test, delayed-post test) although not significantly. That is, students in both groups reduced their grammatical errors from the pre-test to the delayed post-test. Particularly, students who received feedback on content did score slightly higher in their grammatical accuracy than those who received feedback on form. This inconsistency of the results might suggest that delayed significant differences between both groups could occur at a later time point. Therefore, it is possible that one university term is not enough time for learners to process the given types of feedback and that further practice is required. On the other hand, the results revealed a significant difference between the form-focused and the content focused groups in terms of non-grammatical accuracy measure over time which might suggest that non-grammatical errors, as Truscott's (2001) claimed, are the most correctible error types because they are simple and can be treated as discrete items rather than integral parts of a complex system.

Chapter 6

The results from the qualitative data in chapter 5 showed that Bouchra, one of the participants who received feedback on form had several errors in her initial text such as incorrect verb tense, subject-verb agreement, articles, prepositions and non-grammatical errors such as misspelled words, wrong word choice, unclear sentences. The results from the analysis of her essays showed that Bouchra has gradually reduced grammatical and non-grammatical errors from the pre-test to the delayed post-test. Conversely, Nihad, another participant who received feedback on form did not reduce the number of grammatical errors, but she managed to slightly reduce the number of spelling mistakes in the post-test and the delayed-post test. These results support Truscott's (1996) argument that "the acquisition of grammatical structure is a gradual process, not sudden discovery" (1996: 342).

Similar to grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy, the results revealed that the mean scores in syntactic complexity of the form-focused and the content-focused feedback groups have changed over the three testing times. However, no significant differences were detected between the two groups. One potential explanation for these results can be attributed to Skehan's trade-off Hypothesis (1998) in which he argued that learners might find it difficult to pay equal attention to meaning and form and, therefore, they tend to prioritize one over the other. That is, when the learners receive feedback on form or on content, they pay more attention to either the form or the content of their writing during production. In this study, Nihad who received feedback on form was unable to develop her syntactic complexity over time. Her texts were short in length and contain simple sentences structures. During the interview, she mentioned that in her writings, she attempted not to write long texts with complex structures to avoid committing many errors and, thus, reduce her grade. Similarly, Zouhir who received feedback on content, showed less ability to produce syntactically complex sentences in most parts of his post and delayed-post texts because he believes that the focus of feedback impacts students' performance. According to him, content-focused feedback led him to write freely. However, he mentioned that if the focus of feedback was on language-related features, he would pay more attention to them.

In terms of content complexity, the statistical analysis also yielded no significant differences among the investigated groups over time. This means that both groups of students had similar performance in content complexity. These results are in line with Fazios' study (2001), which revealed no significant differences between feedback on form and feedback on content in terms of students' writing accuracy. However, this study extends Fazio's study in that the results also indicated no significant differences between both types of feedback in students' content complexity as well. The qualitative data presented in Chapter 5 provided some potential explanations for why students fail to improve their writing content complexity. From the data collected, it seems that some participants are not familiar with the given types of feedback

because their teachers occasionally if ever give them feedback on their writing (SF1, SF2, SC1, SC2). In addition, their English background is limited because most of them came from scientific classes where English is taught only once or twice per week. Consequently, the student's failure to improve their writing content is not surprising. In other words, since the participants of this study could not improve their grammatical accuracy, it is difficult for them to improve their content complexity because content problems, compared with linguistic ones, are difficult to identify and solve by L2 learners independently. They also require more cognitive resources from the learners (Rahimi & Zhang, 2019).

The present study also considered other factors that might have contributed to detect any significance differences among the form-focused feedback and the content-focused feedback groups in terms of writing grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity. The results of the qualitative data revealed that students' low writing proficiency is a potential factor behind students' lower gains in these aspects of writing. Although most of the students in the study showed positive attitudes towards teacher's feedback (form/content), however, some of them were unable to benefit from feedback because of their low writing proficiency. One case in the study showed no improvement after the experiment. Nihad reported that the time allotted for teaching writing in secondary school is a reason behind her weaknesses in writing. She added that feedback on form could only be helpful for university students if they were used to since their early years of English learning.

Similarly, Zouhir believed that content feedback could be helpful with students with good writing abilities. Furthermore, both students preferred to receive feedback on form. For Nihad, feedback on form will help her to improve her writing in the long run; whereas, Zouhir thinks that feedback on form is more helpful for students with low writing abilities. These results are in line with Lee's study (2008) who found that most low proficient students preferred feedback to focus on language-related errors rather than content and organization, while most high proficient students preferred feedback to focus on all aspects of writing. Therefore, teachers need to take into consideration the students' proficiency level when correcting students' errors (Ferris, 2002).

The non-significant differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback could also be attributed to the difficulties students' encountered to understand feedback. Based on this, Chiang (2004) reported that the failure to detect any differences "may not lie in the feedback itself, but in the way how feedback is delivered to students" (2004: 98). In this study, some students reported that, in some cases, they find it difficult to understand their teachers' feedback and even when they did, they were not always able to correct their errors by themselves. For example, Bouchra, in this study, received feedback on form and she managed to improve her

writing after the experiment. However, she reported that, sometimes, she found the teacher's feedback on form confusing because it highlights error codes, which she has no prior knowledge about their rules. In light of this, researchers such as (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lee, 2003, Ferris, 2006; Sheen, 2007) argued that successful use of error codes depends on the students' prior grammatical knowledge and their understanding of these codes. That is students with no prior or with limited grammatical knowledge could probably face difficulties dealing with this type of feedback. Nadji, on the other hand, received feedback on content; however, he faced some difficulties with this type of feedback not because he did not understand the teacher's feedback on content but he could correct problems related to content. As pointed out by Nadji in the interview:

Well, I understand from feedback that I have problems of for example my arguments or a lack in creativity, but you know when I work on these problems I sometimes I cannot because I don't know how, feedback does not show me how

The fact that students were not allowed to revise their drafts in this study could be another factor behind the failure to detect differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback. ***SF 7*** reported that if students were asked to revise their written texts, they could further benefit from feedback. This might suggest that feedback without students' revision to their written texts is not helpful. Indeed, Nadji, one of the participants who improved his writing after the experiment, reported that although the teacher didn't ask them to revise their drafts, he did revise his texts and produced newly revised texts. He felt that this strategy helped him to develop his writing. In light of this, some studies (e.g. Ashwell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997; Ferris &Roberts, 2001) explored the effects of feedback on students' revised drafts and they found clear evidence regarding the revision efficacy of corrective feedback. However, Truscott and Hsu (2008) reported that the improvement in writing accuracy in their experimental group during revision did not lead to improved accuracy in the writing of new texts and thus they conclude that the improvement made in revision may not necessarily be an indicator of learning.

Regardless of the non-significant differences between content-focused feedback and form-focused feedback in students' writing, most of the participants in this study, as the qualititative data revealed, held positive views towards the types of feedback they received, and they believed that their writing was developing than ever before. The results of the qualitative data showed that the students who received form-focused feedback believed that feedback on form helped them to improve their vocabulary, to reduce their spelling mistakes and to develop their grammar. On the other hand, students who received content-focused feedback found that this type of feedback enabled them to express their ideas, develop critical thinking skills and produce longer essays.

Regarding the students' preferences, the qualitative data showed that students held different opinions on which type of feedback they preferred the most. For example, most students in the form-focused group preferred feedback on form, others in the content-focused group showed a strong desire for feedback on content. The third category of students from both groups favoured a combination of form and content feedback. From a teacher perspective, I have noticed that students' preferences of feedback are influenced by students' writing proficiency with feedback. In other words, students with low writing abilities preferred to receive feedback on form to improve their grammar and produce free-error texts. According to their records, the majority of these students studied in science classes in secondary school. On the other hand, students with good writing abilities are keen to develop their critical thinking skills and the content of their texts. The students' records showed that most of these students either studied in foreign language classes or have developed good language background on their own (Notes from teacher's diary). This interpretation corroborates with the findings of Chiang (2004) and Lee (2008), which revealed that high proficient students prefer feedback to focus on content rather than form, while low proficient students prefer feedback to focus on form rather than content. Further details regarding students' attitudes will be discussed in the following section.

6.3 Answers to the research questions

6.3.1 Question one

Are there differences in grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?

In this study, the differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback in grammatical accuracy was measured by an overall error rate comparison. The findings indicated that both groups of students reduced the number of grammatical errors over the three-time points (pre-post-delayed post tests). However, the results from the repeated measures ANOVA showed no significant differences between both groups in terms of grammatical accuracy. These results are consistent with the findings of Kepner (1991) who found that both the content-focused and the form-focused feedback groups performed similarly in terms of grammatical accuracy. However, Ferris (2003), as mentioned in chapter two, criticised Kepner's study for the lack of a pre-testing which demonstrate that both groups had the same initial level of accuracy. The current study included a pre-test and the results revealed that both groups of students have the same grammatical accuracy level at the start of the treatment. Moreover, Ferris (2003) noted that the results in Kepner (1991) study should be interpreted with caution and not presented as a clear

evidence of the ineffectiveness of both types of feedback because of the lack of a control group although the content-focused group in Kepner's study functions as a control group. In fact, there is broad agreement among L2 written CF researchers (e.g. Storch, 2010; Bitchener, 2008; Guanette, 2007; Truscott, 2007) that studies without a control group do not provide evidence for the effectiveness of written CF. Therefore, it should be noted that this study also lacks a control group because of two major reasons. First, the groups included in this study serve as a kind of comparison group for each other. Second, the researcher did not have access to enough participants given that in the context of the study there were only two classrooms.

The results obtained from the analysis of grammatical accuracy are also consistent with the prediction that language-exposure and previous learning experience are factors that should be considered when giving feedback on students' writing (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005). According to the qualitative data, most of the participants showed their unfamiliarity with teachers' feedback because their teachers rarely provide them with feedback and most of them tended to give grades only. In addition, some of the participants showed a limited language background because they didn't receive sufficient instruction in English. Therefore, previous learning experiences of the participants in this study may have impacted the results obtained from the analysis of grammatical accuracy.

