

The Effectiveness of Feedback on EFL Libyan Writing Context

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Abstract

Research suggests that as an important component of language, FL learners' writing skill can be greatly enhanced by teachers' comments particularly in the form of written feedback on students' written products. This research was carried out to examine how effect is teachers' feedback on writing error correction in EFL context. It seeks to identify the differences between two kinds of written feedback (coded and uncoded feedback) and students' perception towards written feedback provided by their teacher. The research applied both qualitative and quantitative approaches employed on ten Libyan third year students. Data collection involved two writing essays, administration of questionnaire for students and interviews with four students. The findings of the research showed that students improved on their essay writing by committing lesser errors after receiving written feedback from their teacher on the submitted essays, but the coded group recorded more improvement in correcting the errors than the uncoded group. Further findings from the questionnaire and interviews revealed that the entire participants (four students) had a positive perception towards giving and receiving feedback. The study suggested that effective approaches on how to give suitable written feedback on students' written essays should be considered by EFL teachers in classroom.

Keywords: coded feedback, correction feedback, uncoded feedback, perception, writing.

Introduction

Learning how to write is an important skill for ESL/ English Foreign Language (EFL) learners. It is a challenging activity which requires a lot of thinking, planning, revising and editing (Murray 2004). In general, errors in grammar and rhetoric when writing are the most common errors committed by EFL students; they know what ideas to write about, but their knowledge of the target language to produce a comprehensible piece of writing is still insufficient. Teachers and researchers are keen on finding ways of teaching writing more effectively to motivate students to improve their written work. Feedback on students' writing is one of the essential parts in teaching and learning writing in an EFL context (Williams 2001, Ferris 2002, Harmer 2001) as it helps learners to recognize their errors which subsequently lead to an improvement on their writing skills.

In this study, the term 'feedback' embraces the notions of "correction", "marking", "evaluation" and "responding". It includes what Kobayashi (1992, in Kyoungrok 2010) terms as "correction feedback" which refers to the editing type and "evaluative feedback" with reference to the judging type. Feedback, whether it is given through corrections or comments, has the purpose of supporting students' learning. Race (2005:95) cited four purposes for feedback: (1) It should help students to make sense of their work in some way, (2) It should clarify the need of learning by showing the students what they should be trying to achieve; what the outcome of their work should look like, (3) It should enhance students' willingness to learn, and finally yet importantly, (4) Feedback should motivate the students to develop their skills. EFL writing teachers should use appropriate written feedback in order to get effective students' reaction. This goes through motivating students to use their teacher's written feedback.

Types of Written Feedback

According to the article entitled "A typology of written corrective feedback types", Ellis (2009) distinguished between direct and indirect feedback. Direct feedback refers to highlighting the errors and providing the correct forms to the students. That is, the correct form is given in place of an incorrect form. Ellis (2009) stated that direct feedback has advantages because it provides the students with explicit guidance about how to correct their errors. However, Hedge (2000:98) argued that "the dangers of its spoon-feeding effect are that learners overlook their own role in the correction process and may become passive". This is because students can just mechanically copy the ready-made correction without figuring out the reasons. On the other hand, indirect corrective defined as "providing feedback on student errors without giving the correct forms or structures" (Lee 2004: 286). Ellis (2009) had further divided the indirect feedback into coded and uncoded error feedback. When using the coded feedback "the exact location of an error and the type of error involved is indicated with a code" (Bitchener et al. 2005:193). However, for such feedback to be effective and to avoid misinterpretation of the codes, learners must understand what the codes mean, and such feedback must be consistent with and accustomed to the codes (Bartram & Walton 1991; Ferris 2002). The uncoded feedback can be seen as the teacher's provided feedback in the form of underlining an error, circling or placing an error in the margin leaving students to detect as well as correct that error (Bitchener et al. 2005)

In the Libyan classroom context, teacher's feedback on students' written essays in English is a significant component of the writing classroom teaching and it is the teachers' responsibility to mark and correct their students' essays (Fatima 2010). The teacher provides feedback through writing brief comments on students' writing or sometimes no comments at all, thus marking and

grading their writing. The teachers' superficial treatment of students' essays could actually impede students' ability to write accurately. In addition, students mostly pay little attention to teacher's feedback; the students are not asked to follow the feedback by rewriting their essays and then submitting them for re-examining. Thus, correction feedback provided to Libyan students must meet the condition of effective feedback in which they must be able to decode it, internalize it and use it to make judgments about their work (Nicol 2009).

