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## Effects of Explicit Written Corrective Feedback on Subject-Verb Agreement among Kurdish EFL Students

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### Abstract

The research on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing has garnered considerable attention over the years, particularly concerning the impact of corrective feedback (CF) on students' errors. However, in the context of Kurdish EFL students, this area of research has received limited attention, despite its potential to enhance their grammatical accuracy in writing tasks. This paper addresses this gap by examining the impact of Explicit Written Corrective Feedback (EWCF) on Kurdish EFL undergraduate students' writing accuracy in terms of *subject-verb agreement (SVA)*. For data collection, the study employed a mixed-method approach and recruited sixty junior EFL undergraduate students who were randomly assigned to two groups: the experimental group (n=30) received EWCF on their SVA errors for five weeks, while the control group (n=30) received only implicit feedback without correction on SVA errors. Data was collected through questionnaires and pre-and post-tests, and the results revealed that EWCF was preferred by students and was more effective in enhancing their writing accuracy in terms of SVA, as evidenced in the post-test. The study has several theoretical and pedagogical implications, including the need for instructors to provide EWCF to enhance students' grammatical accuracy in writing tasks. Further, the study contributes to the limited body of research on EFL writing in the context of Kurdish students, highlighting the need for further investigation in this area.

**Keywords:** *Explicit Feedback, Written Corrective Feedback, Writing, Writing Accuracy*

### Introduction

Writing has been considered one of the most significant findings in human history as it acts as a medium for sharing knowledge, information, ideas, and perspectives across different generations and countries (Deane, 2018). As Cole and Feng (2015) indicated, developing writing skills in English is crucial for achieving success in language proficiency. Therefore, for decades, writing teachers and experts in the field have been conducting studies to find some

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strategies to improve learners' writing skills, and one of the most prevalent strategies is the WCF (Li & Vuono, 2019; Mao & Lee, 2020). The importance of providing corrective feedback (CF) in second language writing instruction has been widely recognized in the literature (Ferris, 2003; Nassaji, 2018; Mahmood, 2021, 2022). CF serves as a means to draw learners' attention to their linguistic errors, promote language development, and improve overall writing proficiency.

The provision of WCF has been a debatable topic for more than four decades (Brown, 2012; Ferris, 1999; Ferris, 2003, 2010, 2012; Truscott, 1996, 1999, 2022). Truscott and Hsu (2008) have contended that providing written corrective feedback (WCF) is ineffective and potentially detrimental to the development of second language (L2) learners' writing skills. However, subsequent studies conducted by (Bitchener, 2016, 2019); Bitchener and Knoch (2008); (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a, 2009b; Bitchener & Storch, 2016), Bitchener (2016), and Lee (2019) have presented more recent evidence indicating that WCF can indeed have a positive impact on enhancing the accuracy of L2 writing. This ongoing debate among researchers encourages other researchers to conduct more studies to seek effective strategies for WCF provision with its types. In a recent study, Benson and DeKeyser (2019) found that learners who received WCF had significantly higher gains than those who did not receive any WCF, and among two types (i.e., explicit and implicit), it was found that explicit was more effective and durable than metalinguistic CF. Similar results were reported by (Brown et al., 2023; Karim & Nassaji, 2020b). Lee (2019) also verified these findings and concluded that WCF promotes L2 learners' writing skills development.

While there has been a growing body of research investigating the impact of various types of written corrective feedback (WCF), there is still a need for further studies. These studies should explore the varying effects of different feedback approaches and determine the specific conditions under which they contribute to the enhancement of second language (L2) development. Lira-Gonzales and Nassaji (2023) found that both focused feedback and comprehensive feedback enhanced the accuracy of learners' revisions and subsequent writing. However, explicit feedback was found to be more effective compared to comprehensive feedback. Scholars such as Yu et al. (2023) and Frear and Chiu (2015) have highlighted this need for comprehensive research in the field to enable L2 teachers to apply WCF in their writing pedagogy. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct more research to identify any previously methodological limitations (i.e., through longitudinal studies, and various EFL/ESL contexts) and establish the most effective form of written corrective feedback (WCF) that can aid learners in enhancing their writing accuracy. As far as the researchers are aware, no local study has specifically investigated the impacts of explicit WCF on the writing achievements (i.e., accuracy) of Kurdish EFL university students.