The fact that this study has targeted a broad range of linguistic errors could be another factor behind the non-significant results of grammatical accuracy. In other words, the students might have experienced a cognitive overload that inhibited their feedback processing. Thus, as Bitchener (2009) pointed out, processing corrective feedback could have been cognitively demanding for some learners. The results from the individual interviews showed, that Nihad, one of the participants who received feedback on form, preferred if her teacher provided her each time with specific grammar errors because she felt confused when the teacher's feedback targeted many grammar errors. Moreover, students might have encountered some difficulties to follow or understand the feedback provided by the teacher as brought up by Nadji who found content-focused feedback difficult to follow because it doesn't show him how to correct his ideas. Zouhir, another participant, also found difficulties to understand feedback on content because it uses unfamiliar terms such as " interestingness, communicative quality". He added that although the teacher tried to explain the meaning of these terms, he still could not understand them because they are beyond his language abilities. The same results were found by Zacharias (2007) who concluded that feedback is not helpful if students cannot make optimal use of it and that teachers should pay attention to the feedback they deliver by avoiding too much focus on errors beyond student present acquisition level.

As far as non-grammatical accuracy is concerned, the results revealed a significant difference in the non-grammatical errors rate of both groups. Particularly, these significant differences were detected in the pre-test and the post-test, suggesting that both groups performed differently from the pre test to the post-test. The results also revealed that students who received feedback on content had higher mean scores in their non-grammatical accuracy compared to students who received feedback on form. These findings support Ferris (1999) prediction that non-grammatical accuracy would benefit most from indirect corrections. In addition, most of previous studies in the literature investigated the differences of direct and indirect feedback in terms of grammatical accuracy and non-grammar accuracy (e.g., Van Beuningen et al., 2008; Van Beuningen et al., 2012). However, the important contribution that this study makes to the existing literature is that it does not address form-focused feedback only but also compared it to content-focused feedback.

6.3.2 Question two

Are there differences in syntactic complexity between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?

As aforementioned, the results of the repeated measures MANOVA revealed no significant differences between content-focused and form-focused feedback groups in terms of syntactic complexity. This means that both groups of students performed similarly throughout the testing times with slight differences in some measures of syntactic complexity as illustrated in tables (4-10; 4-11; 4-12; 4-13; 4-14). These findings corroborate those found in Sheppard's (1992) study in that both of them found no significant differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback groups in terms of writing complexity.

In addition to the factors mentioned earlier in this chapter, this study also assumes other possible factors that might explain why the two groups performed similarly in syntactic complexity. It is possible that learners did not devote enough time to plan their essays before they start drafting. Concerning this, Ellis and Yuan (2004) found, in their study, that students who went through a pre-task planning stage showed an improvement in syntactic complexity compared to those who directly drafted their written texts. The observation notes from the teacher's diary used in this study, showed that some students in both groups do not seem to plan their writing because they were noticed finishing their drafts in the classroom before the teacher collects them. Another explanation might be attributed to the effect of the genre. Lu (2011), as mentioned in chapter two, examined a corpus of writing produced by ESL writers at four different proficiency levels. The corpus includes two types of genres (argumentative and narrative). The results revealed that argumentative essays exhibited higher syntactic complexity than narrative ones. In light of this

study, the quantitative data showed that students' syntactic complexity in the post-test decreased in some measures *(See figures: 4-3,4-5,4-6).* This could be attributed to a change in genre. In other words, the teacher-researcher decided to change the genre of the writing in the post-test to ensure that the development of students' writing through time is the consequence of the types of feedback and not the genre of writing (Notes from teacher's diary). This was further confirmed in the focus groups where the participants mentioned that argumentative essays helped them to express their ideas smoothly compared to narrative essays which, according to them, limited them to produce a piece of writing.

In a study conducted by Ortega (2003), it was found that context (ESL vs. EFL) had an impact on the development of students' syntactic complexity. Ortega findings revealed that ESL learners had a higher level of syntactic complexity compared to EFL learners particularly in length measure (MLS), which led Ortega to conclude that researchers who investigate syntactic complexity measures (SCMs) in L2 writing should predict potential context effects. This study as mentioned in chapter one was conducted in an EFL context, where English is considered as a second foreign language after French. Therefore, the non-significant differences between both groups regarding syntactic complexity might have been attributed to contextual factors. In addition, it was noticed that L2 (French) might have impacted the results as well. In other words, during the writing course, students' good language capacities in French than in English as demonstrated in the analysis of Zouhir' s essays who sometimes used French words to convey the meaning of English ones (*See chapter 5*). The notes from the researcher's diary also revealed that students' during the focus groups and the individual interviews felt more comfortable expressing themselves using Algerian dialect or French. However, with only a limited number of studies investigating the effect of form and content feedback on syntactic complexity, it is still difficult to settle the debate with firm conclusions. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted to confirm these interpretations.

6.3.3 Question three

Are there differences in content complexity between students who received form-focused feedback and those who received content-focused feedback?

As high-order dimensions of EFL writing production, the content complexity of students' writing, as measured by Lautamatti's topical progression analysis (TPA), did not vary across the pre-post and delayed post-tests. This suggests that feedback on form and feedback on content did not show effects on the content complexity of students' written texts. Overall, these findings are in accordance with the findings reported in a very recent study by Cheng & Zhang (2021), who examined the effects of comprehensive written corrective feedback and found no significant

effects on syntactic complexity, lexical density, content and organization. However, their study only focused on the effects of direct comprehensive WCF and did not take into account other types of feedback such as content feedback. Therefore, the current study gives further evidence that feedback on content also reported no significant effects on content. In addition, Cheng & Zhang (2021) documented the effects of comprehensive WCF on EFL learners' performance in argumentative writing, whereas, this study reported the effects of form and content-focused feedback on two genres of writing (Argumentative and narrative).

An interesting finding from the current study is that students who received feedback on content managed to produce longer essays over the three-time intervals (pre-post and delayed post tests), which suggests that feedback on content gives the students opportunities to practice their writing skills. Moreover, it gives insights that as long as students increase the number of words in their written texts, they learn new words, they develop their ideas and their critical thinking, and more importantly, they become confident about their writing. This was confirmed by the qualitative data analysis. **SC7,** for example, reported that thanks to feedback on content that she can now produce longer texts compared to her earlier texts, which were short in length. **SC9** added that feedback on content helped her to freely express her ideas, while **SC10** believes that feedback on the content not only helped her to produce long essays but also to become critical in her writing, and more importantly, **SC5** confessed that feedback on content built her confidence about her writing (see chapter 5 for further details). Nevertheless, future research can further examine this issue and give insights on how feedback on content help student to develop their ideas, their critical thinking and their confidence about writing.

These unfavourable effects of content and form focused-feedback on content complexity in this study were a bit surprising at first compared to those of accuracy or syntactic complexity. From a teacher's perspective, I was expecting that students who received feedback on form and feedback on content, in particular, to develop the content of their writings. This was based on the fact that in the Algerian educational sector, the context of this study requires teachers to apply the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) in their classrooms (Notes from teacher's diary). The CBA, as mentioned in chapter 1, is an extension of the communicative approach and it aims to develop, what Hymes (1971) called *"communicative competence"*, which refers to the ability of the learner to use language to successfully communicate in varied real-life situations. However, some researchers reported several issues within this teaching approach, which, I assume, have contributed to the findings of this study. Chelli (2012), for example, investigated the effects of this approach on first-year students' writing achievement at an Algerian university to show that the CBA could be a success at the tertiary level if appropriate methods are applied. The researcher pointed out that despite the implementation of the CBA, in teaching English in middle and

secondary education, first-year university students' writings are still poor. The reason behind this, according to Chelli, is the way writing is taught, i.e. teachers' instruction is still form-oriented because they put more emphasis on the linguistic level of writing and ignore other levels that are part of the writing skill. One more reason is that EFL teachers, in particular, view themselves as language teachers rather than writing teachers. The latter has been also confirmed by researchers such as Reichelt (1999) and Hyland (2003). Therefore, their students' written texts are seen as products to be evaluated solely for exams. A follow-up study by Chelli (2013) revealed that the teaching of the writing skill has a marginal position in the classroom as the activities found in the course books are usually given as homework and rarely done in the classrooms. In a similar vein of research, Benadla (2012) commented that the teaching process under the CBA is time-consuming and efforts demanding because of the problem of large classrooms, which lead the teacher to focus his efforts on updating the administrative documents rather than providing an effective teaching environment.

From the issues highlighted above as well as the results of the qualitative data, we can understand why the quantitative data revealed insignificant results of feedback on form and feedback on content on students' content complexity. In other words, some of the participants in this study (SF1, SF2, SC1, SC2), as mentioned earlier, showed their unfamiliarity with the given types of feedback. In addition, their English background is limited. This could be related to the teachers' instruction, which focuses on the linguistic level and ignores other aspects of writing such as content. It could also be attributed to the fact that EFL teachers view themselves as language teachers rather than writing teachers (Chelli, 2012), or probably to time constraints that teachers face under the CBA approach (Benadla, 2012). Therefore, students' failure to improve their writing content could now be unsurprising because content complexity, compared with linguistic ones require, as mentioned earlier, more cognitive resources from the learners (Rahimi &Zhang, 2019), a skill that students with low language abilities need more time to develop. Nevertheless, future researchers need to also investigate teachers' attitudes towards feedback to confirm or disconfirm these results.

At an individual level, the teacher-researcher noticed that some students managed to improve their content complexity over time (Researcher's diary). Therefore the issues highlighted above could not probably apply to all the participants of this study. This also leads us to think of other potential reasons behind students' failure to improve the content of their writing. Ashwell (2000), for example, reported that rewriting could help students produce better content quality. In this study students were evaluated only on the new pieces of writing, therefore, this could be a reason why they did not produce good writing content. Another possible explanation for the results has to do with the nature of content feedback. Some participants in the individual

interviews reported that they face difficulties understanding the teacher's feedback either because it includes unfamiliar terms or because it highlights errors that the student has no prior knowledge about. This, therefore, shows another possible explanation for the results, which has to do with the inconsistency between teachers' expectations and students understanding. I had assumed that since I gave students feedback and provided a clear explanation of it in the classroom, students would successfully apply it in their writing. However, without teacher-student conferences or one to one meeting with the students, students may not understand or apply teachers' feedback on their writing. Nonetheless, with the scarcity of research on content complexity, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions. Therefore, further research needs to be conducted to confirm these assumptions.

6.3.4 Question four

What are students' attitudes towards form-focused and content-focused types of feedback?

To gain in-depth insights about students experience with teachers' feedback, the study explored the attitudes of students towards form and content-focused feedback. These attitudes are translated in terms of their preferences, the difficulties they encountered when processing feedback and the ways they want their teachers give feedback.

