

The Impact of Feedback Timing on L2 Writing Performance and Learner Perceptions: A Study of Jordanian College EFL Learners

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Abstract—This study investigated the linguistic effectiveness of feedback timing for Jordanian EFL learners. Employing a quasi-experimental design involving 80 third-year students in the English department, the study compared performance outcomes between two groups that received different feedback timings after completing writing tasks. Quantitative analyses revealed significant improvements in the on-time feedback group. This was evidenced by increases in Mean Length of T-Unit (MLTU) and Ratio of Clauses Per Unit (RCPU), indicating enhanced syntactic complexity and fluency. In contrast, the delayed feedback group exhibited a decline in MLTU and RCPU. Qualitative data from semi-structured interviews further elucidated learner perceptions, highlighting a strong preference for immediate feedback as it fosters awareness and engagement. These findings support the assertion that immediate feedback is crucial for effective language learning, challenging the efficacy of delayed feedback approaches. The implications for pedagogical practices suggest that educators should prioritize immediate corrective feedback to optimize EFL learners' writing proficiency and overall linguistic development.

Index Terms—quality education, performance, feedback, pedagogical

I. INTRODUCTION

Language learning relies on the instructor's feedback and changes, which improve language acquisition in the classroom (Kerr, 2020). Furthermore, researchers focus on the performance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in relation to its relevance in enhancing the quality of the educational process and meeting learning development outcomes (Zhang & Zhang, 2024; Badrakhan et al., 2024). Previously, researchers focused on the effectiveness of corrective feedback in writing, while they also highlighted the negative impact it can have on the learners' performance, demonstrating its ineffectiveness as a learning process (Kutasi, 2023; Awaisheh, 2025). Conversely, researchers underscore its importance in the language learning process, proving that feedback can improve writing skills across different domains using different methods of teaching and learning (Caux & Pretorius, 2024; Alzyod et al., 2025).

In research on the progress of learning feedback, the primary focus remains on improving writing skills through direct instructor feedback. While feedback has demonstrated effectiveness in improving learners' performance, the level of this improvement remains varied, resulting in both positive and negative outcomes (Fong et al., 2018; Al-Shallakh, 2025).

Although there has been a noticeable increase in research on writing feedback, few of these studies have investigated the best timing for delivering feedback to learners to address specific errors after they complete writing tasks (Hattie & Mandouit, 2023). Undoubtedly, feedback is delivered to students after they have completed their writing tasks. However, recent technology has enhanced this process by allowing feedback to be delivered immediately by showing the learners the errors they committed in their writing tasks. The on-time feedback method, also known as immediate feedback, is commonly used by both teachers and learners due to its affordability and accessibility (Humphery et al., 2019; Al-Shallakh, 2024). Therefore, on-time feedback may play a more significant role in improving learners' linguistic performance compared to delayed feedback.

To address the gap in research on the subject, the present experimental study was carried out to examine the impact of on-time versus delayed feedback on Jordanian EFL learners' performance at a private university in Jordan, assessing accuracy, syntactic complexity, and fluency. Additionally, the study evaluates learners' perceptions regarding the usefulness of both feedback types.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The argument around the suitable timing for delivering feedback is still ongoing for both teachers and researchers alike, owing to the different theoretical bases. Skinner (1953) claimed that behaviorist theory supports the idea of learning as habit formation. Therefore, feedback on essay writing should be delivered immediately after task completion to help learners learn from their errors, whereas delayed feedback may lead to the development of unacceptable bad habits (Tomczyk, 2013).

The learning model known as the Interaction Model supports on-time feedback. It emphasizes the role of immediate feedback and quick interaction in improving the learning process and its outcomes (Lipnevich & Smith, 2022). The advantages of on-time feedback include enabling learners to map language structure and function, as it allows them to correct their linguistic mistakes during task completion. This provides them with information about the linguistic structures of the target language and its components (Nassaji & Kartchava, 2021). This type of feedback is also central for developing oral performance, as its immediate delivery helps learners enhance different communication skills. Therefore, the importance of contextual feedback cannot be overstated.