The examination of written corrective feedback (WCF) can be approached through the lens of the interactionist hypothesis and the negotiation of meaning. According to the interactionist perspective, language learning occurs through meaningful interactions and engagement in communication. WCF, within this framework, can be seen as a facilitator of negotiated meaning, where learners engage in an active process of understanding and refining their language skills through feedback exchanges. By investigating how WCF contributes to the negotiation of meaning (Nassaji, 2018), researchers can gain insights into the dynamic interplay between feedback provision, learner uptake, and the development of linguistic

competence. Such investigations can shed light on the effectiveness and optimal conditions for utilizing WCF to enhance language learning outcomes.

### Literature Review

One of the main components of any language is its grammar (Ekanayaka & Ellis, 2020). The structure and combinations of words, phrases, and clauses are dependent on grammar. Therefore, teaching grammar in a second language (L2) occupies an important position in the teaching and learning process. However, with the rise of the communicative teaching approach in the late 1970s, teaching grammar was deemphasized and overlooked (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004). Furthermore, it was believed that “teaching grammar was not only unhelpful but might be detrimental” (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004, p. 126). In addition to that, research has found that students believe that grammar knowledge and using it accurately is one of the essential indications for good writing (Ekanayaka & Ellis, 2020), and for that reason, the WCF has been considered as an effective strategy by teachers and researchers to help learners improve their writing abilities (Bitchener, 2016; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008, 2009a, 2009b; Ferris, 2006; Ferris, 2012).

#### *Written Corrective Feedback (WCF): A Short History*

When teaching L2 classes, dealing with learners’ errors is a crucial point. L2 teachers use various strategies to correct their learners’ errors, such as oral corrective feedback (OCF) or WCF. In a general sense, Chaudron (1988) defined CF as “any teacher behavior following an error that minimally attempts to inform the learner of the fact of error” (p. 149). Ferris (2006), Nassaji (2018), and Karim and Nassaji (2020a) referred to WCF as any written comments that assist learners in improving their linguistic accuracy, particularly their grammatical accuracy. Additionally, Ferris (2010) and Miao et al. (2023) used different terms for WCF, such as *error correction* or *grammar correction*. Karim and Nassaji (2020a) mentioned some frequent terms used to refer to feedback, such as *negative evidence* and *negative feedback*. Furthermore, Ellis (2009) defined CF as the response to “a learner utterance containing a linguistic error” (p.3).

Error correction can be carried out through a variety of strategies, such as direct (i.e., giving the correct linguistic form(s) for the learners’ error) or indirect (i.e., using symbols to indicate where the error was made) CF (Ferris, 2003; Mahmood, 2021; Nassaji, 2018). CF can also be a comment or clarification to direct learners to notice their errors (Nassaji, 2015). On the other hand, *comprehensive* and *selective* feedback are two other types of CF. When teachers provide CF for all errors made by learners, it is called *comprehensive* CF, whereas *selective* feedback (i.e., focused) is when teachers focus on selective errors, not all errors (Ferris, 2003; Mahmood, 2021). As the current study focuses on explicit CF (i.e., also using the term direct CF interchangeably), it is vital to have a clear understanding of explicit WCF. Nassaji (2018) referred to explicit CF as “utterances that both rephrase the learner’s erroneous utterance into a correct form and also clearly indicate to the learner that his or her utterance is erroneous in some way” (p.2). It means the learner can easily see the error alongside the correct form of the error. CF, especially grammar correction, has been a controversial topic in second language acquisition (SLA) among both teachers and researchers (e.g., Ferris, 1999; Ferris, 2003; Truscott, 1996, 1999, 2022). Despite the controversies, CF has its various roles and place in

most L2 teaching theories (Ellis, 2009). Therefore, it is vital to investigate and review previous studies and illustrate their findings and results on the nature of the relationship between CF and the improvement of grammatical accuracy.

