

## The Effects of Metalinguistic Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) on Language Preparatory School Students` TOEFL Independent Writing Section Score

Soran Abubakr Abdulrahman<sup>1</sup> & Saban Kara<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1&2</sup>Faculty of Education, Department of English Language Teaching, Tishk International University, Erbil, Iraq

Correspondence: Soran Abubakr Abdulrahman, Tishk International University, Erbil, Iraq.

Email: soran.abdulrahman@tiu.edu.iq

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**Abstract:** Varied feedback strategies are prevalent to enhance learners` skills in an Academic Writing course. However, there has been an ongoing discussion on classifying one as the most efficient strategy. In this regard, this study investigated the impacts of metalinguistic feedback on the TOEFL IBT Independent Writing Section Score of language preparatory school students over 12 weeks using pre-test and post-test. Initially, 40 students were separated into two groups through simple random sampling method. Experimental group followed the regulations of metalinguistic feedback strategy, whereas control group students were exposed to direct feedback throughout the study. Each student wrote 6 essays to improve their writing skills. Additionally, their feedback type was arranged according to their groups. IBM SPSS 23. was employed to analyze quantitative data through independent and paired samples t test. It was measured that students in experimental group increased their success rate significantly by considering .000 p-value in independent and paired samples t test respectively. However, no significant improvement was noticed in control group. Likewise, the questionnaire and interview analysis confirmed that metalinguistic feedback was more effective than direct feedback. Findings of this study suggest that metalinguistic feedback strategy can increase students` motivation and enthusiasm so that the learners can boost their performance in Academic Writing courses.

**Keywords:** Academic Writing, Written Corrective Feedback, Metalinguistic Feedback, Direct Feedback

### 1. Introduction

Writing skill has been regarded as one of the most fundamental skills in English which has linguistic and social dimensions. In other words, writing skill is needed to pass certain stages academically and complete tasks in social and professional life. To name a few examples, writing is essential while responding questions in a quiz or exam. Additionally, reports are fundamental to get a high mark at a university level, so students are required to be able to write in a formal format. Likewise, people need to write complaint letters or petitions if they are not satisfied with the current decisions. Furthermore, writing skill is so fundamental in interviews or universally accepted exams (Kiuhara et al., 2009). The requirements and

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versions of writing have evolved thanks to the advancement in technology.

Writing skill has been converted to typing skills on social media platforms. The users are expected to convey the meaning clearly on social media platforms if they prefer typing (Yucedal & Shareef, 2022). In addition to social media platforms, some lecturers urge learners to type their essays on their laptops. They also assign some homework online, so the students send emails after writing reports or summaries. Chappel (2011) states that there are numerous advantages of improved writing skill such as expressing someone's personality clearly, promoting communication, developing thinking skills, persuading others in a logical way, and finally preparing learners for a promising career. Considering these perspectives, writing skill can be regarded as an indispensable part of language learning and teaching process.

Academic Writing course has been receiving much attention thanks to its proven advantages in learners' lives. All circles related to education put much emphasis on improving writing skill, so they can offer these advantages to learners (Fareed et al., 2016). Moreover, writing competence can motivate the students to expand their knowledge in terms of grammar and vocabulary (Irvin, 2010). The students in academic writing course learn how to brainstorm, make an outline, write a well-organized paragraph or essay, edit their mistakes by racing against time to submit on time. Cooperation between colleagues and administrators is essential to achieve these goals and teach effectively, so common workshops, online meetings and knowledge sharing groups can increase the quality of writing education tremendously. Additionally, critical thinking and problem-solving skills can be developed in writing courses (Condon & Kelly-Riley, 2004). Academic writing course offers a lot to students on the way of being a proficient writer of English.

Providing written corrective feedback (WCF hereafter) matters a lot in Academic Writing course. WCF can be broadly illustrated as examining students' works and guiding students on the way of writing mistake-free written materials in the following weeks. In other words, WCF is employed to ensure continuous feedback between students and the feedback providers. Sadler (1989) suggested some guidelines which highlighted essential points of WCF. Likewise, Belcher (2006) argues that valuable and systematic feedback affect learners' progress positively rather than slowing them down. He states that feedback should be designed to increase the enthusiasm of the learners, so their motivation can be boosted each passing day. He also holds the opinion that haphazardly given feedbacks can demotivate learners which results in failure. There are certain feedback strategies to employ which are electronic, reformulation, direct, indirect, metalinguistic, and finally focused or unfocused as stated by Ellis (2008). Each strategy has unique features to implement. To illustrate, direct strategy focuses on making corrections instantly, whereas indirect strategy offers some clues to notice the mistakes. Additionally, metalinguistic feedback requires teachers to give feedback based on predefined error correction codes, so inquiry-based learning will be a common policy in these classes. Furthermore, focused or unfocused error corrections are related to making corrections partially or completely. The fifth category is about electronic feedback which suggests providing links, so they will analyze their mistakes and learn some lessons in order not to repeat the same mistakes again. Final category suggested by Ferris is that a native speaker will compose his ideas by rewriting about the same topic, so students will compare to get some valuable ideas.

