



The Effects of Written Corrective Feedback Types on the Prepositions of Place and Time in EFL Context*

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ABSTRACT

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) has been a centre of a lively debate among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) researchers and practitioners. For this motive, the present study sets out to examine the effects of WCF on the accuracy of the EFL students in second language (L2) writing. For this reason, a pre-test-post-test-delayed post-test design was used to compare the effects of direct-focused and direct-unfocused WCF on the accuracy of the prepositions of place and time: '-in, -at, -on and -to'. The students who were in the focused WCF group received direct correction on the errors related to the target structure only whereas the unfocused WCF group received direct correction on all of their errors (grammar, spelling and punctuation) including the target structure errors. In the post-test and delayed post-test, both experimental groups outperformed the control group, which received no correction. Between the focused WCF and unfocused WCF groups, on the other hand, no statistically significant difference was found in the short and long term. Thus, it was concluded that WCF, focused or unfocused, was helpful for the students to use the target structure more accurately.

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received:07.03.2019

Accepted:26.03.2019

Available online:28.03.2019

Article Type: *Research article*

Keywords: Written corrective feedback, focused and unfocused written corrective feedback, error treatment, the prepositions of place and time, L2 writing, EFL context.

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1. Introduction

Considering the nature of second language learning, expecting non-erroneous oral or written utterances from students in any second language (L2) is not realistic, hence it is not possible to avoid committing errors when learning an L2 (Hendrickson, 1980). In other words, errors in L2 are expected to occur and viewed as a natural part of learning a second language by L2 teachers and researchers alike. Even though some teaching ways tolerate errors made by learners more, every teaching system provides a form of correction whether it is oral or written. In other words, correcting errors is universal. Therefore, error correction or corrective feedback has been a commonly used tool to respond to student errors. Corrective feedback (CF) can be defined as "any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is incorrect" (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 171).

Since an overwhelming majority of L2 teachers make use of CF to respond to students' errors, "it is logical, therefore, to ask a rather critical question: Can error correction benefit language learners?" (Hendrickson, 1980, p. 216). The very question has been asked many times not only in L2 learning as a whole, but also specifically in L2 writing. Various terms have been used for the same phenomena in L2 writing, such as written error correction, written error feedback or written corrective feedback

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*This paper was generated from the M.A. thesis titled "The Effects of Written Corrective Feedback Types on the Prepositions of Time and Place and Students' Perceptions on Written Corrective Feedback in EFL Context in Turkey"

(WCF). WCF can generally be defined as "... a written response to a linguistic error that has been made in the writing of a text by an L2 learner. It seeks to either correct the inaccurate usage or provide information about where the error has occurred and/or about the cause of the error and how it may be corrected" (Bitchener & Storch, 2016, p.1).

While WCF is a central aspect of ESL and EFL writing programmes across the world, many Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and L2 writing researchers have argued over the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of WCF for L2 writing accuracy and L2 development in general. Some researchers (Semke, 1984; Woods, 1989; Kepner, 1991; Sheppard, 1992; Truscott, 1996; 1999; 2007; Truscott & Hsu, 2008) casted doubts on the so-called effectiveness of WCF, yet many other researchers (Lee, 1997; 2004; Ferris, 1999; 2006; 2010; Ashwell, 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Chandler, 2003; Sheen, 2007; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a; 2009b; 2010a) argued for beneficial aspects to WCF in L2 writing. In other words, "...the research literature has not been unequivocally positive about its role in writing development..." (Hyland & Hyland, p. 83). One thing is clear: there was only a small number of studies about WCF until Truscott's (1996) article. However, since then, many studies have been carried out by researchers yielded varying results about the extent of effectiveness of WCF in L2 writing.