6.3.4.1 Students' preferences towards form and content-focused types of feedback.

Although the quantitative data revealed that feedback on content and feedback on form had limited effects on students' writing in terms of accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity, however, the qualitative data showed that most of the participants of this study viewed teacher's feedback as an important tool that helped them to enhance their writing skills. The data collected from the focus groups and the individual interviews also revealed that the participants hold different views regarding which type of feedback they prefer the most. For example, some students believe that feedback on form is more helpful while others favoured feedback on content. The third category of students, prefer to receive feedback on both form and content. In the literature, studies also showed varied results. Some research studies revealed that students preferred the correction of surface-level of errors (Leki, 1991; Saito, 1994; Lee, 2005; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010). Few others showed that students like feedback to focus more on the content of their written texts (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Oladejo, 1993). However, to the best of my knowledge, only Lee's (2008) study reported that high proficiency learners prefer feedback that focuses on all aspects of writing (form+ content).

Regarding students who preferred feedback on form in this study. Bouchra, for example, reported that she prefers to receive feedback on form because she believes that this type of feedback helped her to become a better writer. Thanks to this feedback that she could identify her errors to avoid them in future writing. A similar pattern of results was obtained by other studies in the literature (e.g., Leki, 1991; Saito, 1994; Enginarlar, 1993; Lee, 2005; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Hamouda, 2011), which demonstrated that learners preferred their teacher's correction to focus on surface errors rather than on content. Bouchra added, that she felt happy to receive feedback from her teacher because it shows how the teacher cares about her writing development. This suggests that students' preference for form-focused feedback is influenced by their prior experiences with feedback as well as their teachers' approach while delivering feedback. In other words, Bouchra reported in the interview that her teacher in secondary school used to follow a product-oriented approach where the learners are evaluated in their writing only on the day of the exam. Furthermore, she acknowledged the motivating comments that her teachers wrote on her papers. This finding matches a finding by Lee (2004) who reported that the students' reaction to teacher's WCF is influenced by the use of words, which might be motivating or depressing. This finding also suggests that receiving motivating comments from the teacher plays a major role in the success of the students' writing. As Dörnyei (1994) stated, motivation is the main determinant in L2 achievement.

The findings from the qualitative data also revealed that the student's level of proficiency and their awareness of their needs influenced their preferences to feedback on content. Nadji for example showed good writing abilities right from the start of the experiment. This is because he developed his English language skills since he was young by watching movies and chatting with native speakers. Nadji reported that his preference for content-focused feedback is based on the assumption that students at university are no longer in need of grammar correction because he assumes, that their grammar has developed during middle and secondary school. Therefore, at the tertiary level, students need to develop their critical thinking rather than grammar. These results are in line with Lee's (2008) study, which reported that students' level of proficiency influences their preferences regarding feedback. Lee suggests that "feedback informed by a flexible policy that takes into their account students' abilities is more likely to help students develop interest, confidence, and self-esteem in writing than a rigid policy that requires comprehensive error feedback across the board." (2008:158). In addition, it could be learnt from the interview with Nadji that praise and motivational feedback play a significant role in helping learners develop their writing skills and he suggested that teachers should use a constructive approach while giving feedback to their students. From a teacher-researcher perspective, I have noticed during the focus group and the individual interviews that the majority of students

emphasised the importance and the impact that positive comments have on their self-confidence as well as their writing level. In addition, most of them, as mentioned earlier, reported that they have unsatisfactory experiences with their teachers' negative feedback (see chapter for further details). Concerning the impact of positive comments on students' writing, Gee's (1972) reported that students who received negative comments and no comments on their written texts produce less than those who received positive comments. This suggests that students who receive praise and encouraging comments on their writing are more confident to express their thoughts as they write. He added, "Consistent negative criticism or lack of feedback inhibited verbal performance more than did praise." (1972:217). His findings also revealed that the students who received praise have more positive attitudes towards writing than those who received negative comments and no comments. This led Gee to suggest, "to assist the building of positive attitude, teachers must give a pat-on-the-back for the improvements that student makes." (1972:219). However, Zouhir, one of the participants who received feedback on the content in this study, found that praise could inhibit some low-level learners from development. He explained that if the learner has a weak level in writing, and he/she receives positive feedback from his teacher, he/she will not pay attention to his weaknesses. In relation to this, Hyland &Hyland (2001) commented that praise should be delivered to students who deserve that because, according to them, the misuse of praise might affect negatively students' writing and confuse them. They, therefore, ask teachers to provide praise that is "specific rather than formulaic and closely linked to actual text features rather than general praise" (2001:208).

Another category of students in the current study preferred to receive a combination of feedback on form and feedback on content because they believe that each one complements the other. A balanced approach in giving feedback would probably be most effective to meet individual needs. In other words, since students' levels of proficiency, students' needs and students' prior experiences are inconsistent, providing feedback on form and feedback on the content in a balanced way would help students to pay attention to all aspects of writing rather than prioritizing one over the other. This was confirmed by Biber et al. (2011) findings which showed that the combination of content + form is generally much more effective than an exclusive focus on form for writing development. However, researchers should investigate this issue to come up with further evidence about the effects of combining feedback on form and feedback on the content complexity of the learners.

6.3.4.2 Students' difficulties when processing teachers' feedback

The current study considered some difficulties that the students encountered while processing feedback on form and feedback on content. The findings from the qualitative data revealed that

some students, regardless of their level of proficiency, faced difficulties understanding teacher's feedback. This was not surprising because previous studies in the literature (e.g. Cohen, 1987; Zacharias, 2007; Ferris, 1995; Leki, 1990; Lee, 2004, 2008b; Zamel, 1985; Amrhein and Nassaji, 2010) found that most L2 students may encounter some pitfalls when responding to their teacher‘s feedback. This could be related to, for example, the use of unfamiliar terminology and symbols or teachers’ handwriting. One of the difficulties that students in the current study faced might have been caused by students’ unfamiliarity with some grammar rules. Bouchra, for example, stated that sometimes, it is confusing for her to correct the mistake highlighted by the teacher because she has no prior knowledge about its rules. Nevertheless, she found it helpful when the teacher explained common errors in students’ essays at the beginning of each session. This finding might suggest that teachers should provide feedback on already acquired grammar rules. It also suggests that teachers should note the common errors among students’ while correcting their written texts and explain them in the classroom. This could be effective, especially, in contexts with oversized classrooms where the teacher is restricted with time constraints and he/she might be unable to discuss students’ writing issues individually. Another difficulty reported by Nadji, who received feedback on content, is his inability to follow teachers’ feedback on content because he reported that content feedback only provides him with content-related problems but it does not show him how to correct them. Similarly, Zouhir also received feedback on content and he faced difficulties understanding the language of content feedback. He added that although the teacher attempted to clarify he couldn't make use of it. This result is directly in line with Zackarias’s study (2007) who found that the participants of her study preferred that their teachers deliver feedback on content using easy language. This led Zackarias to conclude that teachers should be careful not to focus too heavily on errors beyond learners’ level of acquisition because she believes that feedback is not effective if students cannot benefit from it.

A further plausible reason is attributed to students’ motivation. This was brought by Nihad, who found that giving students written tasks weekly is time-consuming and sometimes boring. Concerning this issue, Guénette (2007) argued that students who were less likely to consider the teacher's WCF and to report its effectiveness tended to be less motivated to receive the teacher's WCF. In this study, it was observed that some students, particularly low achievers, showed less motivation to write and to take advantage of the feedback I provided. This was clearly confirmed with their reaction when I ask them to produce a written text at the end session. One of them, as noted in my teachers' diary, angrily reacted *“We have other tasks to do for the other modules”.* This confirms Hyland (2010) claims “WCF becomes useful only when students “get willing and motivated to engage with it” (2010: 177). Moreover, it seems that some students are only

motivated to write and to make use of teachers' feedback when these tasks are part of their exam assessment. Many students in both groups (Content+ form) asked me whether these tasks are graded or not, and my answer was definitely yes; otherwise, they will take neither the written tasks nor the feedback into account (notes from teacher's diary). The students' emphasis on grades rather than on developing their writing is probably the result of students' previous experiences with writing and with teachers' feedback as reported by SF1, SC1, SC2, SF3. This reaffirms Zacharias (2007) findings, which revealed that students, especially low achievers, value the feedback that helps them get a better grade.

It can be argued, based on the abovementioned assumptions, that the students' inability to understand and follow teachers' feedback could perhaps be related to the lack of communication between the teachers and the students in the current study. The notes taken from the teacher's diary revealed that some students, especially, low achievers, never seek clarification from the teacher when they face difficulties with teachers' feedback, and even if the teacher tended to provide help, they did not seem to be interested to take advantage of it. On the other hand, the teacher also found it difficult to follow all the students who were willing to better understand the teachers' feedback and to develop their writing. Large classrooms, time constraints and the efforts spent on administrative meetings are the major reasons behind the teacher's difficulty to follow all the students. Nevertheless, I tried my best to give equal opportunities for all the students by dedicating 10 minutes at the beginning of each session to explain the errors that are recurrently repeated in students' written texts (See Appendix A for further details)

6.3.4.3 Students' suggestions for teachers

To gain further insights on students' attitudes towards teacher's feedback, the participants were asked about the ways and the strategies they want their teachers to follow to make effective use of feedback. Almost all the students emphasized that the teacher's way while delivering feedback is of paramount importance, particularly, when it contains motivating and encouraging comments. SF2, for example, reported that all she needs to develop her writing is support *(See section 5.2.4)*. Further to earlier discussion regarding the impact that positive comments have on students' motivation to write It could be concluded that positive feedback is indeed important for students as long as it helps them to improve their confidence about their writing. However, it should not deviate from its essential purpose. That is, improving students' motivation to develop their writings. In this sense Cardelle, and Corno (1981) reported in their study that feedback that combines criticism and praise resulted in the biggest gains in writing compared to feedback which only focused on criticism of errors.

