

Error Feedback in L2 Writing: What Could the Teachers Learn from the Literature?

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Abstract:

Since Truscott published his seminal article, *The Case against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes*, an enormous number of empirical studies have been conducted to explore the necessity and effectiveness of error feedback in second language (L2) writing. Despite the passage of decades, the debates surrounding error feedback remain unresolved. This paper revisits key debates in the field, emphasizing the potential confusion that conflicting findings in current studies may create for L2 writing teachers. It concludes with specific advice for teachers, particularly novices, on how to extract valuable insights from both the published literature and their own classroom practices to inform their error feedback strategies.

Keywords:

Error Feedback, L2 Writing, Teacher Practice, Feedback Strategies, Empirical Research

1. Introduction

Until Truscott's groundbreaking yet contentious assertion that error feedback in L2 writing proves not only ineffective but potentially detrimental, the pedagogical value of providing grammatical error feedback had remained largely unchallenged [1]. This provocative assertion sparked a vigorous scholarly debate, prompting a wave of empirical studies by researchers such as Ferris to systematically investigate and challenge Truscott's claims [2,3]. While these studies have yielded substantial evidence supporting the efficacy of error feedback, Ferris cautions against definitive conclusions, noting the relative scarcity of empirical research in this domain [2].

The debate becomes further complicated when considering the variable effectiveness of different feedback approaches - particularly the distinctions between direct versus indirect feedback and focused versus unfocused feedback. Although the academic consensus predominantly advocates for further research before establishing conclusive findings, there remains a notable gap in addressing how these mixed and often contradictory research outcomes inform and impact classroom practitioners implementing error feedback strategies.

This paper aims to provide a comprehensive synthesis of the ongoing scholarly discourse surrounding error feedback in L2 writing instruction. Through critical

analysis of the existing literature's conflicting findings, it seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical research and classroom practice by offering evidence-based, practical guidance for educators. Specifically, it advocates for a context-sensitive approach to error feedback, encouraging teachers to judiciously evaluate research findings and adapt their feedback methodologies to align with their specific instructional contexts and learner needs.

2. The Effectiveness of Error Feedback in a General Sense

In his seminal article, *The Case against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes*, Truscott posited that providing error feedback on grammar is not only ineffective but also potentially detrimental to students' language development [1]. Based on a critical analysis of earlier studies, including those conducted by Semke and Sheppard [4], Truscott articulated three central arguments to support his claim: First, second language learning is a complex process that cannot be reduced to the simple transfer of information from teacher to student. Error feedback, as a form of information transfer, fails to address the complexities of language acquisition. Second, L2 learners follow a fixed order of acquisition when learning grammatical features, which is not influenced by instruction. Therefore, error feedback, as an instructional intervention, does not facilitate the acquisition of grammar. Third, error correction is inherently unpleasant for learners, often triggering anxiety and discouraging them from engaging with the language.

In response to Truscott's claims, numerous researchers have conducted studies to demonstrate the effectiveness of error feedback. For example, Ashwell compared different types of feedback on Japanese students' writing and found that while there were no significant differences between the feedback types, all groups that received feedback outperformed the group that received no feedback [5]. Similarly, Fathman and Whalley (1990) found positive evidence for the effectiveness of error feedback in a study involving 72 ESL learners in a U.S. college [6]. Ferris and Roberts also found that students who received error feedback produced significantly better revisions than those who did not [3].

However, Truscott and Hsu contested the validity of these new findings, arguing that they do not constitute evidence of genuine learning [7]. They pointed out that the improvements observed in the studies were based on comparisons between early drafts and revised versions of the same text [5, 3]. Truscott and Hsu maintained that such findings merely demonstrate students' ability to make short-term corrections in response to written feedback during the revision process, rather than indicating permanent acquisition of grammatical knowledge [7]. In their view, the ability to apply feedback to a specific text does not necessarily translate into long-term learning or the capacity to avoid similar errors in future writing tasks.

In response to these concerns, more recent studies have shifted their focus to investigating the effectiveness of error feedback in new writing tasks [8, 9]. These studies employ methodologies such as new writing tasks or pre- and post-tests to assess the long-term impact of error feedback. For instance, Ellis et al. demonstrated that students who received error feedback significantly outperformed a control group, leading the researchers to conclude that "written error feedback is effective" [9]. Similar positive outcomes have been reported in other studies, prompting many researchers to affirm the efficacy of error feedback in L2 writing.