The first point Truscott (1996) addressed was concerned with the criticism towards WCF due to the way teachers provide feedback. Teachers are observed to be inconsistent and unsystematic with their error correction in both oral and written communication (Lalande 1982; Semke, 1984; Zamel, 1985; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1987; Woods 1989; Truscott 1996; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Hyland and Hyland (2006) have also cast doubts on the effectiveness of WCF indicating that the development of L2 is not as simple a process as correcting an error made by learners, then simply expecting them to comprehend it and to use it correctly in the future (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Truscott (1996), in addition, states: "The acquisition of a grammatical structure is a gradual process, not a sudden discovery as the intuitive view of correction would imply" (Truscott, 1996, p. 342). A final reason why there is a critical stance against WCF is owing to psychological factors caused by corrective feedback. Woods (1989) and Truscott (1996) view written error correction as a distracting factor for learners and can have detrimental psychological effects on students. It is argued that written or oral correction can hinder second language acquisition as it can raise learners' affective filter (Krashen 1982, 1984).

Ferris (1997; 1999) was one of the first researchers who immediately objected to Truscott's (1996) case about WCF or error correction in L2 writing. She firmly disputed against his argument as "...premature and overly strong..." (p. 2). She further argued that Truscott's claims against WCF is based on limited, incomplete and outdated data, and it is not possible to declare WCF useless or ineffective all together. Moreover, unlike Truscott's stance against WCF, recent significant data have supported the benefits of WCF (Bitchener, Cameron & Young, 2005; Sheen, 2007; Bitchener, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008; Bitchener & Knoch 2009b, 2010a; Frear & Chiu, 2015). The studies fundamentally indicate that WCF is facilitative in improving students' accuracy in L2 writing. Finally, based on the surveys and interviews conducted, an overwhelming majority of L2 teachers find WCF useful and feel that they must provide some type of WCF for students to help them improve in L2 writing (Lalande, 1982; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Hedgcock & Leftkowitz, 1994; Saito 1994; Ferris, 1997; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Atmaca, 2016). It is clear that nearly every student and teacher want WCF to have a key role in L2 learning. As a result, it is difficult to argue for abandoning WCF in L2 writing.

Following the debate on the effectiveness of WCF, many of the conducted studies have been concerned with differential effects of focused and unfocused WCF.

Ellis (2009b) describes focused (selective) WCF as providing correction for certain error types or linguistic features of L2, since it is more selective and intensive (Sheen, 2007; Bitchener, 2008; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami & Takashima, 2008), and unfocused (comprehensive) WCF as involving the

correction of all errors in writing without being selective or prioritizing (Sheen, 2007; Bitchener, 2008; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami & Takashima, 2008).

Ellis (2009a) is in favour of focused WCF as he posits it can be potentially more effective than unfocused WCF; teachers should identify specific linguistic features in small bits rather than as a whole. In this way, it will be easier for students to handle given feedback, and it is likely for them to benefit more. Otherwise, overwhelmed students may not be able to benefit from feedback no matter how effective it is claimed to be. Therefore, a more selective feedback may lead to better results since teachers can be more consistent and systematic, and it will be more manageable for students to intake feedback (Lee, 2004; Atmaca, 2016).

In the history of SLA, most of the early research only investigated the effects of WCF overall, meaning there was a treatment of errors with a comprehensive approach (Lalande, 1982; Fathman & Whaley, 1990; Kepner, 1991; Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ferris, 2006; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). On the other hand, the amount of research on focused WCF is increasing (Sheen, 2007; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami & Takashima, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a, 2009b, 2010a, 2012).

One of the first studies on the effects of focused WCF was carried out by Sheen (2007), whose study involved 91 ESL learners at the intermediate level in the USA. The results showed that focused WCF in general had a positive effect on the acquisition of the selected target structure (the English articles: a, an, the). Similar to Sheen's study (2007), another study on focused WCF was conducted by Bitchener (2008) and it was revealed that all the treatment groups that received direct focused WCF outperformed the control group in using the target structure with accuracy. Similar findings were revealed in Bitchener and Knoch's study (2009a; 2009b). As for EFL context-based studies, one of the studies was carried out by Salah (2015) with 50 EFL university students. The findings revealed that direct focused WCF was reported to be facilitative in reducing students' errors related to the selected target structure.