In addition to the Interaction Model, Skill Acquisition Theory also supports on-time feedback. It claims that declarative information can be transformed into natural and procedural knowledge through competent practice (Suzuki, 2024). On-time feedback is delivered at the time of error occurrence in the learners' output. This type of feedback helps learners avoid the proceduralizing of errors in subsequent practice tasks.

Still, teachers prefer delayed writing feedback to be given according to certain theoretical perspectives. The Guidance Hypothesis, for example, recommends that feedback be delivered later, arguing that on-time feedback can lead to over-reliance, potentially hindering learners' ability to self-correct (Chevalier et al., 2023). Moreover, on-time feedback requires more attentional resources and places a cognitive load on learners. Consequently, limited working memory capacity may hinder the cognitive processes underlying writing skills. Therefore, learners need to engage productively with feedback to fully benefit from it (Mandouit & Hattie, 2023).

Many studies have examined the pedagogical impact of delayed feedback on writing tasks within ESL and EFL contexts (Sánchez & Plaza, 2021). Most of these studies aimed to challenge Truscott's proposal regarding the weak efficacy of grammar correction for second language development. The results demonstrated that writing feedback could improve the learners' texts.

Researchers are now interested in enhancing the effectiveness of different methods of providing direct and indirect delayed written feedback. Direct essay correction involves explicit feedback on errors, whereas indirect correction provides cues to learners regarding their errors (Westmacott, 2017). Findings indicate that the direct feedback method is superior, as it helps learners understand their linguistic errors and facilitates second language (L2) writing development (Mandouit & Hattie, 2023; Alsaifi, 2024). While some researchers claim that indirect feedback is effective, others argue that direct feedback results in faster improvement. Kang and Han's (2013) meta-analysis suggests that the direct method of written feedback is more effective and reliable in enhancing second language writing accuracy.

In addition to feedback methods, many researchers have tested the scope of written corrective feedback provided to learners. Researchers and teachers have categorized feedback into three types: highly focused, mid-focused, and comprehensive. The first type is used to address only one linguistic error, while the second focuses on five or six linguistic categories, and the third involves comprehensive feedback on all errors in the written text (Lee, 2020; Zhang, 2021). Educators and researchers encourage the comprehensive type because it addresses all errors together. Moreover, it enriches learners' knowledge of target language input and empirically improves the accuracy and attainment of specific linguistic features (Mamad & Vigh, 2024).

Therefore, teachers tend to provide several types of written feedback when evaluating students' texts. However, the effectiveness of feedback remains debatable in the academic field due to its lack of connection to authentic second language writing skills (Falhasiri & Hasiri, 2020). Consequently, many researchers have begun exploring the effectiveness of written feedback on second language essays and other forms of student writing. This step has shown significant improvements in the overall correctness of student writing outcomes. These problems arise from the need for greater emphasis on the constraints of learners' working memory and the high demand for cognitive resources. To address this problem, a mid-focused approach to written feedback is strongly advised and highly recommended (Zhang, 2021).

As mentioned earlier, while different studies have focused on delayed feedback, research examining immediate corrective feedback remains limited. One such study by Shintani (2016) explored learners' responses to both types utilizing a case study approach using Google Docs. The results indicated that learners responded positively to both feedback types. Both types contributed to their linguistic understanding of the syntactic structure. Nevertheless, on-time feedback enabled language learners to engage more deeply with the written feedback due to the interactive method involved. More recently, Kin et al. (2020) evaluated the effectiveness of direct, on-time written feedback on learning

outcomes. They supported their claims with perception data collected from exams and participant interviews. The direct method proved to be more effective in enhancing the grammatical accuracy of learners in Korea.