Related Studies on the Effect of Error Feedback

The study by Nabei and Swain (2002) was conducted in the context of Japanese schools and the findings indicated that teacher feedbacks are often infrequent under ESL, thus hindering the interactive facet of ESL learning, which leads to slow progress on the part of the students. Nabei and Swain (2002) explored the effect of recast feedback in ESL classroom in relation to the learner's responsiveness, awareness and understanding of the conditions of the secondary language being taught. The advantage of the study is that it relied on a case study as its primary research design is indicative of the details that are necessary in designing a competent ESL education programmes. Hyland (2003) focused on the written feedback given by teachers to ESL students in order to promote writing development. Under these conditions, the positive attribute of her review was that it identified the problems with traditional feedback mechanisms. For example, feedback focused on grammar correction is often discouraging and unhelpful to ESL students. The justification behind this is that ESL instructors often lack the necessary skills to explain the student's problems while the students often lack the skills to understand the use of written feedback. Another positive attribute was that she supported her assertions with empirical data as well as relevant literature from other scholars who explored the domain of feedback and ESL education. As for the research gap in the study, after identifying both the positive and the negative attributes of feedback in ESL education, she was not able to identify how the strengths of using feedback can be utilized to overcome its detrimental aspects.

Based on the fact that revision has an essential role to produce good writing, Truscott & Yi-ping (2008) conducted a study which examined the effects of error correction during the revision process. The researchers compared the first and second draft of the students writing to see if the student's improvement was achieved during revision or not. The first group "underline group" had their errors underlined and used this feedback in the revising the tasks while the other group "control group" did the same tasks without feedback. Their findings confirmed that correction helped students to reduce their errors in writing.

Bitchener and Knoch (2009) examined whether accuracy in the use of two functions of the English article system improves over a ten-month period as a result of written corrective feedback. Specifically, it investigated the effect of targeting two functional uses of the English article system: the referential indefinite article 'a' for referring to something the first time (first mention) and the referential definite article 'the' for referring to something already mentioned (subsequent mention). In this research, writing essay was as an instrument to assess the students' accuracy in using two English article (a, the) for five times. In each of the five pieces of writing, the students were required to describe what was happening in a given picture and they had thirty minutes to complete each description. It was concluded that the students who received written corrective feedback outperformed those who received no feedback in all four post-tests even though all groups developed differently over time. The enduring effect on accuracy over a ten-

month period is an evidence of the potential for focused written corrective feedback to help learners acquire features of a second language.

Concerning learners' perception on correction feedback, Lee (2009) examined ESL students' perspectives on teacher feedback. The findings indicated that the students' perception of feedback mechanisms often depends on the manner by which the ESL teacher conducts both assessment and feedback mechanisms.

The only study conducted among Libyan students was by Fatema (2010). The participants were five advanced secondary school students who have a good ability to write in English. By means of writing narrative essays, the findings revealed that Libyan students were given a feedback on the content of their writing, while the form was not given much attention. In addition, the error feedback was provided by either indicating to the position of the errors or by indicating the position and providing simultaneously the correct answer.

Realizing the gap in the previous research which focus on the ESL context, this study aims to explore the effect of coded and uncoded feedback from EFL Libyan students' perception.