Another finding in this study is related to the amount of feedback that students want to receive from their teachers. Some students ***(SC10, SC3)*** believe that general feedback, which only showed that the written text is " good" or " bad" without clarification might hinder the student to improve his/her writing. Thus, the students want their teachers to correct all their errors as reported by Bouchra "*I like when my teacher give me feedback in all my mistakes".* This finding is consistent with what has been found in many studies in the literature (e.g. Diab, (2005a); Radecki and Swales, 1988; Leki, 1991; Ferris and Robert, 2001; Lee, 2004; Hamouda, 2011; Amrheirn and Nassaji, 2010), which also reported students' willingness to receive feedback on all their errors. However, Nihad seems to have a different view (see chapter 6) She reported that teachers' feedback should target certain errors and give the student time to work on them because, as she stated, correcting all the students' errors might leave the student confused or unwilling to improve. This supports the findings of Zacharias (2007) and Ferris (2002) who claimed that too much feedback is irritating for the students. These variant views among the participants of this study reflect the students' proficiency levels. Bouchra, for example, is a student who benefited from feedback and made improvements in her writing during the experiment; whereas, Nihad has a low writing level because she could not make improvements during the experiment as reflected in the analysis of her written texts. However, the cases included in the current study had a small number of students (two students in each case) and, thus, there is a need for further research which examine the differences in attitudes towards the amount of teachers' feedback with a large number of high and low achieving students.

Despite acknowledging the importance of receiving feedback from the teacher, some students seem to be comprehensive and aware of the challenges that the teachers face including the correction of huge amounts of students' papers. Bouchra, for example, did not mind receiving feedback from her classmates. Furthermore, Nihad reported that peer feedback is more helpful because it makes her feel comfortable and less embarrassed. These findings contradict with earlier studies by Hedgcock and Lefkowitz's (1994), who reported that the students held strong beliefs towards their needs for expert corrective feedback, and with the one of Zhang (1995), who claimed that there is no evidence in any study to suggest that students prefer peer feedback over any forms of response. Linking to the context of this study, the use of peer feedback could be useful in many ways. Given that most EFL teachers suffer from oversized classrooms, which prevent them from giving feedback regularly, the use of peer feedback could perhaps be a good solution for this issue. In addition, the use of peer feedback will create an interactional atmosphere among the students. This is, particularly, important in the contexts where the competency-based approach is implemented, and which emphasized the active role of students in the classroom. However, the use of peer feedback should not diminish the importance of

teachers' feedback. Thus, teachers should be careful when using this technique in their classrooms.

To summarize, this chapter discussed the findings of the quantitative and the qualitative data. In the discussion, I drew on the previous research on teachers' feedback and identified how the findings of the current study linked to other studies in the literature. In the next chapter, the contributions of the research will be explained, the implications arising from the current research will be discussed, and recommendations for future research will be presented.

Chapter 7 General conclusion

This study heeds researchers' call for further research on teachers' feedback and pursues the line of feedback research that focuses on the comparison of different types of teachers' feedback as well as learners' attitudes towards teachers' feedback. The main objective of this study was to compare the differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback in terms of the changes in the grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity of Algerian EFL learners' writings. The second aim of the study was to explore the attitudes of EFL learners for the different types of feedback and to explore the reasons behind their preferences. It also aimed to examine the problems that the students face with the teacher's feedback. These objectives were achieved by gathering quantitative data (quasi-experiment) and qualitative data (focus groups +individual interviews) from first-year undergraduate students of the English department in Ghardaia University, in Algeria.

The study found no significant differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback groups in terms of the changes in writing accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity because of some potential reasons such as students' prior experience with writing, students' low proficiency level, students' unfamiliarity with teachers' feedback, students' difficulties to follow teachers' feedback and other reasons. In addition, the results of the study showed that learners held positive views towards the different types of feedback. Moreover, they showed varied opinions about the type of feedback they preferred the most i.e., some of them preferred feedback on form; others preferred feedback on content and the third category of students favoured a combination of feedback on form and feedback on content.

During the process of feedback, some students, as reported in the findings of this study, faced difficulties with the teacher's feedback, which were mainly attributed to the teacher's use of complex language, the students' unfamiliarity with some grammar rules and the students' lack of motivation to write and to receive feedback. The findings of the study also revealed that learners emphasized the importance of teacher's positive feedback (i.e., feedback that contains motivating and encouraging comments) because they believe it impacts their writing development and raises their self-confidence about writing. Others suggested that peer feedback could be more helpful because it makes them feel comfortable and less embarrassed. They also held different views about the amount of feedback i.e., some preferred feedback on all their errors, others want from teachers to target certain errors and give them time to work on them.

Overall, this study makes several contributions to the literature. First, a major gap in the literature of written corrective feedback, as mentioned in chapter two, is that most of early and recent studies on WCF focused primarily on form-focused feedback (direct/indirect; focused/unfocused) (Semke, 1984; Rob et al., 1986; Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Kepner, 1991; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Chandler, 2003; Bitchener and Knock, 2008, 2009, 2010;Dabboub, 2019) and only few studies addressed content-focused feedback (Olsen and Raffeld, 1987; Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Ashwell, 2000; Hubais and Dumanig, 2014; Shobeiry, 2020). In addition, most of these studies have addressed writing accuracy (Semke, 1984; Kepner, 1991; Sheppard, 1992; Ashwell, 2000; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Chandler, 2003; Hyland, 2003; Bitchener and Knock, 2008, 2009, 2010;) with scant attention spared to other aspects of writing such as syntactic complexity and content complexity. Concerning this, Cheng and Zhang (2021) confirmed that most studies on written corrective feedback adopt accuracy as the one single measure to assess WCF effects. This practice in research fails to tell the whole story, as its effects on other aspects of writing performance should be examined (2021:4-5); therefore, this study adds to the existing literature by comparing form-focused and content-focused feedback in terms of the changes in accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity.

Research on teacher's feedback also revealed that the teaching context (EFL vs. ESL) plays a significant role in the motivation of learners to uptake teachers' feedback. For example, Bitchener and Storch (2016) claimed that EFL learners might pay more attention to written corrective feedback because they receive an instruction that focuses on form and grammatical accuracy; whereas, ESL instructional programs focus on how to use English communicatively, therefore, ESL learners might pay less attention to their grammatical accuracy (2016:31). The findings of this study, however, showed that the instructional context did not influence students' motivation to uptake their teacher's feedback. In other words, although the participants of this study are EFL learners (i.e., English is their second foreign language), however, they held different views regarding which type of feedback they prefer the most. Some students, as mentioned earlier, found feedback on form more helpful, others showed a strong desire for feedback on content and another category of students preferred to receive feedback on both form and content.

In terms of methodology, Ferris & Hedgcock (2013) argued that "...longitudinal research on student improvement as a result of teacher feedback has been virtually nonexistent" (2005: 187). Furthermore, many researchers in current literature called for more ecologically valid and longitudinal studies on individual learners' responses to WCF (Van Beuningen, 2012; Ferris, 2013; Bitchener and Storch, 2016; Goldstein, 2016; Storch, 2018). The current study, therefore, responded to this call and contributed to the field of teachers' feedback research by adding

insights to this virtually nonexistent pool of longitudinal research. Particularly, the results obtained from the quantitative methods and qualitative methods (focus groups and individual interviews) provided insights on how individual EFL learners differently responded to their teacher's WCF (form/content); identifying the factors that might impacted learners preferences; the difficulties that might occurred when handling teacher's WCF with a consideration of the students' wants and needs about the way they want teachers deliver WCF. The study is also conducted in a real-classroom setting to ensure ecological validity and examined students' writing changes longitudinally (14 weeks).

Moreover, examining students' attitudes towards teachers' feedback contribute to the local teaching writing research and to feedback research that focuses on the attitudes of students towards feedback. The findings of the study showed that students low level of writing is the consequence of the instruction they received in middle and secondary school education and which gave a marginal place to writing and feedback. This finding is in parallel with Chelli's (2012) study which revealed that despite the implementation of the CBA, based on the development of the oral and written competencies, in teaching English in Algerian middle and secondary education, first-year university students' writings are still poor. The reason behind this, according to Chelli, is the way writing is taught, i.e. teachers' instruction is still form-oriented because they put more emphasis on the linguistic level of writing and ignore other levels that are part of the writing skill. This result, therefore, might contribute to the reconceptualization of the pedagogical practices of writing instruction in Algerian educational settings as well as other L2 contexts. That is, EFL teachers need to reconsider the role of writing skills in their classrooms. They should also deepen their knowledge about how writing should be taught under the competency-based approach.

The findings from the focus groups and individual interviews also contribute to a further understanding of the teachers' approaches when providing feedback and how it reflects the attitudes of the students. For instance, many students reported that teachers' negative comments reduced their self-confidence about writing and prevented them from developing. This shows that teachers should be aware of the impacts their negative comments have on students' personality and their writing development. Furthermore, the qualitative data of the study added further insights to research on content-focused feedback. Some participants in the study reported that they struggled with their teacher's feedback on content and they could not apply it in their writing. This shows that being aware of what students do not understand creates communication between the students and the teacher and enables the students to use content feedback effectively. Ferris, (2010) pointed out that understanding the students' needs, improving their motivation, and highlighting communication between students and teachers could offer a

valuable insight into research on the students‘ views regarding WCF.

7.1 Implications of the Study

The findings of the study, as mentioned earlier, revealed no significant differences in the accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity between students who received feedback on form and students who received feedback on content. There are some potential explanations regarding why both groups of students performed similarly in the targeted aspects of writing. This includes students’ unfamiliarity with teachers’ feedback, students’ level of writing, students’ difficulties to understand teachers’ feedback and other factors. Therefore, the findings of this study have implications for EFL writing instructors as it could assist them to develop their feedback practices in a way that students could make use of them.

