

# Editorial: Expanding the horizon of feedback research in second language

Deborah J. Crusan  
Wright State University, USA

## Correspondence

Email: [deborah.crusan@wright.edu](mailto:deborah.crusan@wright.edu)

## Abstract

On behalf of the editorial board, we welcome readers, researchers, and potential authors to the inaugural issue of the new journal *Feedback Research in Second Language*. The journal aims to fill gaps in research on corrective feedback by publishing a variety of studies to contribute to the scholarly community. While feedback has long been recognized as critical in composition studies and second language writing, *Feedback Research in Second Language* will push to include studies that explore the intricate characteristics of both oral and written corrective feedback. The journal emphasizes the importance of feedback as a form of assessment in language education, highlighting its role in promoting language accuracy, individualized learning, and motivation, and its position as a powerful form of self-assessment when reflected upon by the writer.

## ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 11 September 2023

Revised: 28 September 2023

Accepted: 28 October 2023

## KEYWORDS

corrective feedback, written corrective feedback, second language, assessment, inaugural issue, editorial

## Introduction

We warmly welcome readers to the first issue of *Feedback Research in Second Language*, a groundbreaking academic journal published twice a year and dedicated to exploring the multifaceted aspects of oral and written corrective feedback in a diverse range of languages. As Editor-in-Chief, I am honored to greet you on behalf of the editors and the editorial board. We are committed to embracing not only written feedback but other language skills as well. In doing so, we aim to contribute significantly to the advancement of second language acquisition, pedagogy, feedback, assessment, and feedback and assessment literacy across various linguistic contexts.

Feedback in second language learning refers to the response learners receive regarding linguistic errors they make in oral and written production in a second language and has been a key issue in language teaching and learning and language pedagogy for decades. *Feedback Research in Second Language* expands the audience by opening the door for studies in other languages besides English.

### **Rationale for the Journal**

The editors of *Feedback Research in Second Language* see feedback as a form of assessment. More and more, it is vital that teachers are cognizant of the purposes of classroom assessments, which include teacher feedback and self/peer assessment; further, assessment literate teachers know how to use assessment (including feedback) to inform teaching and learning.

Research on corrective feedback in second language learning is significant because it enhances language accuracy, fosters language development, promotes individualized learning, fosters error awareness, and allows for motivation and engagement since learners' increased ability to self-correct encourages them to pay closer attention to language forms and structures. Certainly, language learning should not focus on correctness alone; however, usage persists as a consideration of the complete language learner.

Through the inclusion of a variety of types of research, the journal aims to address gaps and contribute to the broader scholarly community. The journal will strive to publish empirical research using quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods as well as meta-analysis, systematic literature reviews, umbrella reviews, narrative reviews, and technology reviews. The editor will solicit book reviews, interviews, recent scholarship on oral and written corrective feedback, research issues, and special issues.

### **Scope and Focus of the Journal**

Published twice yearly, the journal uses a two-stage review procedure: editorial desk review and external double-blind review. The primary focus of the journal is of course oral and written feedback. Our aim is to promote dialogue and debate on an issue fraught with differing perspectives and many questions: Does it work? If so, how should we provide feedback? When? To what extent? On the other hand, for those who believe feedback in any form doesn't work, how might we re-fashion our feedback to better serve our students?

It is our intent that the scope of the open access journal extends beyond English to encompass a variety of languages, promoting cross-linguistic perspectives. This broad approach allows for the acknowledgment of the diverse linguistic contexts in which second language learning occurs. As noted on our website, our goal is to publish papers that appeal to a wide range of practitioners: teachers, test developers, learners, and researchers, with a special nod to early career teachers and researchers.

### **Expanding the Horizon**

Feedback plays a crucial role in all forms of communication. It can provide clear and documented record of communication and serves as a reference point for both teacher and student. Those who provide feedback are charged with carefully considering their words and providing thoughtful comments, analyzing deeply nuanced topics.

Feedback can help students track progress, identify areas for improvement and can serve as a valuable tool to gauge effectiveness of feedback all the while holding both teacher and student accountable for their actions, commitments, and responsibilities.

We recognize the limitations, particularly in terms of interpersonal communication and potential for misinterpretation; therefore, we seek an innovative approach, which includes exploring ways to make feedback accessible and personal. We welcome studies that combine written feedback with verbal or face-to-face communication to mitigate some of feedback's limitations.

### **Contributions to Second Language Acquisition and Pedagogy**

The potential impact of the journal on language teaching practices lies in its influence on the design of effective feedback interventions in language classrooms. Teachers, researchers, and policymakers can benefit from insights shared in the journal to enhance language education.

Through our submissions, we hope to increase the feedback and assessment literacy of our readers.

### **In This Issue**

What appears in *Feedback Research in Second Language* will depend on our readers and authors. Of course, any publication must choose from what is submitted, so we will depend on you to take the journal into more unexplored areas as well as to continue to pursue valuable existing areas.

It is our good fortune to include in this inaugural issue the work of many distinguished scholars in the fields of feedback and assessment. The twelve papers illustrate a broad international pool and illustrate collaborative efforts among scholars.

The articles in this issue support our quest for a journal with international representation, hailing from Bangladesh/USA (Roy & Vetter), Hong Kong (Ma), Iran (Rastgou), Lebanon (Diab), Macau (Reynolds), Taiwan (Truscott; Kao), and USA (Eckstein; Hartshorn, Rice, Eckstein, & Evans; Kurzer; Leow; Saeli, Rahmati, & Koltovskaia).