Methodology

Research Design

The current investigation was conducted as a case study which is defined as a study focusing on one "individual units; an individual student; an individual unit; a particular group; a particular class; a particular school, etc." (Wallace1998:161). As pointed out by Tellis (1997), using both quantitative and qualitative data in a case study leads to "complete observation, reconstruction and analysis of the cases under investigation (Tellis 1997 in Zainal 2007). Accordingly, for this case study, the researcher chose of EFL Libyan students who are joining the third year or level at the Libyan secondary school. It applied a mixed method design in which two types of data; quantitative and qualitative were collected and analyzed.

Participants

In this study, a total of ten English major Libyan students, third year at Almarkaziah School, Libya were the sample population. They were five males and five females aged 18 years old. Those students have a good level of vocabulary that enables them to write in English. Besides, it was the only one classroom which study in English language department at the time the data were collected. Out of the ten students, four focal students were chosen for the interview session in order to investigate their perception of using written feedback and error codes. The researcher conducted the interview with four students only because the answers given by them were almost alike, and therefore it was not necessary to interview more participants. The selection of the four students was done based on their willingness to participate in the study and their speaking ability to express their views clearly and coherently as they would be interviewed.

Data Collection Instruments

Writing Essay: Two Essays

The first set of data consists of essays written by the students, and feedback provided by the writing class teacher. Looking at the writing essay was one of the most widely used methods in examining teacher's feedback to students' written work (Fatma 2010, Ellis 2009, Sheen 2007, Bitchener et al. 2005, Ferris 2004, Han 2002).

Questionnaire

The students' questionnaire was used to elicit information about the students' perceptions of written feedback so as to collect the data needed to answer the second research question. The questionnaire was adapted from Fauzi (2005) and Kyoungrok (2010) due to the similar nature of the study conducted by them and the current study.

The students' questionnaire consists of one section (seven items) requiring the respondents to rank their preferences on a scale of 1 to 5.

Interview

The aim of conducting the interviews was to expand on some of the topics touched on in the questionnaire. They were six structured questions concerning the participants' willingness to receive error writing feedback, their preferences of the type of feedback and their perception toward their teacher's feedback.

Procedure

First Phase – Writing Essays and Rewriting by Students

In this phase, the participants were required to write two drafts altogether throughout the research. The selected writing topic was given as part of their classroom writing assignment. For each essay, they were asked to write an essay of approximately 200 words and they were given about 45 minutes to write their draft and upon completion, the teacher corrected and commented on the essays. At the end of writing the essay, the teacher corrected the students' writing in two ways. First, the teacher divided the students into two groups randomly: the coded corrective feedback group (N=5) and uncoded corrective feedback group (N=5). Secondly, the teacher used underlining and error codes for the coded group only and underlining for the uncoded corrective feedback group. The aim of this phase was to identify which was the more effective method (coded or uncoded feedback) in improving the students' writing. The purpose for this comparison was to answer the research question one.

The researcher has explained to the teacher how to use codes based on checklist that was given to him (see appendix A for the checklist). The teacher then had explained the error codes before the tasks were given. He had used those codes to correct two preliminary writing tasks to make sure that the students understand what these codes mean. The current study used revision codes adopted from Chitravelu (1995) as most of his codes are abbreviations of the error types (*spelling- SP, tense-T*) which would make the students understand and remember easily what those codes mean when the teacher respond to their essays and when they have to revise their work writing the second draft.

Once the teacher had commented on the students essays, the essays were returned to the students for revisions. The rewritten essays were then collected at a time and date convenient to the students. Each of the students at both groups (coded group =5 and uncoded group =5) wrote the two essays, giving a total of forty essays. The teacher was required to correct the revisions to see if the students had understood the written feedback. The researcher then conducted an analysis of the teacher's feedback in order to identify the impact of written feedback in improving the students' writing.

Second Phase – - Distributing The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered in a single sitting. The students were present in writing class and were given an hour to complete the questionnaire.

Third Phase –Conducting The Interview Sessions

The interviews were conducted with each participant individually face-to-face and taped using an audio-tape recorder to ensure that all relevant information was not missed out so that accurate data was obtained. The interviews were conducted in English and each participant was interviewed at different times so that they would not discuss the answers.