#### *Grammatical Accuracy and Corrective Feedback*

A spoken language has four major skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), but writing is usually considered to be “the most problematic of the four skills” (Schultz, 2011, pp. 65-82). Therefore, since the beginning of teaching L2 writing, grammar has been a core portion of teaching instructions, and teachers provided grammar CF to their learners regularly (i.e., either mostly written or oral). When Truscott (1996) published his article entitled “The Case Against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes”, and indicated that “grammar correction in L2 writing classes should be abandoned” (p.327), “it is unpleasant and time-consuming” (Truscott, 2001, p. 1), other researchers (e.g., Ferris, 1999) responded to Truscott’s claim and said, “Truscott’s thesis that “grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned” (1996, p. 328) is premature and overly strong and discusses areas for further research” (p.1). After responding back and forth from both researchers (i.e., Ferris and Truscott), an extensive body of research was conducted to investigate CF. Negro and Chanquoy (2005) conducted a study with young writers who received training on *subject-verb agreement* either explicitly or implicitly. The results showed that regardless of the groups, their abilities to decrease *subject-verb agreement* errors were increased. The conclusions revealed that explicit training enhanced the participants’ abilities in both the pre-test and the post-test to gain more grammatical accuracy. In a similar study, Ellis et al. (2006) examined the role of explicit and implicit CF in L2 grammar acquisition. The experimental group received either a recast (implicit CF) or metalinguistic explanation (explicit CF). After the pre and post-tests, the results indicated that the group which received explicit CF outperformed the group which received implicit CF.

Research (e.g., Benson & DeKeyser, 2019; Daneshvar & Rahimi, 2014; Mahmood, 2022; Sepehri, 2019; Shintani et al., 2014a) shows that those learners who received CF have improved their writing accuracy and outperformed those who did not receive CF. For instance, Daneshvar and Rahimi (2014) investigated the effects of WCF (i.e., direct, and indirect CF) on EFL learners’ grammatical accuracy. The results indicated that both groups outperformed the controlled group with no feedback, but in the study “*recast WCF*” was more effective than direct WCF. On the contrary, Shintani et al. (2014b) found that the effectiveness of *direct WCF* was lasting longer than the *metalinguistic explanation*. Similarly, Al-Hazzani and Altalhab (2018) investigated the effects of *Explicit WCF* on the improvement of female Saudi EFL learners’ grammatical and lexical accuracy. The results indicated that the participants made many errors in their writing tasks, after providing *explicit WCF*, the results showed that the experimental group achieved significantly higher results than the control group. The results also supported the efficacy of teachers’ WCF. To sum up, a considerable number of studies have been published and investigated a variety of WCF types on learners’ writing accuracy in both ESL/EFL contexts, but very little research (e.g., Mahmood, 2021) has been conducted in the Kurdish EFL context with learners who have been studying and learning English as a foreign language for over four decades. Therefore, there is a need for more studies to investigate the effects of CF- specifically, of WCF on Kurdish EFL learners’ grammatical and

writing accuracy. In summary, numerous studies have investigated various types of WCF on learners' writing accuracy in both ESL/EFL contexts, but very little research (e.g., Mahmood, 2021) has been conducted in the Kurdish EFL context with learners who have been studying and learning English as a foreign language for over four decades. Thus, there is a need for more studies to investigate the effects of CF, specifically WCF, on Kurdish EFL learners' grammatical and writing accuracy.

Building upon these theoretical frameworks, this study investigates the effects of EWCF on Kurdish EFL undergraduate students' writing accuracy in terms of SVA. Specifically, the study aims to answer three research questions: (1) To what extent are Kurdish EFL learners aware of WCF? (2) To what extent do Kurdish EFL learners utilize the given WCF when received from their writing instructors? (3) Does explicit WCF have any significant effect on the grammatical accuracy of Kurdish EFL learners in terms of *subject-verb agreement*?

To address these research questions, a mixed-method approach is employed, and data is collected from sixty junior EFL undergraduate students at Salahaddin University. The participants are randomly assigned to two groups: the experimental group (n=30) and the control group (n=30). The experimental group receives EWCF on their SVA errors for five weeks, while the control group receives only implicit feedback without correction on SVA errors. Data is collected through questionnaires and pre-and post-tests, focusing on students' understanding and utilization of EWCF, as well as their improvement in SVA accuracy.

The analysis of the collected data will provide insights into the effectiveness of EWCF in enhancing Kurdish EFL students' writing accuracy. The results of this study have the potential to contribute to the limited body of research on EFL writing in the context of Kurdish students and highlight the need for further investigation in this area. Additionally, the study has theoretical implications by drawing on existing frameworks to examine the impact of EWCF on SVA accuracy, as well as pedagogical implications by emphasizing the importance of providing explicit CF to enhance students' grammatical accuracy in writing tasks.