## 2. Literature Review

Academic writing course has been getting increasing attention thanks to its numerous benefits in educational institutions, so writing will not be a burden in learners' professional and social lives. Academic writing requires learners to deepen their knowledge, support their opinions and convey the meaning by applying some rules. In an Academic Writing course, teachers launch the program to capture students' attention. Academic writing is a great tool to evaluate and assess learners' knowledge and measure their learning rate to see whether they show progress or not. (Irvin, 2010). Similarly, Hyland (2019) emphasized that a learner who wants to learn a foreign language need a wide range of knowledge and experience to write academically in English, including grammatical, discourse, sociolinguistic and strategic competence. He argues that writing encompasses many skills to be able express ideas clearly in a written format. Similarly, Hammer and Green (2011) postulate that academic literacy is the prerequisite to be successful in an Academic Writing course. He contends that academic literacy has three aspects which are operational, cultural and critical. Operational literacy refers to linguistic competence particularly writing. It implies employing linguistic elements which include vocabulary and grammar accurately. On the other hand, cultural literacy refers to being able to communicate by paying attention to cultural elements whereas critical literacy refers to the ability to interpret the published works and adapt to transformation in language. Thus, it is suggested to combine academic literacy with cultural elements harmoniously to get the highest benefit (Celik & Yildiz, 2019). Being familiar with cultural elements can increase the learning rate of the learners in Academic Writing courses.

Although Truscott (1996) claimed that WCF is both harmful or ineffective, there are numerous studies and perspectives to disprove it. To name a few examples, writing skill can only be improved significantly if there is a constructive feedback cycle between the learners and the teachers (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). When the learners are informed about their weaknesses in writing, their motivation can be boosted to write further. Otherwise, their motivation will reduce day by day when there is only writing without offering the feedback. On the other hand, there is an ongoing debate about types of WCF. Some scholars argue that direct feedback is an effective strategy to improve learners' writing skill (Kara & Abdulrahman, 2022). They conducted a study on the effects of direct and metalinguistic feedback which uncovered that, direct feedback yields better results on the way of being a proficient writer. However, Shintani et al. (2014) conducted another study to compare the effects of direct feedback with metalinguistic one which revealed that metalinguistic feedback increased students' success rate more dramatically. On the other hand, Ellis et al. (2008) carried out a study which resulted in supporting focused written feedback over unfocused written feedback. They argue that comprehensive feedback can be deceptive because students cannot focus on all types of mistakes at once. Their suggestion is to focus on certain mistakes to eliminate them in the following writing attempts. Subsequently, Milton (2006) conducted a study on electronic feedback through a software program called Mark My Words. He inserted some notes and guided students to follow the links about their certain mistakes. Also, it allowed the teacher to provide feedback and send a message to students about their mistakes. Milton substantiated that the study was so successful to improve students' writing skill. Moreover, Sachs and Polio (2007) carried out a study to compare direct feedback with reformulation. They conceded that reformulation produced fruitful results, however, their progress was not as significant as direct feedback.

## 2.1 The Present Study

The aim of this study was to investigate the effects of metalinguistic feedback on students' TOEFL IBT Independent Writing score. In this study, following questions are asked:

- Is metalinguistic feedback more effective than direct feedback?
- Do the students' attitude change towards metalinguistic feedback?

## 3. Methods

There are different research designs to employ while conducting scientific studies. Morse (2016) contends that a mixed methods design can yield better results to get quantitative and qualitative data, so they can be compared whether quantitative data are compatible with the qualitative one. In this respect, this study employed a mixed methods design which required the learners to write essays, take the questionnaire and the share their ideas in the interview. Once the results were gathered, the results were cross-checked to ensure validity and reliability as suggested by Leech et al., (2010).

### 3.1 Research Process

There were certain stages in this study which could be explored in detail through Figure 1.