Even though the above studies seem to have found favourable results for direct focused WCF, they did not attempt to compare the potentially different effects of focused and unfocused WCF. So, it cannot be concluded from the aforementioned studies that focused WCF is superior to unfocused WCF or vice versa. The following studies, on the other hand, did compare the effects of both feedback types and provide some conclusions on the issue.

Ellis, Sheen, Murakami and Takashima (2008) carried out a study that involved 49 EFL Japanese students at a state university in order to measure to effects of direct focused and direct unfocused WCF. The results revealed that there was no difference to be found between the focused and unfocused group in using the target structure (the English articles); they both demonstrated similar levels of improvement. However, in the long term, the focused feedback group was able to improve their accuracy further whereas the unfocused feedback group was only able to maintain their level with no further improvement. Frear and Chiu (2015) also investigated the differences between focused and unfocused feedback, but they provided feedback indirectly rather than directly. 42 EFL students at a Taiwanese university took part in the study and the target structure was past simple tense (regular, irregular verbs). The findings showed that the two treatment groups did not demonstrate a significant difference between them. Moreover, similar to Ellis et al., focused WCF did not improve awareness of the target structure in the students.

In conclusion, although it is difficult for focused WCF to provide a reliable conclusion in the classroom, it is a better alternative to reduce specific types of errors in L2 writing (Ferris, 2010). Moreover, it makes sense that students seem to benefit more from WCF and have long-term acquisition of target language features when the focus is on fewer, clearer error types (Ferris, 1999, 2010; Ellis, 2009a).

Based on the points discussed and the studies conducted by SLA and L2 writing researchers, the present study attempts to address the questions raised in WCF research. For this end, it considers the following research questions:

1. Does WCF in the form of direct focused and indirect focused feedback have an effect on the acquisition of prepositions of time and place?
2. Is there a difference in the effect of direct focused WCF and direct unfocused WCF on EFL learners' acquisition of prepositions of time and place?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The participants in this study were 52 beginner level (A1) EFL students at the preparatory school of a private university. 35 of the participants were males, and 17 were females. 43 of the students who took part in the study were Turkish native speakers whereas nine students were native speakers of Arabic from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq and Syria. All the participants who took part in the study were aged between 18 and 20 years old.

The students were assigned to their respective beginner classes based on their performance in the placement test given by the university. The three classes that took part in the study were randomly selected, and they were randomly assigned to their respective treatment groups and the control group.

2.2. Design

The study used a quasi-experimental design involving three EFL classes serving as two experimental groups – direct focused WCF (N= 18), and direct unfocused WCF (N= 16) – and one control group (N =18). In a three-month period of time, all three groups completed a pre-test, a post-test and a delayed post-test, all of which involved narrative writing based on provided keywords.

2.3. The Process of the Study

All three groups were required to complete error correction tests – one prior to the treatment sessions and two following the treatment sessions. The two experimental groups received WCF on three written narratives. While one group was provided with direct focused WCF (i.e. correction directed exclusively at errors that involve the use of prepositions of time and place), the other group received direct unfocused WCF (i.e. correction directed at a great range of error types). The students were required to take 28 hours of English classes weekly which included grammar and vocabulary, oral communication, listening, reading and writing classes. For the present study, the prepositions of time and place, '-in, '-at, -on, and -to' were selected as the target structure because they which can be completely rule-governed and idiosyncratic.

Direct focused WCF involved correcting only the target structure errors. The feedback was given through indicating the error and correcting it. For example: He start work as shepherd ~~in~~ this summer.

Direct unfocused WCF involved not only the target structure, but also other types of errors (e.g. errors related to simple present, articles, subject-verb agreement and punctuation) were attended to. For example: He ~~start~~ (starts) (to) work as (a) shepherd ~~in~~ this summer.

2.4. Instruments

Two types of tests were implemented in the study: (1) narrative writing tests and (2) error correction tests.

Three different narrative writing tests were used, which involved the students writing a complete story based on the provided key words. A sample narrative writing test is provided in the Appendix.