In conclusion, this study addresses the gap in the research on CF in the context of Kurdish EFL students by investigating the effects of EWCF on SVA accuracy in writing tasks. By employing a mixed-method approach, the study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on EFL writing, provide insights into students' understanding and utilization of EWCF, and highlight the significance of providing explicit CF to enhance students' grammatical accuracy.

## **Method**

### *Context and Participants*

This study was conducted at a public university in Iraqi Kurdistan. The participants were third-year undergraduate students (n = 73): 43 of the participants responded to an online survey questionnaire, and 30 of them were randomly selected to form the experimental group, which received explicit CF on *subject-verb agreement* throughout the entire semester. These students had been studying for three years at the time of the current study and would receive a bachelor's degree in English upon graduation, which typically lasts four years. The majority of the participants were Kurdish, with three Arab participants. The mean age of all the participants was 20 years old. They had taken an essay writing course in their third year of formal studies, and the experimental group was selected randomly.

### *Target Structure*

As participants had been attending grammar classes since their first year of undergraduate studies, there was no specific target grammatical structure. Instead, all grammar structures were considered once the participants' writing samples were collected. The focus of this study was *subject-verb agreement* (SVA), irrespective of specific tenses or grammar structures. The reason for not focusing on a particular grammar structure was that all participants had studied all English grammar tenses during the first and second years of their studies.

### *Procedure and Instrument*

#### *Essay writing task*

The participants (n = 30) were given essay topics at the very beginning of the semester to study essay writing in class. They were given essay topics in their fourth week (i.e., pre-test) and twelfth week (i.e., post-test). They were asked to write an essay of 150 words for both the pre-test and the post-test. After the pre-test essays were collected, the participants received explicit WCF from their teacher on *subject-verb agreement* (SVA). In the next class, the researchers explained the errors explicitly to the participants and provided the correct forms for each error. Two weeks before the end of the semester, the participants were given another topic for the post-test essay writing task. The researchers collected the essays and focused mainly on *subject-verb agreement* forms while marking them. Finally, the collected data was prepared for the analysis process.

#### *Survey Questionnaire*

An online survey questionnaire was conducted using Google Forms to investigate participants' perceptions towards teaching grammar instruction and WCF in English (WCF) writing classes. The survey comprised ten statements based on Likert scales (ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree). The survey was divided into two sections: the first section had three statements that explored the participants' views on teaching grammar in ESL/EFL classes, and the second section had five statements that investigated the participants' perceptions of WCF in writing classes. The data was collected by distributing the online questionnaire in a Telegram group, and 43 participants responded to the survey. The collected data were coded and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics 25 for analysis. For the results section, both descriptive and inferential statistics were used to provide reliable and accurate results.

## **Results**

After the collected data were analyzed, for the descriptive statistics, three main constructs were built based on the survey questionnaire statements.

#### *Perceptions towards WCF*

Based on the analyzed data in Table 1, most of the participants believed that grammar instruction is an essential part of mastering writing skills. This belief is confirmed by the mean value and standard deviation, which are (M = 4.209 and Std = .733), respectively. The high mean value and low standard deviation indicate that there is continuous consistency among the participants in terms of the importance of teaching grammar in EFL classes. The descriptive statistics show that (44.3%) of the participants agreed with the first statement, and (39.5%)

strongly agreed with it. Meanwhile, (14.0%) of the participants were neutral in their responses, and only (2.3%) disagreed with the first statement. On the other hand, the results for the second statement in Table 1 show a high rate of inconsistency among the participants regarding their likes of studying grammar ( $M = 3.744$ ,  $Std = 1.236$ ). Therefore, it can be said that although most of the participants stated that grammar instruction is essential, not all of them liked studying grammar.

**Table 1***Participants' Perceptions of Grammar Instruction in Writing Classes*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1/ Grammar instruction is essential for mastering the writing of English.	43	4.209	.773
2/ I like studying English grammar.	43	3.744	1.236
3/ I keep the grammar rules in mind when I am writing in English.	43	3.907	1.108
Valid N (listwise)	43		

Regarding the writing process and the importance of grammar rules in writing tasks, (74.5%) of the participants (i.e.,  $M = 3.907$ ,  $Std = 1.108$ ) indicated that they keep grammar rules in mind when it comes to writing tasks. However, some inconsistencies can still be noticed when the mean value and standard deviation are calculated. The descriptive statistics show that (16.3%) of the participants were neutral, and (7.0%) of them disagreed with the third statement.