Method of Data Analysis

Writing Essays

The data obtained from the writing tasks were subjected to a statistical analysis including percentages which were generated through the aid of the Microsoft Excel. They were presented in frequency distribution tables.

Questionnaire

The data collected from the participants' responses to the questionnaire survey was analyzed using descriptive statistics such as percentages that are computed using Microsoft Excel. They were presented in the form of frequency distribution tables. Descriptive statistics were calculated to find the frequencies for each of the questionnaire items.

Interviews

They were recorded and transcribed immediately in order to avoid missing any important point. The data was first analyzed individually. It was built on theoretical generalizations out of the process of attempting to explain, interpret and render meaning from the interviews as stated by Neuman (2006) which was taken into account in the current study.

Results

To address the first research question, a comparative measure design was used. The goal of these analyses was to compare the differences between the coded and the uncoded groups in terms of the number of errors marked. In order to identify the differences, the researcher counted the total numbers of errors made by the students in each category of linguistic items in the two groups' writing. Table 1 compares the improvement results obtained from the analysis of the each groups' essays writing (first draft and second draft).

Table 1 Overall Improvement of Coded and Uncoded Errors Groups

Errors code	Improvement on (first essay)		Improvement on (Second essay)	
	Coded group	Uncoded group	Coded group	Uncoded group
SP	85.1%	57.1%	92.8%	-
T	100%	20%	50%	-
P	75.8%	17.3%	86.6%	-
WC	77.7%	-	25%	0.0%
WF	83.8%	0.0%	-	33.3%
Cap	86.9%	54.1%	78.4%	26.6%
?	71.4%	66.6%	33.3%	-
X	69.2%	52.1%	-	21.4%

#	100%	100%	100%	100%
//	44.4%	20%	55.5%	57.8%
^	50%	-	-	0.0%

As can be seen from the results displayed in the table above, the coded group achieved more improvement in correcting errors than the uncoded group. The coded group made a marked difference in the total number of errors in spellings, punctuations, tenses, and incorrect words. For instance, the coded group made 85.1% improvement in the first essay and 92.8% in the second essay in spelling errors while the uncoded group made less improvement (57.1% in the first essay and no improvement in the second essay). In terms of punctuations, the coded group was better since the percentage of improvement made by the coded group in their first essay is 75.8% and it increased to 86.6% in the second essay. However, the results revealed that the uncoded group students made 17.3% reduction in errors in the first essay and they recorded more errors which led to no improvement related to punctuations in the revised drafts.

In case of word choice and word form, the students in the uncoded group made less improvement than the coded group. For example, the uncoded group students were not able to correct errors and made more errors in the revised drafts regarding word choice in writing. They also retained the same errors (0.0%) in the first drafts and the revised versions of writing. On the other hand, the coded students group achieved 77.7 % as improvement in the first drafts in terms of word choice and 25% in the second or revised drafts of writing.

However, both the two groups made improvement in the number of errors made in using tenses, capitalization, unclear words and space in the new paragraph. For example, in the first versions, the improvement made by the coded group is 100% and 86.9% in tenses and capitalization respectively and the uncoded group students' improvement is 20% and 45.1% in the same categories. In addition, the two groups made good improvement in terms of unclear words especially in the first writing, i.e. 71.4% by the coded students group and 66.6% by the uncoded student group.

Further analysis showed that both groups made clear improvement (100%) in relation to the number of errors (singularity/plurality) in the two essays. On the contrary, both groups had difficulties improving the misused word category, i.e. in the second versions, the coded group students increased the errors from 7 to 13 while the uncoded students group retained the same errors without correcting them in the revised drafts.