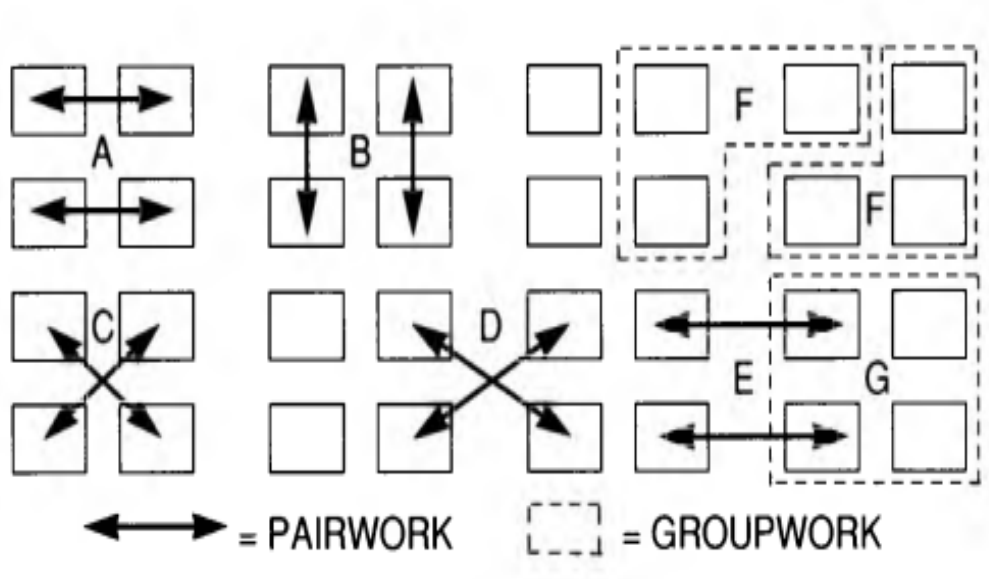
Given that this study took place in an authentic classroom setting, the study offers some important pedagogical implications. First, despite the implementation of the Competency Based Approach (CBA) in Algerian middle and secondary education, teachers are still using the product-approach when teaching the writing skill. This could be reflected in the results of this study which revealed that students are not familiar with teacher’ feedback because they were evaluated only in exams by giving them grades or short comments. Therefore, teachers should review their feedback practices under the CBA and look for appropriate methods, which are compatible with the principles of this educational approach. This could be achieved by offering professional development trainings for teachers to help them build knowledge and skills related to assessment under the CBA.

The results of this study also revealed that although the participants of this study have been studying English for seven years under the CBA, some of them still have poor writing level. The reasons behind this could be attributed the way writing is taught, i.e. teachers’ instruction is still form-oriented because it puts more emphasis on the linguistic level of writing and ignore other levels that are part of the writing skill (Chelli, 2012). Therefore, teachers are required to use writing approaches appropriate to the CBA and the LMD. From our experience in implementing the Process-Genre Approach to writing to first year undergraduate students as an approach fitting the CBA and the LMD, we have found that although the study revealed insignificant results, applying such an approach has several advantages. For example, it allows the students to activate their cognitive skills through (brainstorming, drafting, revising and editing), it promotes autonomous learning and it develops students’ abilities of synthesis and analysis of different writing genres, etc. Therefore, teachers are encouraged to use this approach in middle and

secondary schools to familiarize learners with the essentials of writing before they reach university.

The current study also considered students' views about the ways they want their teachers to deliver feedback. From the findings, teachers can be reminded about the impact that their negative comments have on students' motivation to write and to benefit from feedback. Therefore, teachers should consider providing feedback in ways that increase students' motivation. Furthermore, teachers are also invited to consider the benefits of using peer feedback in their classrooms. It seems, from the findings of the study, that some students believe that feedback from their peers makes them more comfortable and less embarrassed about their errors. Villamil and De Guerrero (2006) claimed that peer feedback allows "both reader and writer to consolidate and recognize knowledge of the L2 and make this knowledge explicit for each other's benefit" (2006:39). In addition, the use of peer feedback could have good effects in contexts with large classrooms. Regarding this, Bartram and Walton's (1991) suggested in their book a diagrammatic figure which shows how peer correction would operate in a large classroom.

Figure 7-1 An illustration of the use of peer feedback in a large classroom



(Bartram and Walton, 1991:88)

According to Bartram& Walton (1991), the letters in the diagram show that there are many different possible combinations for pair-work (A, B, C, D, E) and group-work (F, G). When putting the class into pairs or groups like this, particularly when it is new to the students, teachers need to give clear, precise instructions. All the students must know exactly what they have to do and whom they have to work with. Unclear instructions sometimes produce chaos, and chaos can lead to discouragement. Teachers need to check that the students know what to do, perhaps by asking them to repeat it back to you. These kinds of activities need to be prepared. Teachers should also vary the groups and pairs, and avoid always putting the same students together Bartram and Walton's (1991:88).

The students in this study also revealed that students who received feedback on content had higher mean scores and managed to produce longer essays over the period of the writing course compared to those who received feedback on form. This could probably suggest that feedback on content is beneficial for the students as long as it helped them to practice their writing skills and to produce long written texts. Therefore, teachers should pay attention to the importance of content feedback in their classrooms, and particularly, with the way they deliver this type of feedback. The findings also showed that some students who received feedback on content, in this study, confronted difficulties to understand the language of content feedback because it contains complex and unfamiliar terms. Other students found it difficult to apply this type of feedback to their writings because it does not show them how to correct the content of their written texts. Based on this, L2 teachers should be careful not to use complex language and should provide clear explanations on how the students correct content-related problems.

7.2 Limitations and recommendations for further research

Although the use of quasi-experimental methodology and the high ecological validity were strengths of this study, it is important to acknowledge some limitations. One of these limitations is that the study took place during just one university term. As reported in chapter 4, the students' writing was slightly developing over the three-time intervals (pre -post- delayed post tests). This might suggest that if the study lasts longer (more than 14 weeks), there could probably be some significant differences between students who received feedback on form and those who received feedback on content. However, it was against the University regulations to conduct this research for more than one semester. Therefore, future research should extend the scope of the treatment and include several additional post-tests over a longer period so that the differences between the two types of feedback could be clearly detected. Another limitation of the study is the relatively small sample size. For practical considerations, as mentioned in chapter 3, only thirty students from the total of the 69 students participating in this study were selected as a sample for the detailed analysis of students' writings. Although the estimate number of the sample in educational research is 15 participants in each group in experimental design (Creswell, 2012:146), however, this sample size might have impacted the results of the study and limited the generalizability of the findings. Future research; therefore, should aim to recruit larger sample sizes to achieve greater statistical power.

Given that the aim of this study was to compare the differences between form-focused and content-focused feedback in terms of the changes in grammatical/non-grammatical accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity, this study lacks a true control group (a group with no feedback treatment). Although this might not be a problem from a pedagogical perspective

but it could limit contribution to theory and to the conclusions which can be drawn from the results of the analyses (Boggs, 2019). Additionally, it is possible that the participants with good writing abilities and who were motivated to learn in this study benefited from the feedback they received more than others. Though this study offers a provisional answer to this, future studies need to include two experimental groups; one of lower and the other of higher proficiency students to find out whether there are differences between them.

Comparing form-focused and content-focused feedback in other contexts is another concern that needs to be considered in future research. The findings of this cannot probably be transferred to any other contexts because of the sample used for the intervention. In other words, the participants of this study were first-year undergraduates and they were expected to have an acceptable level of writing. This was based on the assumption that they have received enough instruction about writing and grammar during middle and secondary school. However, the findings showed the opposite as most of them reported that they have not received a great amount of instruction about writing and they were not familiar with the different types of feedback. As previously suggested this could be one of the factors why students' could not benefit from form-focused and content-focused feedback in this study. Therefore, different results could be reported in another context.

The findings of this study also recommend future research on teachers' attitudes towards feedback to find out how compatible are students' attitudes to teachers' attitudes and real classroom practices. Some L2 writing researchers asserted that a mismatch between students' preferences and teachers' practices of feedback might inhibit the effects of feedback on developing students' writing skills (Schulz, 1996; Diab, 2005a; Zhu, 2010). Therefore, further investigations on L2 writing instructors' attitudes towards feedback help to draw a complete picture of the findings of the current study.

Finally, further studies should be conducted in real classroom settings. First, to add some "ecological validity" to this research and, second, to encourage teachers and decision-makers in the academic sector to integrate teacher's feedback in language classrooms. However, researchers should be careful when conducting this kind of research because the teacher-researcher insider position may bring the risk of bias and subjectivity. To avoid this risk in the current study, triangulation was used. This involves the use of multiple methods such as focus groups and individual interviews. These methods might have reduced the influence of personal bias on the data and allows for a more holistic view of the themes, which emerged from different sources of data.

7.3 Summary

The findings of this study answered many questions on teacher's feedback in the literature. First, the study offered further insights to the existing literature by comparing form-focused and content-focused feedback in terms of the changes in accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity as opposed to previous research, which largely focused on form-focused feedback and on writing accuracy. Second, the study showed that the teaching context did not impact students' motivation to teacher's feedback as opposed to earlier studies (e.g, Bitchener & Storch, 2016), which reported that teaching contexts (EFL vs. ESL) affect the students' preferences for the different types of feedback. Third, the study is an addition to the few studies that investigated teachers' feedback longitudinally. Furthermore, the findings regarding students' attitudes gave insights into research on the students' views regarding different types of feedback by highlighting students' needs, their preferences, and their difficulties with teacher's feedback.

The key implications are that teachers should reconsider their feedback practices and the teaching of writing and look for alternative ways to develop students writing skills other than grammar correction. Moreover, teachers should pay attention to the importance of content feedback in their classrooms, particularly, teachers should be careful not to use complex language and should provide clear explanations on how the students correct the content of their writings. Finally, EFL teachers are reminded to provide feedback in ways that increase students' motivation and to consider the benefits of using peer feedback in their classrooms.

The findings of the study also resulted in a number of recommendations that future researchers should take into consideration. First, there should be further investigations with longer research designs. Second, future studies need to include groups with larger sample sizes to improve the statistical power. Third, there should be a consideration of the inclusion of control group to increase the theoretical contributions of the results. Fourth, future research should also consider comparing form-focused and content-focused feedback in other EFL contexts to empirically test the generalizability of the current findings. The study also recommends investigations on teachers' attitudes towards feedback to compare it with students' attitudes and to real classroom practices. Finally, further studies on form-focused and content-focused feedback in different real-world settings should also be taken into consideration to deepen our understanding about teacher's feedback.

Although this study has achieved its objectives, Teachers' corrective feedback remains controversial among L2 writing scholars because further research is required to answer many questions related to this topic.

Appendix A Sample of a lesson plan

Session Plan **Subject / Course: Written expression**

Year: 1st Year

Group: 1/2

Time: 3 hours (2 sessions)

Session topic: Descriptive writing

Objectives:

By the end of the course students will be able to produce a paragraph describing a place.