Moreover, many studies have measured the effectiveness of feedback on students' performance using various methods and strategies. One such study focused on the relationship between feedback and timing, employing only a quantitative method to assess learners' writing performance while concentrating on a single linguistic feature through computer programs (Shintani & Aubrey, 2016). The results indicated that on-time feedback was superior to delayed feedback in promoting the accuracy of the targeted structure. However, the study also highlighted several limitations and unaddressed gaps in the literature. The present study, therefore, investigated two different methods of feedback timing, supplemented by qualitative data on learners' perceptions. This approach provides new insights and broadens our understanding of students' attitudes toward both feedback types. Finally, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, this is the first study of its kind to be undertaken at a private university in Jordan.

Skehan's (2009) Trade-Off Hypothesis is a foundational theory in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) that predicts the effects of second language production (Xu et al., 2022). According to this theory, L2 learners can engage with and improve upon one of the dimensions—complexity, accuracy, or fluency—at a time, as task completion imposes limitations on cognitive resources.

The primary objective of using the feedback process is to improve learners' linguistic accuracy by addressing errors in their written tasks. However, applying the Trade-Off Hypothesis suggests that the timing of feedback may significantly enhance both complexity and fluency. Furthermore, recent studies have concentrated on the effects of feedback after completing writing tasks to the exclusion of other dimensions of L2 development.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Questions

The current study aims to investigate the effect of on-time versus delayed corrective feedback on Jordanian second language (L2) learners' writing performance and perceptions. As a result, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent does on-time versus delayed written corrective feedback affect the L2 performance of Jordanian private university students in terms of accuracy, syntactic complexity, and fluency?
2. What are the learners' perspectives on the use of on-time versus delayed written corrective feedback?

B. Sample of the Study

The sample used in this study included two classes of third-year English students enrolled in the English Department. All of them were of Jordanian nationality and spoke Arabic as their first language. The sample included 80 students (N=80) who were randomly assigned to two experimental groups. The first class received on-time written corrective feedback, while the second class received delayed feedback. Both groups attended a mandatory course titled "Essay Writing" instructed by two different lecturers. To enhance their writing performance, both groups participated in the course in classrooms equipped with computers. They participated in the same activities, and after finishing the tasks, twenty of them were selected randomly for semi-structured interviews to examine their perceptions of the feedback methods received. All participants were females, aged 20 to 22 years, and all had over ten years of prior English language instruction in Jordanian schools. Furthermore, they all had a college entry grade of B+, confirmed through official college records.

C. Instruments of the Study

The researchers applied two types of instruments to achieve the objectives of this study. The first consisted of a pre-test and a post-test, and the second instrument was a semi-structured interview. The pre-test was conducted in the first week of the academic semester, while the post-test was conducted 12 weeks after the treatment. The interviews were conducted at the end of the semester after conducting the post-test.

(a). Pre-Tests and Post-Tests

The first instrument used in the research was the pre-test, conducted in the first week, and the post-test was conducted twelve weeks after the treatment for both groups. The tests consisted of expository writing tasks, a type of test that is widely used to evaluate students' performance in essay writing and features prominently in standardized tests such as IELTS and TOEFL (Roza, 2019). The final evaluation exams were obtained from a previous standardized IELTS examination. This selection has high reliability and validity for assessing Jordanian non-native English speakers. Students were asked to write a 200-word essay within a one-hour time limit. The students were not allowed to use external resources during the testing sessions.

(b). Semi-Structured Interviews

Twenty participants shared their perceptions of the two feedback methods using semi-structured interviews. They were selected purposively from both groups to provide their insights. This phase of the study employed a qualitative design to enrich the research with in-depth information regarding the methods used. Therefore, the learners were interviewed

individually using a semi-structured interview. Each interviewee was interviewed for 20 minutes. It was conducted in Arabic to ensure clarity and allow participants to express themselves freely. After obtaining the participants' permission, the interview sessions were recorded for subsequent analysis.