However, these findings stand in contrast to earlier studies, such as those by Kepner and Sheppard, which found no evidence of long-term improvement in students' writing as a result of error feedback [10,4]. This discrepancy highlights the ongoing debate and underscores the need for further research to reconcile these conflicting results and better understand the conditions under which error feedback may be most beneficial.

In summary, the conflicting findings and persistent debate surrounding the effectiveness of error feedback underscore the necessity for further research before definitive conclusions can be reached regarding its role in L2 writing instruction. Moreover, the question of whether error feedback is necessary at all represents only one dimension of the broader scholarly discussion. Even among researchers who support the use of error feedback, significant disagreement persists regarding the most effective type of feedback to implement. This ongoing debate encompasses issues such as the relative merits of direct versus indirect feedback, focused versus unfocused feedback, and the contextual factors that may influence their efficacy. As such, the field continues to grapple with these complex questions, highlighting the need for more nuanced and context-sensitive investigations.

3. The Direct and the Indirect Error Feedback Debate

One of the most debated topics in the field of L2 writing is the effectiveness of direct (explicit) versus indirect (implicit) error feedback. Direct feedback involves explicitly correcting errors, while indirect feedback involves indicating that an error has been made without providing the correct form, requiring students to self-correct. Despite the extensive research conducted on this topic, the findings remain inconclusive, with studies often yielding conflicting results.

3.1. Indirect Feedback: Promoting Self-Reflection and Problem-Solving

Many earlier studies have found that indirect feedback is more effective than direct feedback in promoting long-term improvement in L2 writing. For example, Lalande argued that indirect feedback encourages students to engage in problem-solving and self-reflection, which are essential for long-term learning [11]. By requiring students to identify and correct their own errors, indirect feedback fosters a deeper understanding of the language and helps students develop the ability to monitor their own writing. Similarly, Williams and Doughty found that indirect feedback led to greater accuracy in students' writing, as it encouraged them to think critically about their errors and learn from their mistakes [12]. Bitchener and Knoch also supported the use of indirect feedback, particularly for advanced learners who have a solid foundation in the target language [8]. They argued that indirect feedback is more effective because it challenges students to engage in cognitive processes that are crucial for language acquisition, such as hypothesis testing and self-correction. This type of feedback is believed to promote autonomy and self-regulation, which are key components of successful language learning.

3.2. Direct Feedback: Reducing Confusion and Providing Clarity

Although the benefits of indirect error feedback, as evidenced by the studies mentioned above, are compelling, research has also shown that direct feedback may yield greater effectiveness, particularly for learners who are still in the early stages of developing their proficiency in the target language. Chandler and Ferris and Roberts argued that direct feedback is more beneficial because it provides clear and

unambiguous corrections, reducing the confusion that indirect feedback may cause [13,3]. For example, students who receive direct feedback are less likely to misinterpret the corrections, as the correct form is explicitly provided. This is especially important for learners who may not yet have the linguistic knowledge or problem-solving skills to self-correct effectively.

Frantzen also found that direct feedback led to greater improvements in students' writing accuracy, particularly in the short term [14]. She argued that direct feedback is more effective for addressing specific grammatical errors, as it provides students with immediate and concrete examples of correct usage. This can be particularly helpful for learners who are struggling with complex grammatical structures or who are still in the early stages of language acquisition.

3.3. Conflicting Findings and the Role of Learner Proficiency

Despite the ongoing scholarly debates surrounding the merits of direct versus indirect feedback, a notable body of research has revealed no statistically significant differences in the efficacy of these two approaches. For instance, Frantzen's seminal study compared the writing accuracy of 120 intermediate Spanish learners over a 12-week period, with one group receiving explicit corrections (direct feedback) and another receiving error codes (indirect feedback) [14]. Surprisingly, both groups demonstrated comparable levels of improvement in grammatical accuracy during post-tests, with less than 2% variance in error reduction rates. Similarly, Robb, Ross, and Shortreed conducted a controlled experiment involving 200 Japanese EFL students, where direct feedback (detailed corrections) and indirect feedback (underlined errors with symbols) yielded nearly identical outcomes in revised drafts [15]. These findings challenge the binary assumption that one feedback type universally outperforms the other, instead pointing to a context-dependent interplay of variables that mediate feedback effectiveness.