*Participants' Perceptions of Written Corrective Feedback*

In the second part of the questionnaire, participants were asked to express their knowledge and preferences towards WCF and its two types: explicit and implicit. The collected data were analyzed as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2***Participants' Perceptions of Written Corrective Feedback*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1/ I know what written corrective feedback is.	43	3.883	1.028
2/ What is your opinion about correcting the errors in your English writings by your instructor(s)?	43	4.372	.976
3/ I want my instructor (s) to provide me with "Explicit" written corrective feedback.	43	3.883	.878
4/ I want my instructor (s) to provide me with "Implicit" written corrective feedback.	43	2.627	1.113
Valid N (listwise)	43		

Table 2 shows that the participants' knowledge of CF varied. The mean value and standard deviation ( $M = 3.883$ ,  $Std. = 1.028$ ) indicated that not all participants knew what CF was.

Specifically, (23.3%) of the participants were unsure if they knew what CF was, and (7%) of the participants stated that they did not know what CF was. Furthermore, participants were asked to state their opinions on correcting their writing errors by their instructors. The results indicated a consistency of responses among the participants ( $M = 4.372$ ,  $Std. = .976$ ). Specifically, (25.6% = important, and 60.5% = very important) of participants believed that correcting writing errors by instructors was either important or very important to be implemented in writing classes. However, (2.3% = were not important at all, 4.7% = not important, and 7.0% = neutral) of the participants showed the opposite.

Regarding the two types of CF, participants were asked to indicate their preferences upon receiving WCF from their instructors. The analyzed data showed that most of the participants preferred explicit CF to implicit CF; (74.5%) of them rated in favor of explicit WCF, whereas only (23.3%) preferred implicit WCF to explicit WCF. Additionally, participants were asked how carefully they reviewed the CF they received from their instructors. The results showed that (60.5%) of the participants indicated that they carefully read and corrected all errors, and (34.9%) of them only corrected major errors. In contrast, (2.3%) did not read the feedback, and (2.3%) read the feedback but did not correct the errors.

To answer the third research question, both groups (i.e., the experimental and the controlled group) wrote two essays, one at the beginning of the semester as the pre-test and one at the end of the semester as the post-test. After the essays in the pre-test were collected and marked with explicit CF for SVA, the number of errors for both groups were calculated. An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test for both groups in terms of the efficacy of explicit WCF on their writing accuracy.

**Table 3**

*Descriptive Statistics for Pre-Test and Post-test*

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pretest	Experimental	23	17.04	1.330
	Controlled	23	<u>15.70</u>	<u>1.148</u>
Posttest	Experimental	23	12.26	1.205
	Controlled	23	<u>16.09</u>	<u>1.135</u>

In the pre-test, a significant difference was observed in the scores between the experimental group ( $M = 17.04$ ,  $SD = 1.330$ ) and the control group ( $M = 15.70$ ,  $SD = 12.26$ ) [ $t(44) = 7.67$ ,  $p = .001$ , two-tailed]. Therefore, based on the statistical results in Table 3, we fail to reject the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the two groups in the pre-test in terms of writing accuracy (i.e., *subject-verb agreement*). As mentioned before, the experimental group received explicit WCF from their writing teacher, and detailed explanations for the errors were provided by the researchers in the next class. In contrast, the control group did not receive any explicit WCF or explanations for *subject-verb agreement* errors.

**Table 4***Independent Samples Test for the Pre-test and the Post-test*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
		F	Sig.	t	df	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest	Equal variances assumed	.943	.337	.767	44	.447
Posttest	Equal variances assumed	.530	.470	-2.312	44	.026

Based on the analyzed data in Table 4, there was a significant difference between the scores of the experimental group ( $M = 12.26$ ,  $SD = 1.205$ ) and the control group ( $M = 10.78$ ,  $SD = 1.408$ ) in the posttest [ $t(44) = -2.312$ ,  $p = .026$ , two-tailed,  $p < .05$ ]. Therefore, it is evident from Table 4 that there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the post-test writing accuracy, as the p-value of .026 is less than .05. Thus, we reject the null hypothesis. Hence, it can be concluded that explicit WCF was effective in improving the participants' writing accuracy in terms of subject-verb agreement. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected.