The error correction in the pre-test included 23 target structure errors; the ones in the post-test and delayed post-test contained 27 target structure related errors. In the error correction tests, distractor

errors (i.e. the errors in subject-verb agreement, present simple, pronouns, articles etc.) were also utilised.

The narrative writing and error correction pre-test were tested in a pilot study where the participants were not included in the study and were at the same level as the students in the experimental groups and the control group. Based on the feedback obtained, necessary changes were made in order to tailor the test to be more suitable for the target students. Furthermore, each test's level and appropriateness were approved by two experts in the field and by the teachers whose classes participated in the study.

2.5. Data Analysis Process

To investigate the effects of the two types of WCF treatment on the students' use of the target structure, the prepositions of place and time, the scores of the narrative writing tests and error correction tests (pre-test, post-test, delayed post-test) were collected by the researcher.

All scores obtained through the narrative writing tests and error correction tests were entered into *SPSS 20* and a range of descriptive and inferential statistics were computed. The values of mean, median, mode, standard deviation, kurtosis and skewness were calculated in order to determine whether the collected data could be analysed using parametric analysis methods. In addition, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov Normality test was run to examine whether the normality assumptions were taken into account. For the scores of the narrative writing and error correction tests, a one-way ANOVA test was used to determine the students' level of accuracy in the pre-test to investigate if the three groups were homogeneous. Furthermore, the scores of the narrative writing tests and error correction tests across the pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test were analysed by means of a repeated measures ANOVA (3 groups x 3 times) with multiple comparison post-hoc one-way ANOVA test.

3. Analysis and Results

3.1. Findings on Narrative Writing Tests

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for the Narrative Writing Tests

Repeated Measures	Pre Test Scores			Post-Test Scores			Delayed Test Scores		
	N	\bar{X}	sd	N	\bar{X}	sd	N	\bar{X}	sd
Unfocused	16	41,51	17,46	16	66,19	14,31	13	59,88	31,41
Focused	18	42,56	15,74	18	68,52	20,13	14	56,91	32,55
Control	18	41,83	15,4	18	53,83	12,50	15	48,62	30,97
Total	52	41,97	18,87	52	62,85	15,65	42	55,14	31,64

Having analysed all three groups' mean scores in the pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test, it is noted that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of the pre-test among the three groups for the narrative writing test. Both the experimental groups' and the control group's pre-test scores are reported to be close to one another with only a slight difference. The statistics, therefore, indicate that the three groups were homogeneous in the grammatical knowledge of L2.

Table 2. One-way ANOVA Results of the Total Scores across the Three Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	854,369	2	427,184	1,157	0,323
Within Groups	18089,6	49	369,176		
Total	18943,97	51			

**p< 0,01; *p< 0,05

Table 2 shows that the mean scores of the focused group, unfocused group and the control group in the pre-test had no statistically significant difference to one another ($F_{(2-49)}=1,157$).

Table 3. Two-way ANOVA Results of the Scores in the Pre-test, Post-test and Delayed Post-test

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between students	222199,462	51			
Groups	2307,451	2	1153,725	36,257	.034*
Error	219892,011	49	4487,592		
Within students	409386,07	104			
Measures (all tests)	19134,468	2	18175,699	329,449	.012*
Groups*Measures	7458,130	4	3542,213	37,477	.003**
Error	382793,472	98	7420,671		
Total	631585,532	155			

**p< 0,01; p< 0,05

Table 3 shows that the students were observed to show improvement in accuracy regardless of their group. In other words, all three groups made to make progress in improving the accuracy of the target structure in the post-test and delayed post-test in comparison to the pre-test. The control group showed the least amount of improvement in accuracy. On the other hand, the two experimental groups showed a higher level of improvement compared to the control group. This contrast depicts that the groups that were exposed to the treatment sessions were positively affected.