A critical analysis of these studies suggests that learner-specific and situational factors may override the inherent characteristics of feedback types. Among the most salient variables is learner proficiency, which appears to modulate feedback utility. Advanced learners, equipped with robust metalinguistic awareness and self-monitoring strategies, often thrive under indirect feedback. For example, Chandler's longitudinal study on C1-level ESL writers revealed that indirect feedback stimulated deeper cognitive engagement, as learners independently researched error patterns—a process correlated with long-term retention of grammatical rules [13]. Conversely, novice learners (A2-B1 levels) in Ferris and Roberts' experiment exhibited greater dependency on direct feedback [3]; when provided only with error codes, their revision attempts frequently introduced new inaccuracies, underscoring their limited capacity for autonomous problem-solving.

3.4. The Role of Error Type and Context

The effectiveness of direct and indirect feedback is also influenced by the type of errors being addressed and the context in which feedback is provided. For instance, errors related to grammar or syntax may be more effectively addressed through direct feedback, as these errors often require clear, explicit corrections to ensure accuracy. Conversely, errors involving style, organization, or higher-order thinking may benefit more from indirect feedback, as this approach encourages students to engage in self-reflection and critical analysis, fostering deeper learning and autonomy.

The context in which feedback is delivered further shapes its effectiveness. In classroom settings with limited teacher-student interaction, direct feedback may prove more effective, as it provides immediate and unambiguous guidance. In contrast, in more interactive environments where students can discuss errors with teachers or peers, indirect feedback may be more advantageous, as it promotes collaborative problem-solving and active engagement in the learning process.

Beyond proficiency levels, error typology, and classroom dynamics, additional contextual factors further complicate the feedback landscape. For example, in exam-driven contexts such as TOEFL preparation courses, direct feedback may be prioritized to address surface-level errors efficiently, aligning with the urgency of test preparation. In contrast, process-oriented classrooms may favor indirect feedback to cultivate learner autonomy and long-term writing development [16].

Cultural and educational contexts also play a significant role. In Confucian-heritage settings (e.g., China, Korea), students often perceive direct feedback as a sign of teacher dedication and care, while indirect feedback may be misinterpreted as a lack of attention or effort [17]. These cultural nuances highlight the importance of tailoring feedback strategies to align with both instructional goals and learners' expectations.

4. The Focused and Unfocused Error Feedback Debate

Indirect and direct feedback are not the only forms of feedback whose effectiveness remains a topic of ongoing debate. Focused and unfocused error feedback constitute another critical area of research, where conflicting findings about their efficacy persist in the literature.

4.1. Evidence Supporting Focused Feedback

One of the key reasons Truscott consider error feedback as ineffective stems from the concern that teachers in practice include various classifications of errors in their feedback [1]. Truscott believes that different error types should be treated differently because the process of L2 acquisition varies depending on the linguistic feature being learned [1]. For example, errors related to grammar, vocabulary, syntax, and discourse require different cognitive processes to correct, and treating them uniformly may not be effective.

This argument has been supported by other researchers, such as Ferris [2], Ferris et al. (2000), Ferris and Helt (2000), and Sheppard, who have also emphasized that it is inappropriate to treat all errors in the same way [4]. They argue that learners may struggle to process and internalize feedback when it covers too many error types simultaneously, as it can overwhelm their cognitive capacities.

In response to these concerns, more recent studies investigated the focused error feedback which concentrate on only one type of error a time as opposed to unfocused error feedback which covers all error types in students' L2 writing [9]. Ellis et al. argue that focused feedback is more effective because it aligns with the limited processing abilities of L2 learners [9]. When feedback is concentrated on a single error type, learners are better able to comprehend, internalize, and apply the corrections. In contrast, unfocused feedback, which covers a wide range of errors, may be too overwhelming for learners, leading to confusion and reduced effectiveness. Positive evidences are also produced in many other studies where focused and unfocused error feedback are compared [8,18,19,20].

4.2. Criticisms and Counterarguments

While findings supporting the effectiveness of focused error feedback have gained attention, Beuningen et al. (2008) and Ferris (2010) caution against overgeneralizing these results. They argue that the predominance of studies on focused feedback may be attributed to its methodological simplicity rather than its inherent superiority. Many of these studies have concentrated on relatively straightforward grammatical features, such as article usage or verb tense, which are easier to address and measure than more complex errors involving syntax, discourse, or higher-order writing skills. Consequently, the positive outcomes observed in these studies may not extend to more intricate error types or advanced learners, whose needs may differ significantly.