## Discussion

The findings of this study shed light on the participants' perceptions of grammar instruction and WCF in EFL writing classes. The first research question aimed to investigate the extent to which Kurdish EFL learners are aware of WCF. The results indicated that most of the participants recognized the significance of grammar instruction for mastering English writing skills, which is in line with previous studies emphasizing the importance of grammar instruction in language learning (Al-Hazzani & Altalhab, 2018; Barrot, 2023; Lee, 2019; Mao & Lee, 2020). It is worth noting, however, that not all participants expressed a liking for studying grammar, suggesting a range of attitudes toward this aspect of language learning. This finding highlights the complexity of learners' perspectives on grammar instruction. Therefore, the findings of this study provide compelling evidence supporting the necessity for teachers to provide written corrective feedback (WCF) in EFL writing classes, even if it may not be enthusiastically received by all students.

Regarding the writing process, a significant number of participants reported considering grammar rules when writing in English, demonstrating their recognition of the relevance of grammar rules. Nonetheless, a minority of participants expressed a neutral or negative attitude toward the importance of grammar rules in writing tasks. This divergence in perspectives suggests that while some learners perceive grammar rules as essential, others may have different priorities or preferences when engaging in writing activities. These findings emphasize the need to consider individual differences and learner preferences when designing grammar instruction in EFL writing classes. Hence, it can be inferred that one of the other

crucial factors affecting the effectiveness of CF is individual differences in ESL/EFL classes, and this should be taken into consideration when CF is provided. This finding suggests that L2 teachers should incorporate interactive activities into grammar instruction to enhance student engagement and counter the perception of grammar as a dull aspect of L2 learning.

Moving on to participants' perceptions of WCF (i.e., research question 2), the results revealed that while not all participants were familiar with the concept of corrective feedback (CF), the majority considered it important or very important for their instructors to correct errors in their writings. This aligns with the expectation that learners generally anticipate feedback on their written work (Nassaji, 2018). Additionally, participants exhibited a clear preference for explicit WCF, suggesting their belief in the effectiveness of receiving direct and specific feedback on their errors. This preference is consistent with previous research highlighting the benefits of explicit feedback in promoting language accuracy (Ferris, 2012; Mahmood, 2021). Although previous studies, such as Truscott (1996); (Truscott, 2022), have presented views suggesting that written corrective feedback (WCF) could potentially be detrimental to learners, the findings of this study challenge such claims. The results indicate that the negative effects attributed to WCF may be attributed to learners' unfamiliarity with this feedback approach. It is possible that once learners become more acquainted with the purpose and benefits of WCF, they may be able to perceive it as a valuable learning tool rather than a punitive measure imposed by their teachers. This highlights the importance of raising learners' awareness and understanding of WCF to ensure its effective utilization in the language learning process.

To investigate the effectiveness of explicit WCF (research question 3), the study conducted pre-tests and post-tests to measure participants' writing accuracy in terms of subject-verb agreement. The pre-test results indicated no significant difference between the experimental and control groups, suggesting similar levels of writing accuracy before the intervention. However, in the post-test, a significant difference emerged, with the experimental group outperforming the control group. This finding provides evidence for the effectiveness of explicit WCF in improving participants' writing accuracy in terms of subject-verb agreement. These results are consistent with previous research highlighting the positive impact of explicit WCF on learners' grammatical accuracy (Benson & DeKeyser, 2019; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009b; Ekanayaka & Ellis, 2020; Frear & Chiu, 2015; Shintani et al., 2014a). The use of explicit feedback, accompanied by detailed explanations of errors, appears to have contributed to the participants' improvement in writing accuracy. This finding supports the argument that explicit feedback can help learners notice and internalize grammatical features more effectively (Ferris, 2006; Ferris, 2012; Nassaji, 2018). One reason for this finding can be interpreted in light of the study's framework, specifically the framework of interaction and negotiation of meaning (Gass, 2003; Mackey, 2014). According to this framework, learners' engagement in the learning process can accelerate language acquisition. By providing explicit WCF, learners have more opportunities to engage in meaningful interactions with their teachers. Through the provision of detailed feedback, learners can better understand their errors and receive guidance on how to correct them. This aligns with the principles of the interaction and negotiation of meaning framework, which emphasizes learners' active participation and engagement. By actively engaging with explicit WCF, learners can enhance their language learning experience and promote their language development.