Table 4. The ANOVA Results for the Scores among All Three Groups in the Post-test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Sig. Dif.
Between Groups	529,718	2	264,859	6,029	,034*	
Within Groups	12616,669	49	257,483			Exp. 1-Control Exp. 2-Control
Total	13146,387	51				

**p< 0,01; *p< 0,05

Table 4 shows that there was a statistically significant difference in the scores of the focused, unfocused and control group for the post-test, which was confirmed by the ANOVA test ($F_{(2-49)}=6,029$). In order to determine the significant difference among the groups in their level of improvement, the Tukey analysis, a post hoc two-way ANOVA test, was implemented. The findings revealed that the unfocused group ($\bar{X} = 66,19$) showed a greater level of accuracy than the control group ($\bar{X} = 53,83$) in the post-test. The focused group ($\bar{X} = 68,52$) were also observed to achieve a higher level of accuracy than the control group ($\bar{X} = 53,83$) in the post-test. However, between the unfocused group ($\bar{X} = 66,19$) and the focused group ($\bar{X} = 68,52$), no statistically significant difference was reported, which means both groups were similar to one another in terms of the post-test results.

Table 5. The ANOVA Results for the Scores among All Three Groups in the Delayed Post-test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig. Dif.
Between Groups	8381,494	2	4190,747	5,359	Exp. 1 - Control Exp. 2 - Control
Within Groups	571979,213	49	11673,045		

Total 580360,707 51

**p< 0,01; *p< 0,05

Table 5 shows that there was a statistically significant difference in the scores of the focused, unfocused and control group for the delayed post-test based on the results of the ANOVA test ($F(2-49)=5,359$). The Tukey analysis of the post hoc two-way ANOVA indicated that the unfocused group ($\bar{X} = 59,88$) showed a higher level of accuracy than the control group ($\bar{X} = 48,62$) in the delayed post-test. Furthermore, the focused group ($\bar{X} = 56,91$) was reported to achieve a greater level of accuracy compared to the control group ($\bar{X} = 48,62$) in the delayed post-test. In other words, the two experimental groups outperformed the control group at a statistically significant level. However, between the unfocused group ($\bar{X} = 59,88$) and the focused group ($\bar{X} = 56,91$), no statistically significant difference was reported, which means both groups were similar to one another in terms of the delayed post-test results. These results indicate that WCF was, to some extent, retainable in the long term.

3.2. Findings on Error Correction Test

Table 6. Descriptive Statistics for the Error Correction Test

Repeated Measures	Pre-Test Scores			Post-Test Scores			Delayed Test Scores		
	N	\bar{X}	sd	N	\bar{X}	sd	N	\bar{X}	sd
Treatment 1	16	15,74	17,23	16	34,92	12,95	16	37,23	27,406
Treatment 2	18	13,49	12,28	18	29,96	15,91	18	33,18	24,316
Control	18	15,25	19,98	18	21,18	13,18	18	23,64	17,687
Total	52	14,82	19,20	52	28,69	17,50	52	31,35	16,95

Upon analysing all three groups' mean scores in the pre-test, post-test and delayed post-test, it was reported that there was no significant difference in the mean scores of the pre-test among the three groups for the error correction test. The scores of the two experimental groups and the control group in the pre-test were close to one another. The statistics, therefore, show that the three groups were homogeneous in the grammatical knowledge of L2 in the pre-test for error correction.

Table 7. One-way ANOVA Results of the Total Scores across the Three Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1942,656	2	971,328	1,028	0,492
Within Groups	13808,728	49	281,811		
Total	15751,384	51			

**p< 0,01; *p< 0,05

Table 7 indicates that the scores of the focused group, unfocused group and the control group in the pre-test had no statistically significant difference to one another ($F(2-49)=1,028$). In other words, all the groups were close to one another in terms of their level of accuracy in the pre-test.