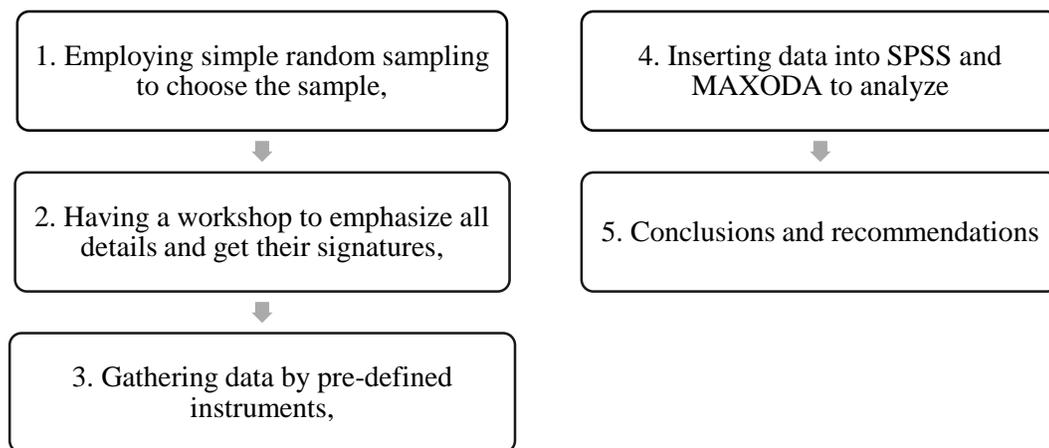


Figure 1: Stages of the study

### 3.2 Setting

The setting in this study was chosen a private university where 5000 students have been studying in 29 departments by taking all courses in English. The rationale to choose this university was that students were ambitious to improve their English. Apart from covering lessons in English, the atmosphere of the university was welcoming with its international and local academics and students, so the study was conducted successfully in a completely English format.

### **3.3 Participants**

The students to represent control and experimental group were chosen from language preparatory school where 100 students were studying English intensively for 32 weeks annually. 40 students who are from 6 different nationalities were chosen to conduct the study, so the scope of the study was enriched. They were admitted to university based on their results in National University Entrance Exam called Wezary which has been conducted by ministry of education. Also, students can be admitted to university by their SAT scores. Participants` ages ranged from 17 to 22. In terms of gender, 19 female students and 21 male students joined the study. Although they graduated from different high schools, one point was common for them which was to improve their English level. Except few students, no student had a prior experience about a writing course which was so fundamental to be a successful student at this private international university. After being admitted to the university, all students had to take TIU Proficiency Exam which was held by language preparatory school of the same university in a professional way by measuring 4 skills simultaneously in one exam. Upon learning the results, the students were placed in a class accordingly.

Language Preparatory School students can be defined as the ones who are eager to learn English thoroughly by taking courses intensively. Additionally, these students do not want take lessons in their departments unless they master English. Their main goal is to express their ideas clearly, so their self-confidence will develop each passing day. On the other hand, their long-term goal is to be a proficient writer and speaker of English, so they will employ their linguistic competence whenever they need during their professional career.

### **3.4 Sampling Procedure**

In this study, 100 students who studied at language preparatory school comprised the population. In the next step, simple random sampling method was adopted to choose 40 students randomly as suggested by Berger and Zhang, (2015). The researcher activated a software program called Random Team Generator to choose the students randomly. After choosing the sample, the students take a brief exam on writing to pinpoint whether each group`s average was equal or not. It was observed that the groups` average was nearly equal, so the study started when their levels were equal. Control group`s average was 60, whereas experimental group`s average was recorded as 61. Considering these figures, the instructor was ready to conduct the study in a successful way.

### **3.5 Data Collection Tools**

In this study, writing an essay biweekly related to TOEFL IBT Independent Writing section, responding to questionnaire and expressing ideas by the interview were the central points of collecting data.

In this respect, quantitative data were collected through essay marks and converted into numerical values by SPSS 23 to measure whether there was a statistically significant difference between each group as pre-test and post-test. Essay marks were graded over 100 based on the rubric prepared by all the instructors in collaboration. Moreover, qualitative data were collected through a questionnaire and an interview. The questionnaire included 10 items with a Likert scale, while the interview comprised two open ended questions. The questionnaire prepared to gather the data consists of 10 items with a 5 Likert scale. This

tool was formed by the researcher by considering published articles and suggestions of experts in this field of study. Ravinder and Saraswathi (2020) state that Cronbach alpha should be higher than 0.7 to show internal consistency which was .81 in this study, so internal reliability criteria was met. Chosen topics to write essays can be seen below:

1. Do you prefer online or traditional shopping?
2. Are you in favor of e-books or paper-based books?
3. What is the greatest invention?
4. Do you want to live in a city or village?
5. Are you in favor of or against genetically modified foods?
6. What makes your parents respectable for you?

The topics were chosen meticulously by the committee after scanning readily available materials related to TOEFL IBT.

### **3.6 Data Collection Procedure**

This study was planned to finalize within 12 weeks. Each student joined three Academic Writing lessons weekly. The students in this study took Academic Writing course in fall semester and had a solid background about writing paragraphs or essays through brainstorming, making outline, organizing a complete written work, editing, racing against time, so the students were familiar with writing paragraphs and turning them into essays. Also, writing section was an essential part in their exams, so they wrote their works to be graded accordingly. It was a fruitful process for each student. Additionally, all students who earned less than 80 in their weekly submissions needed to rewrite the same paragraph by correcting their mistakes based on the feedback given by the instructor. Additionally, both groups received three workshops about all feedback techniques which were employed by different academics around the world in Academic Writing course, so they had a chance to get detailed information by each feedback strategy. In the next phase, students' mistakes were corrected by different feedback strategies to lay a foundation for the study in the next semester.