Moreover, the empirical evidence on focused versus unfocused feedback is far from conclusive. Some studies, such as Ellis et al. have found no significant differences in learner improvement between groups receiving focused and unfocused feedback [9]. In their study, both groups demonstrated comparable gains, suggesting that both approaches can be effective depending on the context and instructional goals. This finding challenges the assumption that focused feedback is universally superior and raises questions about the extent to which its benefits are as clear-cut as some researchers claim.

These nuances highlight the complexity of the debate and underscore the need for a more nuanced understanding of how different feedback types interact with error complexity, learner proficiency, and instructional contexts. Rather than advocating for a one-size-fits-all approach, researchers and practitioners may need to consider a more flexible, context-sensitive framework for delivering error feedback in L2 writing instruction.

5. Future Directions for Research

Given the ongoing debates and conflicting findings in the field of error feedback, there is a pressing need for further research to address several critical issues that remain unresolved. These issues not only hinder the development of a cohesive understanding of error feedback but also limit the ability of teachers to implement evidence-based practices in their classrooms. Below, I expand on some critical aspects that warrant deeper investigation, offering a more comprehensive perspective on how future research can advance the field and provide actionable insights for educators.

5.1. The Need for Longitudinal Studies

While some studies have begun to explore the long-term effects of error feedback, the majority of research continues to focus on short-term improvements, particularly in revised drafts. This narrow focus fails to capture whether students retain and apply feedback in subsequent writing tasks, which is a crucial measure of genuine learning. Longitudinal studies that track students' writing development over months or even years are essential to determine whether error feedback leads to sustained improvement. For example, researchers could investigate how feedback on specific error types (e.g., verb tense or article usage) influences students' accuracy and fluency over time. Such studies would provide valuable insights into the durability of feedback effects and help teachers make informed decisions about how often and when to provide feedback.

Additionally, longitudinal research could explore the cumulative impact of different feedback types. For instance, does a combination of direct and indirect feedback yield

better long-term results than using one type exclusively? By addressing these questions, researchers can offer more robust guidance on how to structure feedback over the course of a semester or academic year.

5.2. Standardizing Assessment Instruments

One of the major challenges in comparing findings across studies is the lack of standardized instruments for measuring writing improvement. Currently, researchers use a wide variety of assessment tools, including holistic scoring rubrics, error frequency counts, and analytic scales, each with its own criteria and focus. This inconsistency makes it difficult to draw definitive conclusions about the effectiveness of different feedback strategies.

Future research should prioritize the development and validation of standardized assessment tools that can be widely adopted across studies. These tools should be designed to capture multiple dimensions of writing quality, including accuracy, complexity, coherence, and fluency. For example, a standardized rubric could include specific criteria for evaluating grammatical accuracy alongside measures of organizational structure and lexical variety. By using consistent instruments, researchers can generate more reliable and comparable data, enabling meta-analyses and systematic reviews that provide clearer insights into best practices.

5.3. Exploring Individual Differences

Another critical area for future research is the role of individual differences in shaping the effectiveness of error feedback. Factors such as students' proficiency levels, learning styles, motivation, and even cultural backgrounds may influence how they perceive and respond to feedback. For instance, while advanced learners may benefit from indirect feedback that encourages self-correction, beginners might require more explicit guidance to understand and address their errors. Similarly, students with a strong intrinsic motivation to improve their writing may engage more deeply with feedback than those who view writing as a purely academic requirement.

Research that examines these individual differences can provide more nuanced recommendations for teachers. For example, studies could investigate how to tailor feedback to meet the needs of diverse learners within the same classroom. This might involve developing differentiated feedback strategies or using adaptive technologies that customize feedback based on individual error patterns and learning preferences.

5.4. The Role of Context in Feedback Effectiveness

As Lee and others have emphasized, the specific context in which feedback is provided plays a significant role in determining its effectiveness [21]. Factors such as class size, instructional time, institutional expectations, and cultural norms can all influence how feedback is delivered and received. For example, in exam-driven contexts, teachers may prioritize direct feedback to help students quickly address surface-level errors, whereas in process-oriented classrooms, indirect feedback might be more effective in fostering long-term writing development.