Analysis of the Students' responses to the Questionnaire and Interviews Questions

1. Would You Like to Get Feedback on Every Writing Essay?

The results for this item shows that the majority of the respondents (n=7) 70% reported that they like to get feedback on every written essay while (n=3) 30% of the students stated that they do not like to get feedback on every written essay. This shows that majority of the students believe that written feedback is important to improve their writing. This finding mirrored the qualitative findings from the interviews conducted with four students who expressed their willingness to receive errors in their writing. Participant "1" (P1, second group) answered the question in a direct way. He considered that teachers should indicate errors. As stated by "P1",

“this would help him to know every mistake that he made in writing and then improve it”. Participant “2” stated that “absolutely help me to know all my mistakes that I did when write and try to correct it”

2. The Students’ Perception of Teacher’s Use of Correction Codes

The participants’ responses revealed that the teacher does not use correction codes as indicated by more than half of them (70%). This is also further corroborated by the interviews results as all the participants agreed that the teacher never uses such error codes when he corrects their writing essays.

3. Students’ Perception of Teachers’ Written Feedback

Ten items in the question 4 measured information on the students’ perception of teachers’ written feedback, and the students’ responses to these items revealed the following results.

Table 2 *The Students’ Perception of Teachers’ Written Feedback*

Statements	S.A		A		Un		D		S.D		Mean
	(1) N	%	(2) N	%	(3) N	%	(4) N	%	(5) N	%	
1. I have no fear of my writing being evaluated	2	20	7	70%	1	10%	-	-	-	-	1.9
2. I think it is important for teachers to correct students' written errors.	5	50%	4	40%	1	10%	-	-	-	-	1.6
3. The different teachers I have had, gave feedback to my writing in different ways.	3	20%	5	50%	1	10%	1	10%	-	-	2.0
4. Teacher's correction on my writing helps me learn and improve my writing.	6	60%	4	40%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.4
5. When the teacher used marking codes and symbols when marking my writing he/she explained the codes and symbols first.	2	20%	6	60%	2	20%	-	-	-	-	2.0
6. I believe that application of symbols (e.g VT: Verb Tense, Sp: Spelling, Pro: The selection of Pronoun) is quite useful.	6	60%	4	40%	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.4
7. It is more helpful to give clear, direct instructions about my writing errors than suggesting a correction.	3	30%	5	50%	1	10%	1	10%	-	-	2.0
8. I always pay close attention to my teacher's	6	60%	3	30%	-	-	1	10%	-	-	1.6

written feedback on my writing.												
9. I do not make the same errors once the teacher corrects them.	5	50%	3	30%	2	20%	-	-	-	-	-	1.7
10. I think it is better to write the feedback in the margins than at the end.	-	-	4	40%	3	30%	3	30%	-	-	-	2.9

S.A = Strongly agree A = Agree Un = Unsure D = Disagree S.D = Strongly disagree
 N = number of responses

As can be seen from the results in Table 4, most of the respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the questionnaire items. However, only a very small percentage of the respondents stated that they were unsure, disagree and strongly disagree. It is apparent from the results that 70% (7 out of 10) of the students like to get written feedback and they do not have any fear of having their writing evaluated (item 1-2). This reflects how the students are aware of the importance of teachers’ feedback as a way to learn how to write better or to enhance writing skills in English. In addition, more than half of the students 60% strongly agreed that teacher’s correction of their errors in writing helps them to learn and improve their writing (item 4).

In terms of error codes and symbols, there is a clear trend from all of the students that the application of symbols (e.g VT: Verb Tense, Sp: Spelling) is quite useful (item 6). 60% of the students strongly agreed with the use of codes and 40% agreed with using them. A possible explanation of this could be that the students have found error codes efficient and easy to understand. Further analysis showed that 50% (n=5) of the students strongly agreed and 40% (n=4) agreed that they would not make the same errors once the teacher corrected them (item 14). This is also revealed by the findings obtained from the students’ interview responses. They all preferred their teacher to use error codes when he/she corrects their writing essays. P1 preferred error codes because it helps him to know the mistakes carefully. He explained “*that is different maybe one day the teachers just show me the mistake and I do not know what this mistake or why, I know it’s wrong but I don’t know how to write the right way, so I prefer they use codes because help me know the errors carefully*”. P2 also preferred that the teacher uses error codes to know his mistake simply. The same view was expressed by P3 who said the error codes help her to know her mistakes easily and never do them again in the next writing. Besides, error codes help P4 to understand the mistakes easily.