When the study was initiated in spring semester, control group students' mistakes were corrected by direct feedback which means to correct all mistakes, whereas experimental group students' mistakes were handled with metalinguistic feedback which means to write error codes instead of correcting all the mistakes. An instructor who was experienced in Academic Writing course for 10 years planned all the activities and finalized the study. A single instructor was chosen on purpose because different instructors can take varied initiatives, and they may affect the results in a positive or negative way. On the other hand, the responsible instructor for the study had 5 common meetings with the other instructors who have been running Academic Writing course at the same university to pinpoint their progress and get their valuable ideas. Academic Writing Pool was created by the instructors through scanning TOEFL IBT independent writing topics. In the topic pool, there were 50 topics, and the students were informed about choosing 6 of them by cooperation spanning 12 weeks in total. After limiting the topics with 6, the instructor planned the topics to cover biweekly.

According to the pre-defined plan, first week was organized to brainstorm, make an outline, write a sample with the help of the instructor on the smartboard as a whole class activity, analyze the written sample by considering thesis statement, topic sentence, reasons of support, examples, supporting details, conjunctions, coherence, relevancy etc. Also, worthy collocations were also emphasized to be a good role model for the students. If there were any unknown words, students helped each other to define before the initiative of the instructor. The instructor only revised these points because they had learnt them in detail during the first semester.

When it was the second week, it was time to write the essays. Students wrote their essays within 40 minutes. The students wrote essays in the class including 5 paragraphs and submitted to their instructors within the given time. There was no difference in terms of procedure until that moment. Later, the instructor managed the feedback process based on their groups. Control group students` each mistake was corrected and noted by the instructor as they followed direct feedback technique. On the other hand, experimental group`s mistakes were marked with error codes and noted as it was in line with the metalinguistic error correction technique. The number of mistakes mattered a lot because the instructor wanted to see whether they were learning from their mistakes or not each passing week. After getting valuable feedback from the instructor, the students rewrote the topics and sent an email to their instructors one more time. The rationale to rewrite the topics was that students would learn from their mistakes and improve their writing skills considering the given feedback by the instructor. The data collection procedure continued in the same way as mentioned in week 1 and 2 above.

### **3.7 Data Analysis**

Collected quantitative data were analyzed by SPSS 23 in two different sets which were independent samples t test and paired samples t test. Independent samples t test is used to compare means of two sets of data (Rochon et al., 2012). In this study, control and experimental group`s pre-test and post-test results were compared to make some interpretations later. Likewise, paired samples t test is another test which is used to measure each group separately by comparing pre-test and post-test results (Ross & Willson, 2012). In other words, it is used to measure whether there was a significant difference in each group by comparing the results of pre-test and post-test.

Collected qualitative data in the questionnaire were analyzed by managing Likert scale and converting them into percentages with the help of IBM SPSS 23. The items were analyzed in detail when opinions of students were turned into percentages. Additionally, interview was recorded to be transcribed with the help of MAXODA software program as suggested by Marjaei and Chandrashekara, (2019). After a thorough analysis, insightful ideas in interviews to pave way for other studies were uncovered.

### **4. Findings**

The findings of the study were classified in 5 categories to distinguish without having difficulty. The detailed analysis can be seen below for each category.

Total number of mistakes in control group was depicted in Table 1 as pre-test and post-test.

Table 1: The number of mistakes under 12 categories in control group

Differences					
Error Code	Error Types	Pre-test	Post-test	Numerical	Percentage
A	Article	70	65	5	8 %
Cap	Capitalization	80	77	3	4 %
D	Delete	210	195	15	8%
IS	Incomplete Sentence	230	214	16	7 %
PL	Singular/ Plural	170	175	-5	-3 %
P	Preposition	180	165	15	9 %
PU	Punctuation	150	145	5	3 %
RO	Run-on	160	153	7	5 %
SP	Spelling Mistake	190	175	15	9 %
SV	Subject Verb Agreement	180	190	-10	-5 %
T	Tense	90	83	7	8 %
WW	Wrong Word	70	66	4	6 %
Total	All	1780	1675	105	6 %

When table 1 was analyzed in detail, the number of students` mistakes in control group can be figured out instantly. Based on the figures given in the table, it can be concluded that incomplete sentence, delete, spelling mistake categories were the most chronic problems, whereas article, wrong word, capitalization were the least troublesome problems for students at first. Control group students made 1780 mistakes in total. Once post- test mistakes were noted, there was some improvement in all categories except singular plural and subject verb agreement ones. On the other hand, the improvement was not noticeable enough to minimize students` mistakes. Although there were 12 categories, no category`s improvement was higher than 10 percent. Considering these figures, we can easily conclude that control group`s number of mistakes was not minimized which was also confirmed by paired and independent samples t- test.

Total number of mistakes in experimental group was depicted in Table 2 as pre-test and post-test.