Future research should continue to explore these contextual factors through classroom-based studies that capture the complexities of real-world teaching environments. Such studies could investigate how different feedback strategies interact with specific contextual variables, providing teachers with practical, context-sensitive recommendations. For instance, researchers could examine how feedback

practices vary across educational systems (e.g., Western vs. Confucian-heritage contexts) and how these practices can be adapted to better align with local expectations and resources.

5.5. Integrating Technology and Feedback

With the increasing use of digital tools in education, future research should also explore how technology can enhance the delivery and effectiveness of error feedback. Automated writing evaluation systems, for example, offer the potential to provide immediate, consistent feedback on certain error types, freeing up teachers to focus on higher-order writing skills. However, the effectiveness of these tools in comparison to human feedback remains an open question. Research could investigate how to integrate automated feedback with teacher feedback to create a more comprehensive and supportive learning experience.

Additionally, studies could explore the use of collaborative platforms (e.g., Google Docs) to facilitate peer feedback and teacher-student interactions. These tools not only make feedback more accessible but also encourage students to engage more actively with the feedback process. By examining the potential of technology to enhance feedback practices, researchers can help teachers leverage digital tools to improve writing instruction.

5.6. Teacher Training and Professional Development

Finally, future research should address the role of teacher training in improving feedback practices. Many teachers report feeling unprepared to provide effective error feedback, particularly in light of the conflicting advice in the literature. Studies could investigate how professional development programs can equip teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to implement evidence-based feedback strategies. For example, training modules could focus on how to prioritize errors, balance direct and indirect feedback, and engage students in the feedback process.

Research could also explore how to foster a culture of collaboration among teachers, enabling them to share feedback strategies and learn from one another's experiences. By addressing these practical challenges, researchers can help bridge the gap between theory and practice, ensuring that teachers feel confident and supported in their use of error feedback.

6. Implications for Teachers

As the literature review demonstrates, the field of error feedback in L2 writing is marked by conflicting findings and unresolved debates. Researchers have yet to reach a consensus on fundamental questions, such as whether error feedback is necessary, which feedback types are most effective, or whether feedback should be focused or unfocused. This lack of clarity has created significant challenges for teachers, who are often left uncertain about how to implement error feedback in their classrooms. Compounding this uncertainty is the conflicting "best practices" advice emerging from the research. For instance, some studies suggest that indirect feedback is more effective than direct feedback, while others argue the opposite. Similarly, while some researchers advocate for focused feedback, others find no significant difference between focused and unfocused approaches. These contradictions leave teachers grappling with difficult decisions about which strategies to adopt and how to tailor feedback to meet their students' needs.

If these issues remain unresolved, teachers may face a dilemma where neither approach yields satisfactory results. On one hand, they may invest considerable time and effort meticulously marking every error in their students' writing, only to discover that their feedback has little impact on students' long-term improvement. On the other hand, students may feel overwhelmed by the volume of feedback they receive, struggling to understand how to apply it effectively to enhance their writing. As Lee aptly observed, this dynamic can lead to a frustrating scenario where “writing teachers exhaust themselves in marking pile after pile of compositions without seeing the effectiveness of their practice,” while “learners find their writing inundated with red ink and yet remain unable to figure out how to improve their writing [21].”

6.1. Seeing the Limitations of the Studies

Given the mixed findings in the literature, teachers who are looking for advice on error feedback practice need to be very critical when they interpret these findings. And one way to be critical is to be able to spot the limitations of the studies so that they know which findings are more reliable and which are not.

Among the many limitations exist in previous studies, four are pointed out by Ferris as the major ones that may generate misleading findings [22]:

First, many studies do not include a control group that receives no feedback, making it difficult to determine whether observed improvements are due to feedback or other factors.

Second, short-term focus: Many studies only measure improvements in revised drafts, rather than assessing long-term learning through new writing tasks.

Third, inappropriate assessment tools: Some studies use assessment tools that are not well-suited to measuring writing improvement, such as pre- and post-tests that focus on different genres.

Fourth, broad error categories: Some studies cover a wide range of error types, making it difficult to draw meaningful conclusions about the effectiveness of feedback for specific errors.