In addition, the interview results revealed that some of the error codes were difficult to be understood. P1, P2 and P3 stated that “SP” which means wrong spelling, is an easy code to understand. The question mark code “?”, which means something is not clear, was considered as an easy code to be understood for P1 but not for P2 and P3. P1 pointed out that if the teacher uses error codes many times, it will help him to understand what they are used for.

4. The Extent to Which the Students Read their Teacher’s Written Feedback

Questionnaire item 5 that elicited information on the extent to which the students read the teacher’s written feedback revealed 60% of the students seem to be interested in reading the entire teacher’s written feedback. This indicates that students are aware of the importance of knowing their errors, and they hope to improve their writing abilities.

5. The Extent to Which the Students Pay Thoughtful Attention to their

Teacher's Written Feedback

The responses to this item showed that many of the students are interested in paying thoughtful attention to their teacher's written feedback. This is indicated by the high number of students who have given thoughtful attention to all, and also most of teacher written feedback, i.e. 60% have given thoughtful attention to all, and 20% to most of the teacher's written feedback. However, only a small number of the respondents reported that they do not pay attention to any of the teacher's written feedback. These findings could be related to the findings regarding the extent to which the students read their teacher's written feedback, i.e., 60% of the students have read the entire teacher written feedback.

6. The Students' Perceived Level of Understanding the Teacher's Written Feedback

The result indicated that many of the students have problems understanding teacher written feedback. This is because half of the students (50%) reported to have understood only half of the teacher written feedback. This could be due to the legibility of their teacher hand writing as he wrote between the sentences. Whereas, only small number of students (30%) indicate that they have understood all the teacher written feedback. However, two students (20%) reported that they only understand little of their teacher feedback. This could be that the students did not pay attention to their teacher when he/ she explain the feedback given on their essays.

7. The Students' Perceived Improvement in Their Writing

The result showed that more than half of the students (60%) think that they have improved a lot in writing. Furthermore, three of the students (30%) feel that they had improved moderately, i.e., they have been able to correct about half of the errors in their essays. In addition, two students (20%) see that they have improved little in writing. These findings indicate that written feedback could play a good role in improving the Libyan secondary students' writing. Based on the interviews results, all the interviewees stated that teacher's written feedback helped them to improve their writing and they found that error correction helped them to remember the previous mistakes that they made and avoid repeating them in the next writing. P1 stated "*yes, it helps me a lot*". P2 said, "*yes, sure help me, because make me know what is problem and then correct it*". The same view is expressed by P3 and P4 who said the teacher error correction helps them to understand the errors that they made.

Discussion

The findings proved that error correction helped the students to reduce their errors in writing in which they received teacher's correction, and that the effect is valuable. Our major findings revealed that there are benefits of error correction found on the students' revised drafts since all the students who had received correction on the errors in their first and second drafts were more successful in reducing their errors during revision. Thus, the findings of the current study are consistent with the findings obtained by many previous researchers such as Ashwell (2000), Chandler (2003) and Ferris (1997) in which error correction has a positive effect on improving students' writing accuracy whatever was the type of correction. In identifying the most effective methods (coded or uncoded feedback) in improving the students' writing in the current study, the findings indicated that coded feedback was more effective. This could be seen by the decrease in the number of errors in the coded group for which feedback was given. The coded approaches to feedback may allow learners to better concentrate on problematic issues without being weighed down by too much information and too many errors to process. This differs from what Lee' study (2004) of coded feedback revealed. The researcher raised various issues regarding the

effectiveness of error codes. She thought that students' real understanding of the error codes was questionable, especially when the codes were taken from different sources. She also mentioned the possible frustration learners can experience when they try to interpret the codes while correcting their errors, as well as the teachers' time availability when they have to categorize a wide range of errors using codes.