Procedures	**Classroom activities**	**Materials**
Preparation The teacher creates a situation by using a picture	**Task 1**: Describe this picture. Have you been to the beach before? Tell your classmate what it was like. Students describe the beach to each other providing sentences such as: The weather is sunny, people are sunbathing	Picture
Modelling and reinforcing: In this stage students are provided with a model followed by a number of tasks in order to deconstruct the text.	**Task 2**: students are asked to identify the different parts of the paragraph (topic sentences and supporting sentences) through deconstruction	Students will be provided with short written text describing The beach
Planning: In this phase, the teacher provides the students with the following activities related to the same genre.	**Task 3:**Discussion of paragraph characteristics (more practice).The students will be asked to discuss the characteristics of some descriptive paragraphs. They have to read them and discuss them with their classmates, then, identify all the characteristics of these paragraphs (content, organization, mechanics). **Task 4**: students will be asked to underline the adjectives used in the previous paragraphs and explain the difficult ones.	Students will be provided with two descriptive paragraphs

Appendix A

Joint construction In this phase the teacher and students construct a paragraph together	First, students are asked choose a topic (a place to describe). Second, students generate ideas using word map, or clustering. Together, they write a topic sentence and then chose from the ideas suggested to be used as supportive details. This model should be written on the board. The different phases of the process approach should be followed. This means that the paragraph written should be revised and improved till the teacher and students reach the final draft, which can be used as a model for the next phase	Papers, pencils
Individual construction: Students will be asked to choose a place to describe	They will be provided with a word map to classify their ideas. After brainstorming, they will be asked to write sentences, and then build the paragraph using connectors. After having written the first draft, they will receive comments or feedback from the teacher or their peers In this phase, the teacher uses conferencing in order to guide students to improve their paragraphs. This will enhance them to correct errors or make modification (revision phase). Students are always reminded to follow the drafting process learnt in the classroom when producing their homework tasks	

Lesson plan designed by Chelli (2012)

Appendix B Sample of classroom Tasks

Objective of the task:

Identification and deconstruction of the paragraph above.

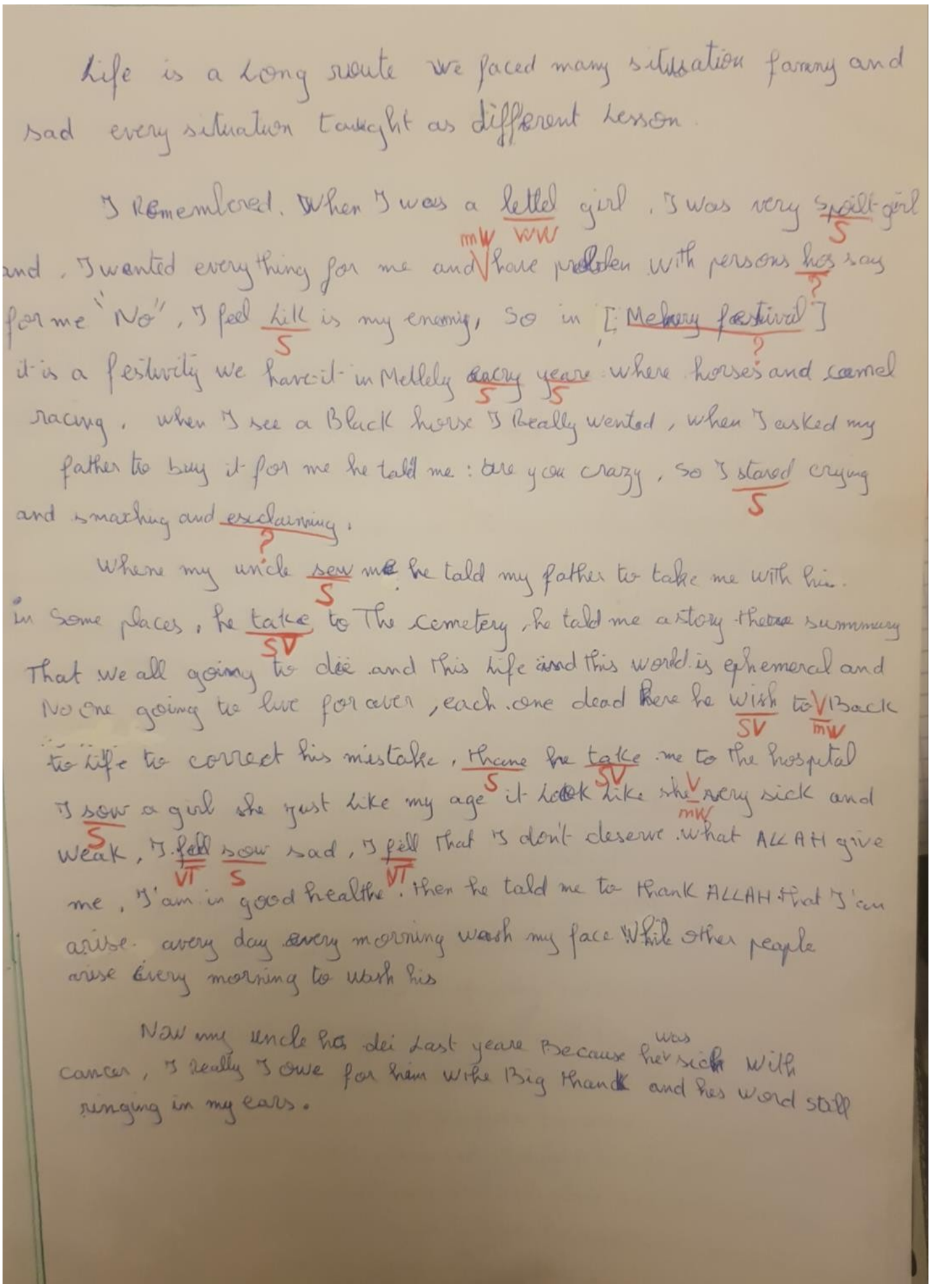
Text: *Read the text below, then, answer the following questions*

Air pollution is perhaps the most devastating form of pollution since it destroys a resource that every life form we know it needs to sustain itself. The effects of this menace, both immediate and far ranging are easy to summarize: unbreathable air. The causes, however, need some more explanation. Every citizen who drives a car that is not properly serviced and that does not have emission control devices is contributing noxious gases into the atmosphere. Large industries that do not have filtration mechanisms on their smoke stacks are also contributors. Every government which does not pass legislation is also destroying the atmosphere. One may wonder why these three aspects of society are so cavalier about the air we breathe. Well, there is an underlying cause which motivates all three groups: money. Legislation and enforcement of laws, installation and maintenance of filtration systems cost money. The majority of these three groups seem content to save a bit of money now and to sacrifice an invaluable commodity later.

1. What type of text is it?
2. How is the paragraph organized?
3. Identify the topic sentence and the supporting details.
4. Use the following table to deconstruct the text

Topic sentences	***Supporting details***
Air pollution is perhaps the most devastating type of pollution	It destroys a resource that every life form we know it need to sustain itself.
……	……
……	…….

Appendix C Sample of a student's essay



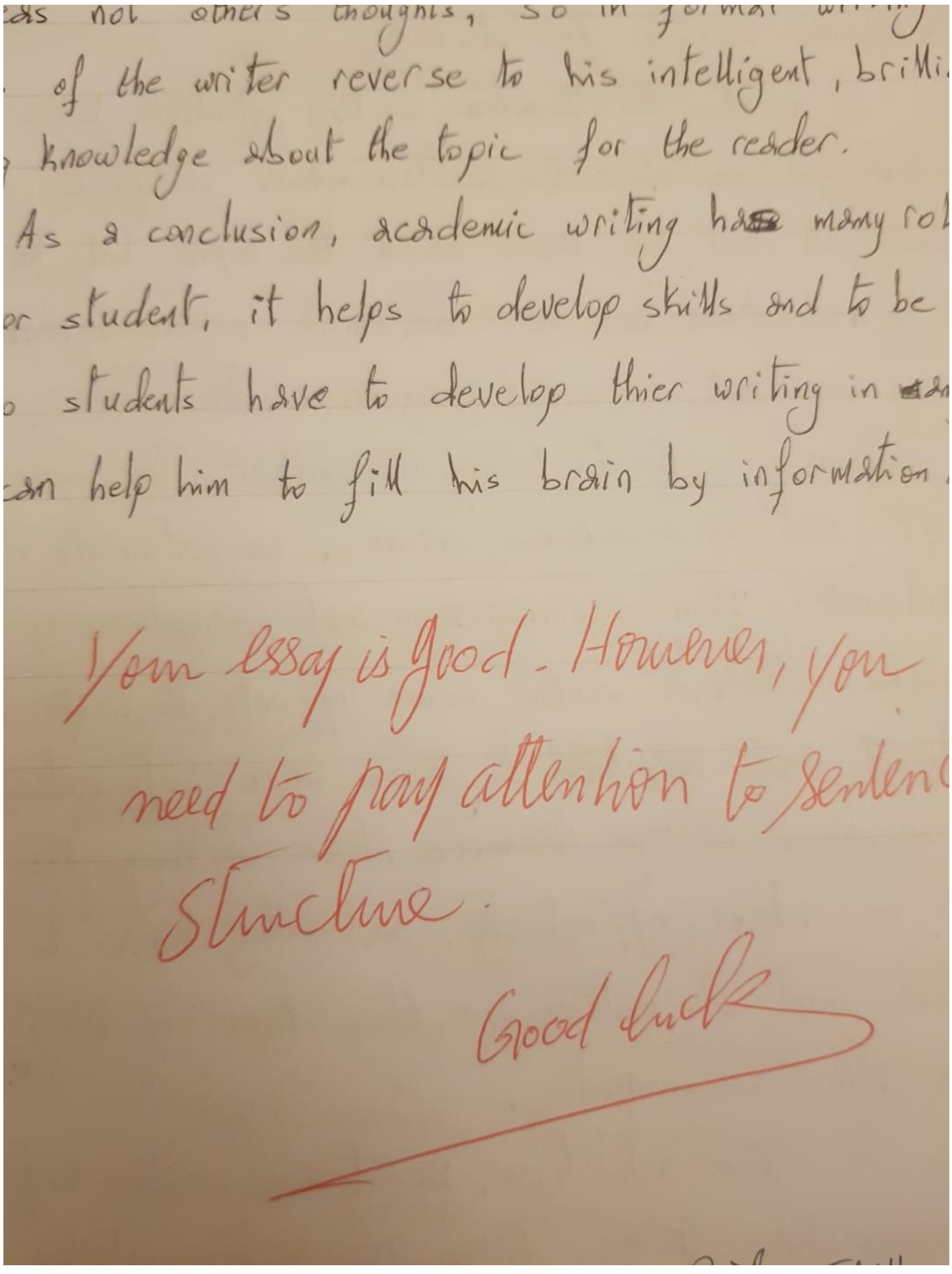
Life is a Long route we faced many situation funny and sad every situation taught as different lesson.