Table 2: Number of mistakes under 12 categories in experimental group

Error	Code Error Types	Differences			
		Pre test	Post test	Numerical	Percentage
A	Article	67	56	11	20 %
Cap	Capitalization	83	74	11	12%
D	Delete	205	192	13	7%
IS	Incomplete Sentence	226	200	26	13 %
PL	Singular/ Plural	168	153	15	10 %
P	Preposition	182	156	26	17 %
PU	Punctuation	148	151	-3	-2 %
RO	Run-on	162	146	16	11 %
SP	Spelling Mistake	186	165	21	13 %
SV	Subject Verb Agreement	178	149	29	19 %
T	Tense	87	77	10	13 %
WW	Wrong Word	72	65	12	11 %
Total	All	1764	1584	180	11 %

When Table 2 was analyzed in detail, the number of students' mistakes in experimental group can be figured out instantly. Based on the figures given in the table, it can be concluded that incomplete sentence, delete, spelling mistake categories were the most chronic problems as in control group, whereas article, wrong word, capitalization were the least troublesome problems for students at first as in control group. It was measured once more that students' levels were nearly the same at first which created the feasibility to conduct the study fairly. Experimental group students made 1764 mistakes in total in pre-test. Once post-test mistakes were noted, there was some considerable improvement in all categories except punctuation one. Additionally, students' mistakes were far less in article, subject verb agreement and preposition categories. Likewise, the overall difference was 11 % which was only 6 % in control group. Students' overall mistakes shifted from 1764 to 1584 which was a noticeable advancement as well. Considering these figures, we can easily conclude that experimental group's number of mistakes reduced dramatically which was also confirmed by paired and independent samples t- test.

#### 4.1 Some Mistakes Made by the Students Frequently During the Study

##### 4.1.1 Article Mistakes – Error Correction Code –A-

Incorrect Sentence(s): I prefer reading e- books because there are many advantages of them. For example, my uncle has habit of reading e book once week.

Corrected Form: I prefer reading e-books because there are many advantages of them. For example, my uncle has a habit of reading an e-book once a week.

As seen clearly, article mistakes were common in these sentences. Article mistakes increased the ambiguity of the sentences, and the readers got confused about the real meaning of the sentences.

#### **4.1.2 Capitalization Mistakes – Error Correction Code –Cap-**

Incorrect Sentence(s): My favorite type of shopping is online because it is cheaper and more convenient. for example, i buy electronic devices from amazon when i am at home. i do not need to visit a physical store. also, the price is 10 % less than traditional stores.

Corrected Form: My favorite type of shopping is online because it is cheaper and more convenient. For example, I buy electronic devices from Amazon when I am at home. I do not need to visit a physical store. Also, the price is 10 % less than traditional stores.

Once the mistakes were analyzed, it was seen that capitalization rules need to be emphasized more. The mistakes were more than tolerable in some cases as in this one.

#### **4.1.3 Delete Mistakes – Error Correction Code –Del-**

Incorrect Sentence(s): Electricity it is the greatest invention for the following reasons. Electricity it has made our lives easier. Electricity it is indispensable in our lives. We need electricity to light our homes, run electric cars, start electronic devices etc.

Corrected Form: Electricity is the greatest invention for the following reasons. Electricity has made our lives easier. Electricity is indispensable in our lives. We need electricity to light our homes, run electric cars, start electronic devices etc.

Once the mistakes were noted, it was figured out that the students need to study more about the order of grammatically correct sentences. When they wrote unnecessary subjects in the sentences as in these ones, the students marks would not be high accordingly.

#### **4.1.4 Incomplete Sentence Mistakes – Error Correction Code –Is-**

Incorrect Sentence(s): When I live in a city. Although people can be employed more easily in cities. If I have enough money. While it is important to drive.

Corrected Form: When I live in a city, I feel more stressful. Although people can be employed more easily in cities, the rate to be sick can be higher due to air pollution. If I had enough money, I would buy a house in rural areas. While it is important to drive, we need to consider adverse effects of it on the environment.

Once the mistakes were analyzed in detail, it was figured out that the students need to study more about completing the sentences till the end, so the sentences will make sense. Otherwise, the students will not get any benefit by writing incomplete sentences.

#### **4.1.5 Singular-Plural Mistakes – Error Correction Code –Pl-**

Incorrect Sentence(s): I read a few article about genetically modified foods. Grocery stores have a lot of healthy option. People have many materials to read and raise their awareness.

Corrected Form: I read a few articles about genetically modified foods. Grocery stores have a lot of healthy options. People have many materials to read and raise their awareness.

Once the mistakes were analyzed in detail, it was figured out that the students need to study more about singular and plural rules. Otherwise, their mistakes can reduce the quality of their works.

#### **4.1.6 Preposition Mistakes – Error Correction Code –P-**

Incorrect Sentence(s): I used to live on a city. I had a barbecue in the weekend. I am at holiday. I come to university by foot.