For the first issue, it is believed that the missing of the controlled groups in many previous studies is an outcome of an ethical concern [22,23]. Ferris stated that by not providing error feedback to the controlled group while providing the experimental groups with error feedback is considered to be unethical and thus has been avoided [22,23]. However, by giving the controlled groups with summary feedback on their errors the experimental groups in-text feedback, many recent studies have avoided the ethical concern and thus generate more reliable findings compared to the ones that do not include controlled groups [24].

In terms of the second issue, as is stated in the earlier section, as a response to Truscott & Hsu's argument that comparing the first draft and the revised paper in the previous studies only demonstrate short-term improvement in L2 writing [7], more studies have been conducted in new writing tasks [8,9,20]. Likewise, when looking for advice from the literature, it is a better choice for the teachers to look into these studies that focus on long-term effect of error feedback instead of those that focus on revision.

When turning for literature, teacher should also exercise care on the validity of the instruments that the studies have adopted before they go to the findings. Studies that

use a pre and post-test are usually considered to be valid measurement of improvement. That being said, it is also important to examine if the pre and post-test used same genres. Using journal entries in the pre-test and persuasive essays in the post-test would consist an invalid comparison.

Equally important to examine is the number of error types in the studies. Since different categories of language are acquired in different ways [1], it makes little sense to find valuable advice from the studies that cover a broad category of error. Studies on feedback in L2 learning have yielded reliable findings when they have targeted a single language feature instead of covering a broad range [24,25].

While the understanding of the limitations in the previous studies help teachers to distinguish more valid and reliable studies from the opposite ones, there is no guarantee that findings from a well-designed study can be directly introduced into his or her own teaching practice. This is because teachers are in a context “of lived experience of participation in the world” (Wenger, 1998, p. 3), therefore no direct relationship between the knowledge in the literature and their specific teaching situation exists. Thus, as Lee recommended, a “situated perspective and a context approach to teacher education on feedback in writing is crucial” [16].

6.2. Situated perspective as a solution

To avoid being misled by conflicting findings in the literature, it is imperative for teachers to critically contextualize research insights within their unique pedagogical environments. This necessity is vividly illustrated in Lee’s longitudinal case study, which documented the struggles of two novice EFL teachers attempting to implement progressive feedback strategies (e.g., indirect coded feedback) in a high-stakes exam-oriented school in Hong Kong [21]. Despite their rigorous training in evidence-based practices, both teachers faced institutional resistance—including pressure from administrators to prioritize error-free final drafts over process-oriented revisions—and were ultimately compelled to revert to traditional direct correction methods. Lee’s analysis revealed a critical gap: while the teachers possessed theoretical knowledge of feedback efficacy from published studies, this knowledge “failed to sufficiently prepare them for change because the ideas introduced might not have been tailor-made to suit the exigencies of teaching and learning in their specific contexts” [16]. This case underscores a systemic issue in teacher education: the disconnect between global research paradigms and localized classroom realities [26].

To bridge the gap between research and practice, teachers must adopt a practitioner-researcher mindset, designing and implementing classroom-based action research to evaluate feedback strategies within their specific institutional contexts. For example, consider a scenario where teachers aim to determine whether focused feedback (targeting specific error types) or unfocused feedback (addressing all errors) better meets their students’ needs. A robust experimental design could include the following steps:

(1) Baseline Assessment: Administer diagnostic writing tasks to identify prevalent error patterns (e.g., articles, prepositions) across classes. This initial assessment provides a clear understanding of students' common challenges and establishes a benchmark for measuring progress.

(2) Intervention Design:

Group A (3 classes): Receive focused feedback on 1-2 high-frequency error types per assignment, supplemented by mini-lessons explaining the relevant grammatical rules. This approach allows students to concentrate on specific areas of improvement without feeling overwhelmed.

Group B (3 classes): Receive unfocused feedback highlighting all errors, with corrections provided directly. This method mirrors traditional feedback practices and serves as a comparative baseline.

(3) Data Collection: Track improvements over a 12-week period using a combination of pre- and post-tests, student interviews, and error frequency logs. These tools provide both quantitative and qualitative insights into the effectiveness of each feedback approach.

(4) Stakeholder Engagement: Present interim findings to administrators and parents through visual dashboards (e.g., error reduction graphs, student progress charts) to justify pedagogical choices and demonstrate the impact of the intervention. This step ensures transparency and builds support for evidence-based practices.