D. Data Collection Procedures

The data of the study were collected from both pre- and post-tests by looking at the learners' errors to measure accuracy, syntactic complexity, and fluency. The second part of the data was collected from the interviews with the learners to explore their perceptions of each feedback method.

(a). Types of Errors in the Exams

This study aims to investigate five error types: run-on sentences, subject-verb agreement, singular/plural nouns, prepositions, and lexical choice. These types were selected for different reasons. First, the former three types are rule-governed, so they are categorized as treatable errors. In contrast, the latter two types are categorized as untreatable errors, as they rely on learners' comprehension and knowledge and are therefore non-rule-governed. These types of errors provide a better understanding of the effects of written feedback (Karim & Nassaji, 2020). Additionally, they are among the most common errors made by Jordanian learners and are considered fundamental linguistic indicators such as accuracy, syntactic complexity, and fluency (Crossley, 2020).

As stated in the questions of this study, accuracy was evaluated by calculating the percentage of errors using the following calculation: $(\text{Number of Errors} \div \text{Total Number of Words}) \times 100$. While syntactic complexity was measured by calculating both Mean Length of T-units (MLTU) and the Ratio of Clauses Per T-Unit (RCPU). Finally, fluency was assessed by calculating the number of words produced per unit of time (WPM).

(b). Students' Perceptions Analysis

The researchers in this study recorded all interview sessions with all participants to be transcribed as an initial step in this analysis. After that, all transcripts were sent to the participants for checking as a verification step. This step was conducted to ensure alignment with the intended meaning. All the researchers then read the transcripts twice for initial data familiarization. The researchers then coded the data using a recursive and iterative process, performing open, axial, and selective coding. The researchers followed that with coding and analyzing the transcripts to generate the initial code criteria. The researchers then compared and grouped these codes into higher-order categories based on thematic similarities. Finally, themes were refined through inter-case analysis.

The qualitative data revealed a number of themes, including the attitudes and perceptions of the learners regarding the two feedback techniques. These themes highlight the benefits of on-time feedback and the perceived usefulness of written corrective feedback. Additionally, inter-coder reliability was established by having a second researcher independently code the data to ensure the trustworthiness and consistency of the analysis.

E. Ethical Considerations

This study involving human participants was reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of a private university. All procedures performed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the IRB/national research committee and with the 1964 Declaration of Helsinki and its subsequent amendments, or comparable ethical standards.

Informed consent was obtained from all participants. Before their participation, students were fully apprised of the study's purpose, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their unreserved right to withdraw at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. Participants were also assured that their anonymity would be maintained, and data would be kept strictly confidential, used solely for research purposes, and securely stored to prevent unauthorized access.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

All data in this study are presented in Table 1 to show accuracy, syntactic complexity, and fluency scores for both the pre-tests and post-tests results. The general comparison between tests showed significant differences in performance between the groups. The researchers employed a one-way ANOVA test to analyze the results. This analysis was conducted on the pre-test scores for all measurements to establish the baseline compatibility between the groups. As shown in the table, no significant differences were observed in the three dimensions.

TABLE 1
DATA OF BOTH GROUPS IN THE TWO METHODS

Metric	Group	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Mean Change	Statistical Significance Claim (ANOVA)
Mean Length of T-Unit	On-time	17.16 (3.305)	19.20 (4.23)	↑2.04	Significant (Group × Time Interaction: $F = 4.15$, $p = 0.046$)
	Delayed	18.20 (2.98)	14.30 (3.07)	↓3.90	
Ratio of Clause Per Unit	On-time	2.41 (0.30)	3.20 (0.67)	↑0.79	Significant (Group × Time Interaction: $F = 4.15$, $p = 0.046$)
	Delayed	2.40 (0.19)	3.14 (0.22)	↑0.74	
Accuracy	On-time	9.13 (1.87)	9.12 (1.85)	↓0.01	Not Significant (Interaction: $F = 0.04$, $p = 0.834$)
	Delayed	9.14 (1.98)	9.12 (1.96)	↓0.02	
Fluency	On-time	101.16 (29.65)	112.30 (30.82)	↑11.14	Significant (Main effect of Time: $F = 4.09$, $p = 0.048$)
	Delayed	111.20 (26.56)	115.40 (29.43)	↑4.20	