Table 8. Two-way ANOVA Results of the Scores in the Pre-test, Post-test and Delayed Post-test

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between students	27447,566	51			
Groups	1827,188	2	913,594	31,747	,026*
Error	25620,378	49	522,865		
Within students	31530,243	104			

Measures (all tests)	2722,435	2	1361,217	5,422	,006 **
Groups*Measures	4204,740	4	1316,280	4,187	,007**
Error	24603,068	98	251,052		
Total	27447,566	155			

**p< 0,01; *p< 0,05

Table 8 shows that the students in all three groups were observed to have shown improvement in their level of accuracy. In other words, all three groups made progress in improving their accuracy of the target structure in the post-test and delayed post-test in comparison to the pre-test. Table 8 also reveals there was a difference in the level of improvement of the students across the focused, unfocused and the control group. The control group showed the least amount of improvement in the accuracy of the target structure. In addition, the two experimental groups showed a higher level of improvement compared to the control group in the post-test for error correction.

Table 9. The ANOVA Results for the Scores among All Three Groups in the Post-test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Sig. Dif.
Between Groups	1601,549	2	800,775	4,012	,024*	Exp. 1-Control
Within Groups	9779,287	49	199,577			Exp. 2-Control
Total	11380,836	51				

**p< 0,01; *p< 0,05

Table 9, based on the ANOVA test ($F_{(2,49)}=4,012$), shows that there was a statistically significant difference in the scores of the focused, unfocused and control group for the post-test. In order to determine the significant difference among the groups in their level of improvement, the Tukey analysis, a post hoc two-way ANOVA test, was implemented. The findings revealed that the unfocused group ($\bar{X} = 34,92$) showed a greater level of accuracy than the control group ($\bar{X} = 21,18$) in the post-test. The focused group ($\bar{X} = 29,96$) were also observed to achieve a higher level of accuracy than the control group ($\bar{X} = 21,18$) in the post-test. However, between the unfocused group ($\bar{X} = 34,92$) and the focused group ($\bar{X} = 29,96$), no statistically significant difference was found, which means the two experimental groups were similar to one another in terms of the post-test results.

Table 10. The ANOVA Results for the Scores among All Three Groups in the Delayed Post-test

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	Sig. Dif.
Between Groups	2487,723	2	1243,862	12,288	,043*	Exp. 1-Control
Within Groups	26635,431	49	543,580			Exp. 2-Control
Total	29123,155	51				

**p< 0,01; *p< 0,05

Table 10 shows that the results of the ANOVA test ($F_{(2,49)}=12,288$), which found a statistically significant difference in the scores of the focused, unfocused and control group for the delayed post-test. The Tukey analysis of the post hoc two-way ANOVA revealed that the unfocused group ($\bar{X} = 37,23$) showed a higher level of accuracy than the control group ($\bar{X} = 23,64$) in the delayed post-test. Moreover, the focused group ($\bar{X} = 31,18$) was found to have achieved a greater level of accuracy compared to the control group ($\bar{X} = 23,64$) in the delayed post-test. This is to say, a statistically significant difference was found when the two experimental groups were compared to the control group and it was in favour of the experimental groups. However, between the unfocused group ($\bar{X} = 37,23$) and the focused group ($\bar{X} = 31,18$), no statistically significant difference was reported, meaning both groups were similar to one another in terms of the delayed post-test results. These results also depict that WCF was, to some extent, retainable in the long term.

4. Discussion

The first research question asked whether written CF was effective in improving the students' accuracy on the target structure, the prepositions of time and place: '-in, -at, -on and -to'. The results of the narrative writing post-test indicate that the students in the focused WCF and unfocused WCF groups made significant improvement in their use of the target structure. Moreover, in comparison to the control group, the students in the experimental groups were observed to use the target structure more accurately in the post-test and delayed post-test. As for the error correction tests, the results were similar. The experimental groups were able to detect and correct more errors related to the target structure than the control group did in both the post-test and delayed post-test. Thus, it is safe to say that written CF had a positive effect on the accuracy and long-term retention of the target structure. The control group, however, had a more unstable progress. Although the students in the control group showed some improvement in the post-test, they were not able to retain it in the delayed post-test. Finally, the findings of the current study are similar to some of the previous studies conducted (Bitchener, Cameron & Young, 2005; Sheen, 2007; Bitchener, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008; Bitchener & Knoch 2009b, 2010a; Frear & Chiu, 2015).