Regarding students' perception toward corrective feedback, the findings of the study was similar to the findings of other previous studies which demonstrate that students positively perceive written corrective feedback and believe that it is useful to help them to improve their writing. The participants strongly prefer to receive corrective feedback on all their errors in writing. This is well supported by Ferris (2002) who noted that writing accurately engaged ESL students' attention as they asked for correction feedback. The positive perception helps students to fully and thoughtfully attend to teachers' feedback on their errors in writing. The findings showed that the participants paid thoughtful attention to their teacher's explanation of their errors, and recognized the value of such written feedback in helping them improve their writing. This is consistent with the findings of several previous studies which revealed that students valued their teachers' written feedback on their errors and ask their teachers to correct their errors. Otherwise, they might have been frustrated if this did not happen (Ferris 1995, Ferris & Roberts 2001).

In terms of error codes and symbols, there was a clear trend from all the students that the use of symbols (e.g T: Tense, Sp: Spelling) was quite useful which indicates that this type of written feedback is realized to be more useful and workable based on the students' needs. A possible explanation of this could be that the students found error codes efficient and easy to understand. Similarly, findings from previous studies reported that the use of error codes and symbols was rated noticeably higher than error correction. Proud & Gatbonton (1996), for instance, found that students preferred this type of feedback, but only when their teacher gave them enough information on how to make use of the correction codes. However, this does not support the findings of Fatima's (2010) research which presented a contradicting point of view. In her research, she reported that the teacher's use of codes or symbols made the students unable to understand the types of correction.

This study has contributed to the existing literature about the effectiveness of feedback on students' writing. Specifically, this study made contribution to pedagogical practices in EFL contexts as the idea of giving written feedback can be adopted by teachers to enhance their teaching methods, which, in turn, would help them to guide their learners more effectively to enhance their written literacy skills. In addition, the study was also significant because students need to be accurate when writing particularly in the academic and professional contexts. The importance of writing skill for students calls for changes to be made to the teaching practices of writing and the use of written feedback. Moreover, careful consideration of the nature of writing feedback may make it possible to understand the effect of feedback on improving writing. This study tried to discover how much the improvement the students made in their writing based on the feedback given by the teachers. This was very important since the teachers need to know if their feedback benefits the students. If it is so, then their efforts would have been worth it. However, if most of the students do not show any improvement, then the teachers have to consider more effective ways of giving written feedback to their students.

Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to determine the effects of written feedback on EFL Libyan secondary school students' writing. Generally, the findings of the study showed that teacher's written feedback is useful and helpful to promote students' writing. The results indicated that corrective feedback was effective in decreasing the students' errors. The findings also enhanced our understanding of written feedback as a method in improving the writing ability among EFL students. It revealed the students' general satisfaction with coded feedback and their strong preference of receiving written feedback on all of their written errors.

The findings suggested a number of ideas for further research. Firstly, the study was conducted in one Libyan school so the findings could not be generalized to other Libyan schools. Thus, the study should be replicated to include as many secondary schools as possible in Libya in order to provide more information about the whole Libyan EFL context of teaching and learning writing skill. This will help to gain more detailed findings to ascertain the actual writing correction practice in Libyan secondary school. Furthermore, the results of this study cannot be applied to EFL children who study English at primary school levels because these learners have different characteristics and needs concerning accuracy in writing. Therefore, further research examining the effect of written feedback on primary school students' writing needs can be conducted. In addition, the findings of the present study did not indicate any long-term effects of teachers' feedback on students' writing. Therefore, future research should concentrate on the investigation of written feedback including multiple essays over a longer period of time. Finally, and more broadly, research is also needed to determine the FL teachers' perception of written feedback and other approaches such as face-to-face oral feedback, conference, peer review, guided-self-evaluation, and electronic feedback.

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Appendix A

Marking Code Used to Assess Writing (Chitaravelu 1995)

Codes	Type of error
SP	Spelling
T	Tense
P	Punctuation
WC	Word Choice
WF	Word Form
Cap	Capitalization
?	Unclear word/sentence
X	Omit this
#	Number (singular/plural)
//	Paragraph
^	Add a word