A. Pre-Test Baseline and Group Equivalence

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the pre-test scores. This test was used for all dependent measures of mean length of T-unit, ratio of clauses per T-unit, and accuracy to establish initial group compatibility. Results showed no statistically significant differences between the on-time and delayed feedback groups across any of the dimensions (e.g., T-Unit Length: $F(1, 58) = 0.58, p = 0.449$). This confirms that the groups were comparable regarding their initial linguistic proficiency before the intervention, establishing a reliable baseline for comparison.

(a). Syntactic Complexity

The effect of the intervention on syntactic complexity was examined using a mixed-design ANOVA. It reveals a statistically significant interaction for complexity metrics ($F(1, 58) = 4.15, p = 0.046$). This indicates that the effect of the on-time feedback method versus the delayed feedback method on complexity scores differed significantly between the pre-test and post-test.

1. Mean Length of T-Unit (MLT)

It is also clear from the analysis of the MLT that there are different performance trends. The On-time group demonstrated a positive development. Specifically, the mean score for this group increased from 17.16 ($SD = 3.305$) at the pre-test to 19.20 ($SD = 4.23$) at the post-test. In contrast, the Delayed group indicated a decline in complexity, with the mean decreasing from 18.20 ($SD = 2.98$) to 14.30 ($SD = 3.07$).

2. Ratio of Clauses Per T-Unit (RC/TU)

The ratio of clauses per T-unit showed a significant improvement for both groups. The ratio of the on-time group increased from 2.41 ($SD = 0.30$) to 3.20 ($SD = 0.67$). Similarly, the ratio of the delayed group also showed a substantial increase, moving from 2.40 ($SD = 0.19$) to 3.14 ($SD = 0.22$). While both methods led to higher clause density, the significant interaction suggests that the on-time feedback method yielded a statistically more impactful or sustainable increase.

(b). Accuracy

The analysis of accuracy scores indicated no significant interaction ($F(1, 58) = 0.04, p = 0.834$). In the two groups, the mean scores stayed highly stable across the testing phases. The On-time group indicated a minor change (from 9.13 to 9.12), and the Delayed group showed a similar minor change (from 9.14 to 9.12). This finding suggests that none of the feedback timing significantly impacted grammatical accuracy.

(c). Fluency

The usage of ANOVA for fluency showed a statistically significant main effect of time ($F(1, 58) = 4.09, p = 0.048$), but the interaction was not significant ($F(1, 58) = 0.32, p = 0.574$). The two groups improved their fluency from pre-test to post-test. The mean of the on-time group increased from 101.16 ($SD = 29.65$) to 112.30 ($SD = 30.82$), and the mean of the delayed group increased from 111.20 ($SD = 26.56$) to 115.40 ($SD = 29.43$). The absence of significant interaction suggests that fluency improvement occurred independent of feedback timing.

Overall, the data clearly differentiate the effects of feedback timing on the dimensions of syntactic difficulty. The on-time group successfully increased the mean length of T-unit and the ratio of clauses per T-unit while maintaining stable accuracy. However, the delayed group showed a noticeable decrease in the mean length of T-unit. They achieved improvement in the ratio of clauses per T-unit. Finally, fluency improved significantly for both groups, suggesting a general learning effect over time.