I Remembered. When I was a lettle girl, I was very spoilt-girl and, I wanted everything for me and have problem with persons has say for me "No", I feel like is my enemy, So in [: Melody festival] it is a festivity we have it in Melody racing years where horses and camel racing. when I see a Black horse I Really wented, when I asked my father to buy it for me he told me: are you crazy, so I stard crying and smacking and exclaiming.

Where my uncle sew me he tald my father to take me with him. in some places, he take to The cemetery, he told me a story there summary That we all going to die and this life and this world is ephemeral and No one going to live for ever, each one dead there he wish to Back to life to correct his mistake, thane he take me to the hospital I sow a girl she yust like my age it look like she very sick and weak, I. fell sow sad, I fell that I don't deserve what ALLAH give me, I am in good healthe. then he told me to thank ALLAH that I can arise every day every morning wash my face While other people arise Every morning to wash his

Now my uncle has dei Last yeare Because her was sick With cancer, I really I owe for him Wihe Big thank and hes word still ringing in my ears.

Appendix D Sample of teacher's feedback



Appendix E Sample of content analysis

Nowadays **the Internet** became such an important measure in our life, so that we cannot pass our day without using it. (1) /*But* **some people** think about the Internet causes and creates many problems in the society. (2) /*In this essay* I will talk about **Internet**, **its** advantages and disadvantages. (3) /*Well*, **Internet** as most people see it, is a double-edged sword. (4) /*Along* being **a parameter** to measure the advancement of a community or a country compared to others. (5)/***It***'s been a blessing to the humanity (6)/. *But* as I have mentioned, **the Internet** is a double-edged sword, (7) /***it*** has advantages and also disadvantages as well. (8)/*Starting* by talking about **some of the advantages of Internet**. (9)/ *Firstly*, **It** offers an unlimited communication by facilitating the connection between people" friends, family…etc" via social media, *taking* for example Facebook, Twitter, Skype and so on. (10)/ / *Besides that,* **social media** helped people to share and interact ideas. (11) /*Secondly*, **Internet** is full of informations about anything and everything, and what makes **it** useful is the easy way to find any information through it. (12) /*Also*, **the Internet** offers different kinds of entertainment, including watching movies, listening to music, reading books and playing games….etc. (13) /*However*, **the dark side of the Internet** is wider.(14)/ ***It***'s been on the other hand a curse for some people who delimited its efficiency on basic societal interaction only.(15)/ *So*, a lot of people have what we call **"Addiction to Internet"** by means that some of them spent too much on the Internet. (16) /***This*** can effects their social life, and this can causes catastrofal diseases as a result. (17)/*Moreover*, although **the Internet** made life easier in different ways, but it also reflects negatively in some points. (18)/ *Let's take* " communication" for instance, **people and especially children** lost their ability to communicate fluently with others face by face because most of them are used to communicate and interact via social medias. (19) /*Furthermore*, **one of the main disadvantages of the Internet** is viruses. (20) /***They*** attack a computer with the aim of causing harm, they destroy the system of the computer, and may cause the loss of an important data, and fixing it can be very costly. (21)/*Also*, **the problem of spamming** which is sending unwanted messages to radom people so that they make it difficult for people to enter to their accounts. (22) /***The*** **Internet** made life easier with the benefic offers. (23) ***/People*** can socialize, find informations, shopping online…etc. (24) */But* **it** causes many problems as well. (25)/*As a conclusion*, I believe that beside the variety of positive things that **the Internet** shows, it causes too many problems in human's life and society also. (26)/

Appendix F Experimental communicative profile scale

Communicative Quality	Interestingness	Referencing	Organization	Argumentation	Linguistic Accuracy	Linguistic Appropriacy
[9] The writing displays an ability to communicate in a way that gives the reader full satisfaction.	The writing shows high creativity and novelty, fully engrossing the reader.	The writing shows abundant use of illustrations and examples displaying cultural awareness.	The writing displays completely logical organizational structure, enabling the message to be followed effortlessly.	Relevant arguments are presented in an interesting way, with main ideas prominently and clearly stated, with complete effective supporting material; arguments are effectively related to the writer's experience or views.	The reader sees no errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar.	There is an ability to manipulate the linguistic system with complete appropriacy.
[8] The writing displays an ability to communicate without causing the reader any difficulties.	The writing shows novelty and creativity, sustaining interest throughout.	The writing makes frequent use of examples suited to the reader.	The writing displays a logical organizational structure that enables the message to be followed easily.	Relevant arguments are presented in an interesting way, with main ideas highlighted, effective supporting material and they are well related to the writer's own experience or views.	The reader sees no significant errors of vocabulary, punctuation, or grammar.	There is an ability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately.
[7] The writing displays an ability to communicate with few difficulties for the reader.	The writing has frequent novel ideas that evoke reader interest and attention.	The writing offers many examples that are suitable for most readers.	The writing displays good organizational structure that enables the message to be followed throughout.	Arguments are well presented with relevant supporting material and an attempt to relate them to the writer's experience or views.	The reader is aware of but not troubled by occasional errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar.	There is limited ability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately, but this intrudes only occasionally.
[6] The writing displays an ability to communicate although there is occasional strain for the reader.	The writing occasionally shows interesting ideas that attract reader attention.	The writing makes use of examples although the particular examples used may not be culturally appropriate.	The writing is organized well enough for the message to be followed throughout.	Arguments are presented, but it may be difficult for the reader to distinguish main ideas from supporting material; main ideas may not be supported; their relevance may be dubious; arguments may not be related to the writer's experience or views.	The reader is aware of errors of vocabulary, spelling, or grammar—but only occasionally.	There is limited ability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately, but this intrudes only occasionally.

[5] The writing displays an ability to communicate although there is often strain for the reader.	The writing occasionally provides new information but little of it is interesting.	The writing makes infrequent use of explanations or examples.	The writing is organized well enough for the message to be followed most of the time.	Arguments are presented but may lack relevance clarity, consistency, or support; they may not be related to the writers's experience or views.	The reader is aware of errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar that intrude frequently.	There is limited ability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately, which intrudes frequently.
[4] The writing shows a limited ability to communicate, which puts a strain on the reader throughout.	The writing is routine in the major part of its content with little new information.	The writing contains fragmented examples or allusions that assist few readers.	The writing lacks a clear organizational structure and the message is difficult to follow.	Arguments are inadequately presented and supported; they may be irrelevant; if the writer's experience or views are presented, their relevance may be difficult to see.	The reader finds the control of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and grammar inadequate.	There is inability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately, which causes severe strain for the reader.
[3] The writing does not display an ability to communicate although meaning comes through spasmodically.	The writing is is dull and uninteresting for most readers.	The writing provides no examples suitable for the reader.	The writing has no discernable organizational structure, and a message cannot be followed.	Some elements of information are presented, but the reader is not provided with an argument, or the argument is mainly irrelevant.	The reader is is aware primarily of gross inadequacies of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and grammar.	There is little or no sense of linguistic approciacy, although there is evidence of sentence structure.
[2] The writing displays no ability to communicate.	The writing is completely void of interesting content.	The writing provides no examples whatever.	No organizational structure or message is recognizable.	A meaning comes through occasionally, but it is not relevant.	The reader sees no evidence of control of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar.	There is no sense of linguistic appropriacy.

[1] A true nonwriter who has not produced any assessable strings of English writing. An answer that is wholly or almost wholly copied from the input text or task is in this category.

[0] This rating should be used only when a candidate did not attend or attempt this part of the test in any way.

Appendix G Participant Information sheet

Study Title: Feedback on Form Vs. Feedback on content: The changes in EFL writing accuracy, syntactic complexity and content complexity

Researcher: Yasmine Mustafa

ERGO number: 45867

You are being invited to take part in the above research study. To help you decide whether you would like to take part or not, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the information below carefully and ask questions if anything is not clear or you would like more information before you decide to take part in this research. You may like to discuss it with others but it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you are happy to participate you will be asked to sign a consent form.

What is the research about?

I am Yasmine Mustafa, a PhD candidate in Language Teaching at the University of Southampton (United Kingdom). I am interested in pursuing an investigation into the effects of form and content feedback in foreign students' writing development for my PhD dissertation. Particularly, I intend to find out whether direct feedback, focusing on form, and direct feedback, focusing on content, help Algerian EFL students improve overall accuracy and complexity in new pieces of writing over time.

Why have I been asked to participate?

You are an Algerian university student who learned English as a foreign language

What will happen to me if I take part?

You need to give us your permission to use your essays for the data collection. You also need to take part of an interview, by the end of the semester.

Are there any benefits in my taking part?

The potential benefit of your participation in this research is that it may help teachers to know what assessment practices are more efficient for students' writing development.

Are there any risks involved?

There are no potential risks in taking part in this study.

What data will be collected?

The data required for this study will be gathered from the pieces of writings you produce. I will correct your pieces of writings and provide you with the necessary feedback in order to find out whether the feedback I provide helps you to develop your writing in terms of accuracy and complexity. By the end of the study, I will also interview some students to find out whether they are satisfied about the feedback they have been receiving or not.

Appendix G

Will my participation be confidential?

Your participation and the information we collect about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential.

Only members of the research team and responsible members of the University of Southampton may be given access to data about you for monitoring purposes and/or to carry out an audit of the study to ensure that the research is complying with applicable regulations. Individuals from regulatory authorities (people who check that we are carrying out the study correctly) may require access to your data. All of these people have a duty to keep your information, as a research participant, strictly confidential.

All the data collected will be saved in my university laptop, which is locked and only me can log into it.

NB: In order to validate the findings of this study, your essays might be corrected by a second teacher, however, I will make sure that your names will not appear.

Do I have to take part?

No, it is entirely up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide you want to take part, you will need to sign a consent form to show you have agreed to take part.

What happens if I change my mind?

If, at any time, you decide that you no longer wish to proceed with this research you have the right to withdraw without giving a reason and without your participant rights being affected.

What will happen to the results of the research?

Your personal details will remain strictly confidential. Research findings made available in any reports or publications will not include information that can directly identify you without your specific consent.