To sum up, the findings of this study offer valuable insights into participants' perceptions of grammar instruction and WCF in EFL writing classes. While the majority of participants recognized the importance of grammar instruction, it is important to consider the diversity of attitudes and preferences among learners. Furthermore, participants' understanding of the relevance of grammar rules in the writing process suggests the continued relevance of explicit grammar instruction interventions in writing classes. Similar EFL contexts can also utilize WCF to enhance students' grammar accuracy in writing, not only in terms of subject-verb agreement but also with respect to other grammar elements.

### **Conclusion**

This study sought to explore the EFL Kurdish students' awareness of WCF and whether such correction finds its way in and positively affects such students' written tasks. The findings, in line with the previous studies, were in favour of the writing instructors' adoption of WCF in their writing courses. This was evident from the students' positive view of such corrections and the lowered number of errors the experimental-group students made in terms of SV agreement in the post-test. WCF, of both types, as was found to be effective to improve Kurdish EFL students' SV agreement, could be employed with the other grammar elements in the writing lectures. Regarding WCF, most participants considered it important for their instructors to correct errors in their writings. They also exhibited a clear preference for explicit feedback, valuing clear and direct explanations of their errors. These findings align with previous research emphasizing the significance of explicit WCF in promoting language accuracy. Thus, findings from this research, although driven from one specific EFL context, could be extended to represent the EFL students' perspective of a broader context on WCF of both types direct and indirect. Furthermore, the study provided evidence for the effectiveness of explicit WCF in improving participants' writing accuracy in terms of subject-verb agreement. The pre-test results indicated no significant difference between the experimental and control groups, suggesting similar levels of writing accuracy before the intervention. However, in the post-test, the experimental group outperformed the control group, demonstrating the positive impact of explicit WCF. These results are consistent with previous research highlighting the positive effects of explicit WCF on learners' grammatical accuracy. The use of explicit feedback, accompanied by detailed explanations of errors, contributed to the participants' improvement in writing accuracy. In light of these findings, it is recommended that EFL writing instructors prioritize grammar instruction and incorporate explicit WCF strategies into their teaching practices. Providing clear explanations of errors and offering explicit feedback can enhance learners' understanding and internalization of grammatical features. As the study was conducted in a context where the issues of teaching and learning English as a foreign language have been investigated and addressed to the least, the findings of the current study have several crucial methodological and pedagogical implications. The most important implications are for L2 instructors. First, EFL instructors should emphasize the importance of grammar instruction to their students, even if some students may not enjoy studying grammar. Second, EFL/ESL instructors should provide explicit WCF to their students, as it is preferred by most of them and is effective in improving writing accuracy. Yet the issue of the effectiveness of CF needs to be further investigated in different contexts to tailor the types of CF to learners' needs. Third, instructors should ensure that their students understand the purpose and meaning of CF,

especially those who are unsure if they have received CF or just confirmation from the teacher, especially with some types of CF such as “recasts” because previous studies (e.g., Lyster, 2004) have found that the provision of some types of CF may be ambiguous for learners to understand and act on them upon receiving them. Finally, instructors should encourage their students to carefully review and correct all errors in the CF they receive. This can be achieved through dynamic feedback between the instructors and learners. On the other hand, the study also has several theoretical contributions from its examination of students' perceptions of grammar instruction and WCF in EFL writing classes. For instance, the findings provide insight into how students perceive the role of grammar instruction in mastering writing skills, which is crucial for developing effective teaching methods, especially in EFL contexts. Furthermore, the results also shed light on students' preferences regarding different types of WCF, which can inform instructors on how to provide feedback that is both effective and well-received. Additionally, the study contributes to the broader discussion on the importance of explicit CF in improving writing accuracy as the debate on the effectiveness of WCF has been going on for more than four decades. Finally, for stakeholders, these theoretical insights can inform the development of teaching materials and methods that better align with students' needs and preferences. It is important, also, to acknowledge the limitations of this study. The sample size was relatively small, consisting of participants from a specific context. Future research could expand the sample size and include participants from diverse language backgrounds to ensure generalizability. This research, further, did not include the writing instructors' perspectives due to time and scope limitations and constraints. The findings of this research would have been more comprehensible if the writing teachers' perspectives were also considered by using questionnaire or interview. We, as researchers and English language instructors, now realize the significance of such corrections to improve students' writing. We are also more aware of the students' positive feelings toward such feedback from the teachers. Therefore, we must employ such feedback to address the students' grammatical errors.

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### **Ethics Declarations**

### **Competing Interests**

No, there are no conflicting interests.

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