Such classroom-driven research achieves two key objectives. First, it generates context-specific evidence that accounts for institutional cultures, resource limitations, and learner profiles [27]. Second, quantifiable outcomes—such as error reduction rates and student satisfaction surveys—empower teachers to advocate for pedagogical autonomy and resist administrative or parental pressures that may favor less effective, traditional methods [28].

Ultimately, the goal is not to disregard published research but to recontextualize its principles through iterative experimentation. This process aligns with Wallace's "reflective cycle" of plan-act-observe-refine, enabling teachers to refine their practices based on empirical evidence and student outcomes [29]. By embracing this approach, teachers transition from passive consumers of research to active agents of evidence-based innovation, fostering a more dynamic and responsive learning environment.

6.3. Practical Recommendations for Teachers

While classroom-based action research is an effective way to evaluate the effectiveness of different error feedback types, there are also several practical steps teachers can take to enhance their feedback practices in specific teaching contexts. First, teachers should aim to provide feedback that is specific, actionable, and focused on the most important errors. Rather than overwhelming students with feedback on every error, teachers should prioritize the errors that are most likely to impede communication or hinder students' progress. Second, teachers should consider the individual needs of their students when providing feedback. For example, students with lower proficiency levels may benefit from more direct feedback, while more advanced students may be able to handle more indirect feedback that requires them to self-correct. Third, teachers should aim to provide feedback in a timely manner. Research has shown that delayed feedback is less effective than immediate feedback, as students are less likely to remember the context in which the error occurred. Fourth, teachers should frame feedback in a positive and constructive manner, emphasizing progress rather than perfection. For example, highlight improvements and provide encouragement alongside corrections. A growth mindset approach motivates students to view errors as opportunities for learning rather than failures. Fifth, teachers should pair written feedback with mini-lessons, peer review sessions, or practice exercises

that reinforce the targeted error types. For example, if students struggle with article usage, provide a short lesson and practice activities on articles. Follow-up activities help students internalize corrections and transfer their learning to new contexts. Last but not the least, teachers should encourage students to engage with the feedback they receive. This can be done by requiring students to revise their work based on the feedback, or by providing opportunities for students to discuss the feedback with their peers or the teacher.

7. Conclusions

While acknowledging the disjuncture between teachers' current practices of error feedback and the published literature, Lee attributes this gap primarily to "unsupportive school environments [30]." Indeed, stakeholders such as administrators, parents, students, and school culture can act as barriers to teachers' attempts to innovate their feedback practices. However, a more fundamental reason for this disconnect lies in the nature of the published literature itself, which is often characterized by conflicting and mixed findings. This inconsistency makes it difficult for teachers to identify reliable, actionable recommendations for their classrooms.

As researchers continue to investigate and attempt to resolve ongoing debates—such as the necessity of error feedback and the effectiveness of different feedback types—teachers cannot afford to simply wait for definitive conclusions to emerge before taking action. Instead, they must adopt a proactive and critical approach to navigating the existing literature. On one hand, despite the contradictions and inconsistencies, the available studies still offer valuable insights. By critically evaluating the limitations and strengths of these studies, teachers can identify research that aligns with their specific teaching contexts and draw practical implications for their feedback practices. For example, studies with robust methodologies, clear contextual descriptions, and alignment with teachers' own classroom realities are more likely to yield useful guidance.

On the other hand, teachers should not remain passive consumers of research but should actively contribute to the field by conducting classroom-based research. While teachers are often burdened with heavy workloads, engaging in action research can be a powerful way to address the unique challenges of their teaching contexts. By designing and implementing studies tailored to their students' needs, teachers can generate context-specific evidence that informs their feedback practices. Moreover, these findings can enrich the broader research field, offering valuable insights that complement large-scale studies. For instance, classroom-based research can provide nuanced understandings of how specific feedback strategies work in real-world settings, serving as a vital evidence base for making informed decisions about error feedback.

In essence, teachers must embrace a dual role: as critical consumers of existing research and as active contributors to the ongoing scholarly dialogue. By doing so, they not only enhance their own teaching practices but also help bridge the gap between theory and practice, ultimately advancing the field of L2 writing instruction. This approach aligns with the notion that effective teaching is both an art and a science, requiring a balance of evidence-based strategies and context-sensitive innovation.

Conflicts of Interest

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