Corrected Form: I used to live in a city. I had a barbecue at/on the weekend. I am on holiday. I come to university on foot.

Once the mistakes were analyzed in detail, it was figured out that the students need to study more about prepositions. Otherwise, simple mistakes can be turned into grave ones in the following weeks.

#### **4.1.7 Run-On Sentence Mistakes – Error Correction Code –Ro-**

Incorrect Sentence(s): My mom is so supportive and she is so kind and my dad is a generous man and my dad is also reliable and my mom is so humorous.

Corrected Form: My mom is so supportive and humorous, and she is so kind. Also, my dad is a generous and reliable man.

Once the mistakes were analyzed in detail, it was figured out that connecting many different sentences can raise some problems, so it is advised to finalize one and start a new one if it is needed.

#### **4.1.8 Spelling Mistakes – Error Correction Code –Sp-**

Incorrect Sentence(s): Electricity cars are so important. I do not prefer buying a gasoline povered car. I do not need to go to a patrol station to fill my gas thank.

Corrected Form: Electric cars are so important. I do not prefer buying a gasoline powered car. I do not need to go to a petrol station to fill my gas tank.

Once the mistakes were analyzed in detail, it was figured out that spelling matters a lot on the way of being a proficient writer in English.

#### **4.1.9 Subject Verb Agreement – Error Correction Code –Sv-**

Incorrect Sentence(s): Everyone are free what to choose. All people is equal. Supermarkets is a places where you can buy fruit and vegetables. My friend and I am a big supporter of badminton.

Corrected Form: Everyone is free what to choose. All people are equal. Supermarkets are places where you can buy fruit and vegetables. My friend and I are big supporters of badminton.

Once the mistakes were analyzed in detail, it was figured out that writer cannot convey the meaning as clear as expected once subject verb agreement mistakes are prevalent.

#### **4.1.10 Tense Related Mistakes – Error Correction Code –T-**

Incorrect Sentence(s): I graduate from university two years ago. She visited her mum next week. They have never understood the importance of being responsible.

Corrected Form: I graduated from university two years ago. She will visit her mum next week. They have never understood the importance of being responsible.

Once the mistakes were analyzed in detail, it was figured out that tense related mistakes can increase the possibility of misunderstanding the sentences.

#### **4.1.11 Wrong Word Mistakes – Error Correction Code –Ww-**

Incorrect Sentence(s): I ate some spaghetti which was so ambitious. I have fallen the bike. Unfortunately, I have bruises my hand.

Corrected Form: I ate some spaghetti which was so delicious. I have fallen the bike. Unfortunately, I have broken my hand.

Once the mistakes were analyzed in detail, wrong word choice can be troublesome to convey the meaning accurately.

#### **4.1.12 Punctuation Mistakes – Error Correction Code –Pu-**

Incorrect Sentence(s): From my perspective mobile phones are the greatest inventions of all time, they changed our lives positively but some people may disagree with me

Corrected Form: From my perspective, mobile phones are the greatest inventions of all time. They changed our lives positively, but some people may disagree with me.

Once the mistakes were analyzed in detail, punctuation mistakes can reduce the intelligibility of the sentences. Also, the reader may stop reading if punctuation mistakes are more than tolerable.

## **4.2 Analysis of the Questionnaire**

Students` responses through questionnaire were analyzed in Table 3.

Table 3: The analysis of questionnaire

ITEMS		Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
		%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f
Writing is as important as other skills.	4,25	65%	26	18%	7	5%	2	8%	3	4%	2
Our instructor`s efforts were encouraging for me.	4,57	75%	30	13%	5	8%	3	4%	2	0%	0
From my perspective, figuring out the mistakes by direct feedback is a fruitful process.	3,92	48%	19	8%	3	35%	14	10%	4	0%	0
From my perspective, figuring out the mistakes by metalinguistic feedback is a fruitful process.	4,42	68%	27	18%	7	8%	3	5%	2	1%	1
I would rather get direct feedback than metalinguistic feedback.	3,75	45%	17	23%	9	10%	4	8%	3	15%	6
I prefer getting metalinguistic feedback to direct feedback.	4,45	73%	29	15%	6	3%	1	5%	2	4%	2
After getting direct feedback, I reduced my mistakes significantly.	3,35	43%	17	10%	4	5%	2	25%	10	17%	7
After getting metalinguistic feedback, I reduced my mistakes considerably.	4,40	70%	28	15%	6	5%	2	5%	2	5%	2
If I had a new chance in the future, I would join the group to get direct feedback.	3,65	40%	16	13%	5	28%	11	13%	5	6%	3

If I had a new opportunity in the future, I would join the group to get metalinguistic feedback.	4,60	75 %	30	13 %	5	10 %	4	2 %	1	0 %	0
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When Item 1 was analyzed, mean score was recorded as 4,25 which was significant. 65 % (26 students) of the respondents chose strongly agree, while %18 (7 students), % 5 (2 students), % 8 (3 students) and 4 % (2 students) of the respondents chose agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. It clearly shows that writing is as important as other skills was confirmed by the highest number of students.