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions about any aspect of the study, you can either email me or approach me in the classroom.

What happens if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you should speak to the researcher who will do their best to answer your questions. You can either approach the researcher in the classroom or by email

If you remain unhappy or have a complaint about any aspect of this study, please contact the University of Southampton Research Integrity and Governance Manager (023 8059 5058, rgoinfo@soton.ac.uk).

Data Protection Privacy Notice

The University of Southampton conducts research to the highest standards of research integrity. As a publicly-funded organisation, the University has to ensure that it is in the public interest

when we use personally-identifiable information about people who have agreed to take part in research. This means that when you agree to take part in a research study, we will use information about you in the ways needed, and for the purposes specified, to conduct and complete the research project. Under data protection law, 'Personal data' means any information that relates to and is capable of identifying a living individual. The University's data protection policy governing the use of personal data by the University can be found on its website (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page).

This Participant Information Sheet tells you what data will be collected for this project and whether this includes any personal data. Please ask the research team if you have any questions or are unclear what data is being collected about you.

Our privacy notice for research participants provides more information on how the University of Southampton collects and uses your personal data when you take part in one of our research projects and can be found at
http://www.southampton.ac.uk/assets/sharepoint/intranet/ls/Public/Research%20and%20Integrity%20Privacy%20Notice/Privacy%20Notice%20for%20Research%20Participants.pdf

Any personal data we collect in this study will be used only for the purposes of carrying out our research and will be handled according to the University's policies in line with data protection law. If any personal data is used from which you can be identified directly, it will not be disclosed to anyone else without your consent unless the University of Southampton is required by law to disclose it.

Data protection law requires us to have a valid legal reason ('lawful basis') to process and use your Personal data. The lawful basis for processing personal information in this research study is for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest. Personal data collected for research will not be used for any other purpose.

For the purposes of data protection law, the University of Southampton is the 'Data Controller' for this study, which means that we are responsible for looking after your information and using it properly. The University of Southampton will keep identifiable information about you for xx years after the study has finished after which time any link between you and your information will be removed.

To safeguard your rights, we will use the minimum personal data necessary to achieve our research study objectives. Your data protection rights – such as to access, change, or transfer such information - may be limited, however, in order for the research output to be reliable and accurate. The University will not do anything with your personal data that you would not reasonably expect.

If you have any questions about how your personal data is used, or wish to exercise any of your rights, please consult the University's data protection webpage (https://www.southampton.ac.uk/legalservices/what-we-do/data-protection-and-foi.page) where you can make a request using our online form. If you need further assistance, please contact the University's Data Protection Officer (data.protection@soton.ac.uk).

Appendix H Students' consent form

Study Title: The Effects of Different Types of Feedback On EFL Students' Writing Accuracy, Syntactic Complexity and Content Complexity

Researcher: Yasmine Mustafa

ERGO number: 45867

Please initial the box (es) if you agree with the statement(s):

I have read and understood the information sheet and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to take part in this research project and agree for my data to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw (at any time) for any reason without my participation rights being affected.	
I agree to take part in the *interview* for the purposes set out in the participation information sheet and understand that these will be recorded using *audio/ written notes*.	
I agree that other teachers might correct my essays. However, my personal information will remain strictly confidential	

Name of participant ……

Signature of the participant…….

Date……..

Name of researcher: Yasmine Mustafa

Signature of researcher: Yasmine Mustafa

Date……..

Appendix I Focus Group interview Sample

Questions:

1. What did you learn from this experience?

ماذا تعلمت من هذه التجربة؟

2. Do you think that this experience contributed in developing your writing skill?

في رايك، هل هذه التجربة ساهمت في تطوير مهاراتك الكتابية؟

3. Did you have any difficulty to understand the feedback you have received during the experiment?

هل واجهت اي صعوبات في فهم ملاحظات الاستاذ خلال هذه التجربة؟

4. If yes, what are these difficulties?

ما هي هذه الصعوبات؟

5. Do you usually receive this type of feedback from your teachers?

هل اعتدت على تلقي هذا النوع من الملاحظات من اساتذتك سابقا؟

6. Do you think that feedback, focusing on form, is helpful for improving your writing?

في رايك، هل ملاحظات الاستاذ التي تركز عل شكل المقال تساعدك عل تطوير كتاباتك؟

7. Do you think that giving continuous feedback is a good way to improve your writing? Why?

في رايك، هل اعطاء ملاحظات بشكل مستمر طريقة جيدة لتطوير كتابتك؟ لماذا؟

8. Are there any suggestions you might have for your teacher to improve the effectiveness of feedback on your writing?

هل لديك اي اقتراحات التي من الممكن ان تساعد في اثراء فعالية ملاحظات الاستاذ على كتاباتك

Appendix J Individual interview sample

Questions:

1. Can you tell me about your experience with English writing in school?

هل بامكانك مشاركة تجربتك مع الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية في المدرسة ؟

2. Did your teachers give you any types of feedback?

هل اعتدت على تلقي ملاحظات من اساتذتك سابقا؟

3. How did you find your teacher’s feedback?

كيف وجدت ملاحظات اساتذتك ؟

4. What was the focus of your teacher’s feedback form or content?

على ماذاركزت ملاحظات اساتذتك الشكل او المضمون؟

5. Did you understand your teacher’s feedback?

هل فهمت ملاحظات اساتذتك؟

6. How did you find my feedback?

كيف وجدت الملاحظات التي قدمتها لك؟

7. Do you think your teacher’s comments encourage you to develop your writing? How?

في رايك، هل ملاحظات الاستاد شجعتك على تطوير الكتابة؟ وكيف ذلك؟

8. Let’s look at some of your essays, can you tell me what was your first impression when you received your teacher’s feedback?

لنلقي نظرة على بعض مقالاتك؛ ماهو انطباعك عندما تلقيت ملاحظات الاستاذ؟

9. I provided you with form/content feedback. Do you think this this type of feedback helped you to write better? Why? Why not?

لقد زودتك بتعليقات عن المحتوى اوالمضمون ايهما افضل للكتابة ؟لماذا؟ لما لا؟

10. Did you understand my feedback? If yes, tell me more how did you deal with my feedback when you received it? If not, what was difficult with my feedback?

هل فهمت ملاحظاتي؟ اذا نعم؟ اخبرني اكثر كيف تعاملت معها ؟اذا لا؟ ما المشكل؟

11. Are there any other difficulties you confronted while processing your teacher's feedback?

هل واجهت اي صعوبات في فهم ملاحظات الاستاذ ؟

12. Let's go through some examples of the errors on your essays, can you tell me why you made these errors?

لنلقي نظرة على بعض الامثلة من الاخطا ماهو انطباعك عندما تلقبت ملاحظات الاستاذ؟

13. Some errors have reduced in your mid and final essays, while others were repeated. How? Why?

بعض من اخطاك نقصت وبعضها بقي كما هو في المقال ٧ والمقال ١٤ ؟كيف ذلك؟لماذا؟

14. Would you prefer your teacher to discuss the errors? Why?

هل تفضل ان يناقش معك الاستاذ اخطاك؟

15. Can you tell me how you became more careful about your writing?

هل بامكانك ان تخبرني كيف اصبحت اكثر حذر بشان كتاباتك؟

16. Would your writing improve if the teacher provides you with feedback frequently? Why? Why not?

في رايك، هل اعطاء ملاحظات بشكل مستمر طريقة جيدة لتطوير كتابتك؟ لماذا

17. Do you prefer to receive feedback from other sources?

هل تفضل ان تلقي ملاحظات الاستاذ من مصادر اخرى؟

18. Would you prefer your teacher to circle the errors or to correct them? Why?

هل تفضل ان يوضح لك الاستاذ الاخطا فقط دون تصحيحها ام تفضل ان يصححها؟لماذا؟

19. Would you like your teacher to correct all your errors or select them?

هل تفضل ان يصحح الاستاذ جميع اخطاك او بعض منها؟

20. Would you prefer your teacher to correct your grammar or the content of your writing

هل تفضل ان يركز الاستاذ في تصحيحه على الشكل ام المضمرن؟

21. How do you prefer to receive feedback?

Appendix J

كيف تفضل ملاحظات استاذك؟

22. What do you want from your teacher?

ماذا تريد من استاذك؟

Appendix K Results of Normality test (Accuracy)

Types of feedback	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	Df	Sig	Statistic	Df	Sig
Grammatical accuracy (Pre-test)						
Content-focused	.235	15	.200*	.873	15	.384
Form-focused	.103	15	.200*	.966	15	.789
Non-grammatical accuracy (Pre-test)						
Content-focused	.219	15	.200*	.879	15	.470
Form-focused	.213	15	.200*	.898	15	.089

Appendix L Results of Normality Test (Syntactic complexity)

Measures	Types of feedback	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	Df	Sig	Statistic	Df	Sig
MLS	Content-focused	.178	15	.200*	.911	15	.141
	Form-focused	.093	15	.200*	.983	15	.986
MLC	Content-focused	.154	15	.200*	.846	15	.150
	Form-focused	.130	15	.200*	.980	15	.972
MLT	Content-focused	.266	15	.200*	.715	15	.121
	Form-focused	.155	15	.200*	.937	15	.315
C/S	Content-focused	.181	15	.198	.920	15	.190
	Form-focused	.202	15	.101	.928	15	.251
DC/C	Content-focused	.158	15	.200*	.968	15	.822
	Form-focused	.157	15	.200*	.960	15	.691
CP/C	Content-focused	.229	15	.200*	.906	15	.116
	Form-focused	.148	15	.200*	.940	15	.385
CN/C	Content-focused	.165	15	.200*	.917	15	.176
	Form-focused	.155	15	.200*	974	15	.916

Appendix M Results of Normality test (Content complexity)

Measures	Types of feedback	Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
		Statistic	**Df**	**Sig**	**Statistic**	**Df**	**Sig**
NT	Content-focused	.177	15	.200*	.941	15	.701
	Form-focused	.151	15	.200*	.941	15	.401
PP	Content-focused	.217	15	.055	.919	15	.187
	Form-focused	.237	15	.230	.901	15	.100
EP	Content-focused	.199	15	.114	.916	15	.167
	Form-focused	.257	15	.190	.881	15	.350
SP	Content-focused	.176	15	.200*	.899	15	.090
	Form-focused	.242	15	.200*	.943	15	.421

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