The second research question investigated whether there was a statistically significant difference between the focused WCF and unfocused WCF in terms of the level of accuracy of the target structure. The pre-test results of the narrative writing and error correction tests ensured that the two experimental groups had a similar level of accuracy in using the target structure. The findings of the post-test and delayed post-test showed that the level of accuracy of the focused WCF group was slightly higher than the unfocused WCF group's in narrative writing and error correction tests. However, this difference was not statistically significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that the focused and unfocused WCF groups showed a similar amount of improvement in using the target structure accurately and focused WCF was not observed to be more effective in the accuracy of the prepositions of place and time. Moreover, the unfocused WCF was just as effective as the focused WCF for long-term the retainability of the target structure. Lastly, in line with the current study, the studies such as Ellis et al. (2008) and Frear and Chiu (2015) did not find a statistically significant difference between their focused WCF and unfocused WCF groups in terms of their level of accuracy in the target structure.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the current study fundamentally revealed that the students who received WCF outperformed the ones who received no correction in the use of the prepositions of place and time in both the short and long term. Thus, written CF, whether it is focused or unfocused, positively affected the students' level of accuracy on the target structure. However, the focused and unfocused WCF groups showed very similar improvement. This is to say, unfocused WCF was as just as effective as focused WCF in terms of improving the students' accuracy with the target structure.

Even though the controversy surrounding the effectiveness of WCF has yet to be resolved, the findings of the current study do not support Truscott's (1996, 1999) argument against the effectiveness of WCF. Rather, the findings support for the effectiveness of WCF. In fact, in the recent years, more and more studies indicate the benefits of WCF in terms of improving learners' accuracy on certain grammatical points (Bitchener, Cameron & Young, 2005; Sheen, 2007; Bitchener, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008; Bitchener & Knoch 2009b, 2010a; Frear & Chiu, 2015). Therefore, it would not be possible to completely abandon the practice of providing feedback in L2 writing, in contrast to Truscott's arguments.

6. Suggestions for Further Research

Although there is much recent research supporting the case for WCF in L2 writing, most of the studies focused on a certain grammatical point such the English articles and past simple tense (Bitchener et al,

2005; Sheen, 2007; Ellis et al., 2008). Therefore, there is a need for new studies supporting the case for WCF, which focus on a wider range of grammatical features.

7. Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that it only focused on the prepositions of place and time, '-in, -at, -on and -to' in particular. Another limitation to the current study was the small sample size. Therefore, new studies with a larger sample size should be carried out in order to investigate the effects of written CF on the accuracy of learners in L2 writing. The final limitation of the study is that the students in the groups were exposed to WCF outside of the study in their L2 writing class. However, it is not possible to argue that outside exposure to WCF might have had a role in the improvement of the students' accuracy, since, even if the students received feedback on the target structure in their L2 writing class, the concerned feedback was not focused.

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Appendix - Narrative Writing Test

USE all the **WORDS** below and write the story. Please use **Present Simple Tense** and use **linking words** if necessary

Gustavo's Experience

Gustavo / study / English / university	not / live / family /	stay / friend / place	want / study / England	would like / go / there / summer
talk / parents / they / say / yes	buy / plane / tickets / excited	plane / take / off / 9 o'clock / morning	arrive / London / meet / English family	they / nice / warm / people
give / him / bedroom	there / old / desk / bedroom	there / old / paintings / wall	they / have / dinner / evening	go / language school / Monday morning
school / meet / new friends	enjoy / London / interesting / city	watch / musicians / dancers / streets	love / grey / clouds / sky / weather / beautiful	take / bus / and / go / school / weekdays
enjoy / read / about / city / bus	come / home / 4 o'clock / afternoon	chat / parents / Instagram / miss / them	learn / new / things / English / culture / every / day	there / a lot / of / social / activities / weekend
visit / museums / city / Saturdays	do karaoke / bar / night	there / school trip / this / Sunday	plan / go / Oxford	everything / amazing / feel / so / happy