When item 2 analysis was completed, means score was 4,57 which was highly significant. 75 % of the respondents chose strongly agree, while %13, % 8, % 4 and 0 % of the respondents chose agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. It clearly depicts that the instructor's efforts were highly appreciated by the highest number of students.

When item 3 analysis was completed, means score was 3.92 which was insignificant. Only 48 % of the respondents chose strongly agree, while %8, % 35, % 10 and 0 % of the respondents chose agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. It clearly portrays that the direct feedback was not a fruitful process to pinpoint chronic mistakes and force students to research more about their mistakes.

When item 4 analysis was completed, means score was 4.42 which was highly significant. 68 % of the respondents chose strongly agree, while % 18, % 8, % 5 and 1 % of the respondents chose agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. It clearly unfolds that the metalinguistic feedback was a fruitful process to pinpoint chronic mistakes and force students to research more about their mistakes.

When item 5 analysis was completed, means score was 3.75 which was insignificant. Only 45 % of the respondents chose strongly agree, while %23, % 10, % 8 and 14 % of the respondents chose agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. It clearly presents that the direct feedback was not preferred by most of the students. They want to learn their mistakes by inquiry.

When item 6 analysis was completed, means score was 4.45 which was highly significant. 73% of the respondents chose strongly agree, while % 15, % 3, % 5 and 4 % of the respondents chose agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. It clearly illustrates that metalinguistic feedback was preferred by most of the students. They want to learn their mistakes by inquiry.

When item 7 analysis was completed, means score was 3.35 which was insignificant. Only 43 % of the respondents chose strongly agree, while %17, % 5, % 25 and 5 % of the respondents chose agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. It clearly unfolds that the direct feedback did not produce the expected result. The students' attitude was mostly negative.

When item 8 analysis was completed, means score was 4.40 which was highly significant. 70% of the respondents chose strongly agree, while % 15, % 5, % 5 and 5 % of the respondents chose agree, neutral,

disagree and strongly disagree respectively. It clearly shows that metalinguistic feedback was so essential to realize the mistakes and research more in order not to repeat them again.

When item 9 analysis was completed, means score was 3.65 which was insignificant. Only 40 % of the respondents chose strongly agree, while % 13, % 28, % 13 and 6 % of the respondents chose agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. It clearly displays that the students do not want to join a group to get direct feedback in the future. The students` attitude was mostly negative.

When item 10 analysis was completed, means score was 4.60 which was highly significant. 75% of the respondents chose strongly agree, while % 13, % 10, % 2 and 0 % of the respondents chose agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree respectively. It clearly uncovers that most of the students would join a group to get metalinguistic feedback in the future. The students` attitude was mostly positive.

When all items were analyzed thoroughly, it was noticed that item 2, 6 and 10 were chosen by the highest number of students with strongly agree options, whereas 5, 7 and 9 were chosen by the least number of students with strongly agree options. These results were in line with the hypothesis of the study which claims that metalinguistic feedback yields better results than direct feedback.

Independent samples t test analysis was illustrated in Table 4.

### 4.3 Independent Samples T Test Analysis

Table 4: Independent sample T Test

Variables	Groups	N	Mean	SD	t	df	Sig
Pre-test	Experimental Group	20	61.25	5.821	1.308	38	.199
Pre-test	Control Group	20	59	5.026			
Post-test	Experimental Group	20	76	7.363	4.506	38	.000
Post-test	Control Group	20	64.50	8.721			

Note. P<0.05

As shown in Table 4,  $P < 0.05$  for all pairs, so the model is significant at 95 % in this study. When the significance values were analyzed in terms of pre-test results, there was no significant difference between each group because it was measured as .199 which was greater than 0.05. In this respect, there was no significant difference between control and experimental group at first. On the other hand, when the p values were analyzed in terms of post-test results, it was measured as .000 which was highly significant. Alternative hypothesis which stated that there was a significant difference between each group in terms of

variables was accepted. There was a significant difference, and the progress in experimental group was greater than the control group.

Paired samples t test analysis in experimental group was illustrated in Table 5.

#### 4.4 Paired Samples T Test Analysis in Each Group

Table 5: Paired Samples T Test Analysis in experimental group

Paired Samples Test								
	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Experimental Group Pre- test Post-test	-14.750	10.447	2.336	-19.639	-9.861	-6.314	19	.000

Paired samples test was run to measure whether there was a significant difference in each group separately by comparing means of pre-test and post-test. Based on the observed values in experimental group, p value was measured as .000 which was less than 0.05, so there was a highly significant difference between each treatment. Additionally, mean score, standard deviation, standard error mean, t value and df were observed as 10.447, 2.336, -6.314 and 19 respectively. These figures were also in line with observed significant difference between pre-test and post-test in terms of experimental group.