These twelve papers offer diverse perspectives on feedback. Hartshorn, Rice, Eckstein, and Evans examine ways that frequency (daily and/or every other day) of two reduced forms of dynamic written corrective feedback (DWCF) contribute to improvement of ESL writing accuracy, fluency, and complexity and strive to determine the target amount of feedback frequency necessary for optimal development of those skills. Using the 5-minute writing limit detailed in their study, the authors offer evidence of progress in student accuracy and fluency.

Truscott calls into question the validity of written corrective feedback (WCF) studies, contending that studies used to support the efficacy of WCF are not questioning

whether WCF advances accuracy in writing and helps students achieve more accuracy in their writing. He then lists ways that studies could be conducted – what questions could be asked to validate WCF as pedagogically useful. He takes authors to task in his analysis of some prominent WCF studies, critiquing their design and analysis as not answering the question that should be at the forefront: is WCF a useful teaching tool? Truscott argues that it is not.

Eckstein looks at writing center tutors and asks if tutoring experience is enough or should more specialized ESL training be required. For more than 3 decades, writing centers in the U.S. have seen an uptick in ESL writers, leading to the hiring of ESL specialists as tutors. To look closer at the attitudes, sympathies, and practices of ESL specialists, an interview involving a longtime ESL tutor produced data demonstrating that while the tutor showed deference to ESL writers, her tutoring methods were similar for both native English speakers and their English learner counterparts. What's more, her methods leaned heavily in the direction of traditional writing center practices, indicating that ESL tutoring experience may not replace specialized ESL training.

Ma presents an instructional model for teacher-supported peer feedback aimed at improving students' feedback literacy, something she feels is necessary as literacy unlocks students' minds to the true potential of feedback, emphasizing their ability to engage in feedback processes such as seeking, generating, processing, and using feedback. The model highlights the need for teacher support before, during, and after peer feedback activities, encouraging students to take an active role in feedback practices. Ma calls for future research to explore the implementation and effectiveness of the model.

In a scoping review, Kurzer provides an overview of the existing knowledge of dynamic written corrective feedback. Overall, the research suggests that DWCF can be an effective pedagogical tool, particularly for lower-level students in specific contexts, though further research is needed to explore its impact in different settings (e.g., Intensive English Programs, first year composition, discipline-specific writing courses/writing intensive courses, additional writing support courses for graduate students) and on long term writing proficiency.

In *Written corrective feedback and the language curriculum: Theory, research, curricular issues, and the researcher-teacher interface*, Loew acknowledges feedback as a crucial aspect of second language (L2) learning, citing studies indicating its importance in both oral and written corrective feedback. The article discusses the need for a theoretically driven and curricular approach to written corrective feedback research, highlighting its alignment with language curriculum and the potential to bridge the gap between researchers and classroom teachers.

Saeli, Rahmati, and Koltovskaia examine the affective engagement of intermediate English learners with their teacher's written corrective feedback, with a focus on the impact of the teacher's translanguaging practices. Data analysis revealed that some learners appreciated feedback in their first language (Persian), while others aimed to maximize feedback in English, suggesting that certain learners found value in the teacher using their L1 in feedback, contributing to positive affective engagement. The teacher, however, noted institutional constraints regarding the use of Persian in providing feedback.

In their article examining mode of feedback, Roy and Vetter address the lack of research regarding multilingual writers' preferences for audio versus written feedback in a U.S. composition class and the impact of feedback format on their revision process. The study, involving eight multilingual writers, found that those confident in their English listening proficiency preferred audio feedback, and that these writers expected directive explicit feedback from their instructors. The authors suggest further exploration of audio feedback's potential in fostering student-teacher connections, especially in online composition courses.

Rastgou's study utilizes existing research on L2 written feedback to highlight key empirical and methodological considerations for future feedback studies, emphasizing the significance of student feedback literacy in a writing-to-learn framework for L2 development. It suggests a proportional approach to the selection of target structures for feedback and advocates against the inclusion of a no-WCF group in quantitative studies, while also promoting mixed-methods research with structured interviews and open-ended questionnaires to enhance understanding of learners' writing experiences and support quantitative findings.

Diab examines the impact of language learning strategies and motivation on the reduction of lexical errors in 63 second language learners' written work after receiving coded teacher feedback. The results indicate that language learning strategies significantly reduced various types of lexical errors, and while motivation was initially associated with different error types, a higher overall motivation score was linked to fewer collocation errors in post-tests.


Examining the role of eye-tracking, Reynolds' paper underscores the significance of timing and differentiation between instruction and feedback in written corrective feedback (WCF) for second language learners. It proposes the integration of eye-tracking and qualitative data collection to study learner attention and WCF processing, highlighting the potential of this approach, while calling for further research to explore metalinguistic explanations' benefits, addressing the dominance of quantitative approaches, and promoting ecologically valid experiments to enhance understanding of WCF and effective pedagogical practices in L2 writing.

Kao investigates of the impact of second language student writers' perception of subject-verb agreement on the effectiveness of corrective feedback. The results revealed that students who received corrections and correctly perceived subject-verb agreement errors as the target type showed greater immediate and sustained improvements compared to those who received corrections but did not correctly identify the error type, as well as those who did not receive any corrections, highlighting the importance of feedback perception in language learning.

### **Conclusion and Future Prospects**

As we have mentioned several times in this introduction to *Feedback Research in Second Language*, feedback plays a vital role in assessment and evaluation of language learners. We are especially grateful for contributors, reviewers, and the editorial team for their work in making feedback more visible and for making the inaugural issue possible. We encourage researchers and practitioners to engage with the journal, contribute their work, and participate in the ongoing dialogue on feedback research in second language learning.

### **ORCID**

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6316-8674>

### **Acknowledgements**

Not applicable.

### **Funding**

Not applicable.

### **Ethics Declarations**

### **Competing Interests**

No, there are no conflicting interests.

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