Paired samples t test analysis in control group was illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6: Paired Samples T Test Analysis in control group

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Control	Pre-test Post-test	-5.500	9.305	2.081	-9.855	-1.145	-2.643	19	.016

The same procedure was conducted in control group as well. P value was measured as .016 which was higher than 0.05. The gathered data show that there was no significant difference between pre-test and post-test in terms of control group. Moreover, mean score, standard deviation, standard error mean, t value and df were noted as -5500, 9.305, 2.081, -2.643 and 19 respectively. These figures also support the data about not having a considerable difference between each treatment in terms of control group.

### 5. Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

This study aimed to compare two written corrective feedback techniques which were direct feedback and metalinguistic feedback. In this respect, multiple instruments were employed. Based on the gathered data, it was measured that the students who were exposed to metalinguistic feedback outperformed the students who were engaged in direct feedback process. These results were in line with previous studies conducted in this area (Rassaei, Moeinzadeh, & Youhannaee, 2012; Ellis, 2008). In regard to these results, some interpretations can be made.

Incomplete sentence, delete, spelling mistake categories were the most chronic problems at first. Although the students in experimental group minimized the mistakes in these categories and others, the same success could not be seen in control group members who had a slight decrease in terms of their mistakes. Additionally, singular plural and subject verb agreement categories were needed to improve in control group`s members because there was a backward trend, while punctuation mistakes could not be reduced in experimental group students. It can be figured out that more efforts are needed to minimize the mistakes in these categories. Another striking point was that the success rate to reduce the mistakes was far better in experimental group. Experimental group`s overall change was recorded as 11 %, whereas it was only 6 % in control group.

After a thorough analysis of the questionnaire, it was noticed that students consider writing skill as essential as other skills as convened by Graham et al. (2013). Also, most students appreciated the instructor`s effort to promote their learning in essay writing process. Moreover, they conceded that they reduced their mistakes significantly when they were exposed to metalinguistic feedback process.

Furthermore, most students opt in joining metalinguistic feedback group if the study is conducted again in the future.

Once independent samples t test and paired samples t test results were uncovered, it was figured out that the improvement was far better in experimental group, while it was not as satisfactory as expected in control group. It was confirmed once more that metalinguistic feedback increased their success rate in academic writing course thanks to its nature to channel students` energy on inquiry based learning through internet or other authentic materials rather than correcting all the answers immediately on the paper.

Once the interviews were deciphered and analyzed, most students appreciated metalinguistic feedback to improve their levels academically in terms of writing, whereas only few students had positive attitudes towards direct feedback technique. Some of the comments by students can be examined below:

I had some biases against writing when I was a high school student because I thought that writing was so challenging, and I was not creative enough to write persuasive essays. However, flawless education offered at university by experienced and dedicated instructors changed my opinion dramatically. After receiving metalinguistic feedback, I realized that more research was needed to analyze my mistakes through error correction codes. The more I did research, the better I learned. This period was one of the most fruitful periods in my life. I have noticed one more time that metalinguistic feedback strategy increases my motivation more than others. (Student L)

I wish I had joined this program earlier. Being a student to get a metalinguistic feedback was an awesome experience. Once we learned our mistakes by exam codes, we came together with our friends to go online, so we grasped our mistakes, researched more in order not to repeat the same mistakes again. I have realized that my mistakes were so common. After noticing them, I read some tips which help me a lot to write nearly mistake-free essays right now. (Student S)

When I was a high school student, I did not know how to sharpen my writing skill. Now, I know many strategies to develop good habits towards writing thanks to getting metalinguistic feedback. I feel proud to join this program. (Student V)

I was exposed to both feedback techniques which were metalinguistic and direct feedback. Once I used to think that direct feedback was practical and less time consuming. However, I could not improve my writing in the past because all my mistakes were corrected by my instructor. I was not inclined to researching on the internet to learn the root of my mistakes on the internet. After metalinguistic feedback style, I learned deeply about my mistakes. Now, I have much self- confidence to write excellent essays. (Student E)

I joined the group to get direct feedback. Once my idea was that I was lucky because the instructor would undertake all the responsibility to correct my mistakes. Later, I figured out that I was wrong. My friends in the other group improved their writing skill a lot because they were motivated to discover their mistakes by error correction codes. At the

end of this study, I realized that doing further research breeds productivity and reduce the risk of making the same mistakes again and again. (Student J)

This study had some limitations as well. The first point was that males were higher than female students. It could be equalized to represent the population well. Moreover, more students from different departments could be integrated. Additionally, the study measured students` writing skill in 12 weeks. Longer periods can yield better results to improve students` writing skill.

Some recommendations to the stakeholders of education can be made related to this study. Considering the positive influence of metalinguistic feedback on students, this strategy can be applied more extensively in educational institutions where English is used as the medium of instruction. Additionally, the collaboration between instructors and the administrators can be enhanced to increase the quality of writing lessons through metalinguistic feedback.

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