B. Semi-Structured Interviews

Regarding learners' perspectives toward both methods, all learners in the interview expressed a preference for both types because they saw that the feedback they received was useful. The positive side of the feedback of the learners stemmed from an increased awareness of the quality of their writing. The learners were more aware of their errors in their essay writing. This awareness appeared because they knew that the instructors would check their work. It heightened their awareness of future tasks. However, a few learners were not satisfied with the delayed method. They stated that they forgot their sentences and were unable to address the feedback given. On the other hand, students who received on-time feedback expressed sincere gratitude for the timing, noting that they could immediately work on correcting their errors.

This study aims to examine the effects of on-time written corrective feedback versus delayed corrective feedback. It explores the linguistic proficiency of Jordanian EFL learners at the university level. It focuses on accuracy, syntactic complexity, and fluency. The findings indicated that immediate feedback significantly enhances learners' performance compared to delayed feedback. It supported existing literature on the importance of timely interventions in language learning.

C. Performance Outcomes

(a). The Impact of Feedback Timing on Syntactic Complexity

The most distinguished result of this study indicated a significant interaction in the syntactic complexity measures. It provides new insights into the Trade-Off Hypothesis (Skehan, 2009). This hypothesizes that learners of a second language must prioritize one area—accuracy, complexity, or fluency—because of their finite cognitive resources.

The results of the mean length of T-unit directly support the cognitive strain mentioned by this hypothesis when feedback is delayed. The on-time type group increased their mean length of T-unit (MLT) successfully. This clearly indicates a higher level of syntactic complexity in the results. They suggest that on-time written corrective feedback reduces the cognitive load on working memory, so this makes the learners focus more on the complex structures. They also allow resources to be directed toward structural elaboration. On the other hand, the significant decrease in MLT mentioned and noticed in the delayed group suggests that the interval between the writing task and the receipt of feedback diminished the relevance of the original sentences. Accordingly, it prevents effective self-correction and results in simplified output in the post-test.

However, the fact that both groups significantly increased their ratio of clauses per T-unit presents a nuance to this trade-off. This suggests that while delayed feedback impaired the overall length of complex structures (MLT), it did not stop the improvement of structural density. This outcome may align with findings that written feedback can improve certain structural knowledge (Sánchez & Plaza, 2021). The results refine the Trade-off Hypothesis. It suggests that the negative effect of delayed feedback is more deeply noticeable in metrics. It requires greater combination and retention of sentence history (MLT) than in local and structural manipulation (RC/TU).

(b). Consistency of Findings on Fluency and Accuracy

The results regarding accuracy and fluency partially align with different studies mentioned in the literature review. Moreover, there are particular studies that examine the overall efficacy of corrective feedback.

1. Accuracy

The observed constancy in accuracy of both groups indicated an absence of significant interaction, in comparison to studies encouraging the efficacy of direct written feedback in enhancing L2 writing accuracy (Mandouit & Hattie, 2023; Kang & Han, 2015). This lack of effect may be attributed to two methodological factors. The comprehensive approach, which targets a broad range of errors (run-on sentences, subject-verb agreement, etc.), may have diffused the learners' cognitive focus. While some studies advocate for comprehensive correction (Mamad & Vigh, 2024), the data in this study give empirical weight to the argument for a more mid-focused approach (Zhang, 2021), which is advised to manage the high cognitive demand placed on working memory. In line with Skehan's (2009) theory, the students, having directed cognitive resources towards complexity (MLT for the on-time group and RC/TU for both), may have consciously or unconsciously stabilized rather than improved their accuracy to manage task demands.

2. Fluency

The significant main effect of time for fluency, coupled with a lack of interaction, suggests that fluency gains stem from extended practice and exposure rather than the specific timing of written feedback. This suggests that fluency gains may reflect developmental maturation and repetition over time, aligning with existing quantitative studies that primarily examine accuracy (Shintani & Aubrey, 2016), while extending the discussion to confirm a general positive trajectory in untargeted metrics.

This study directly contributes to the scarce body of research examining on-time corrective feedback (Shintani, 2016; Kin et al., 2020) by providing a quantitative analysis within a new geographical context. Specifically, the higher MLT scores achieved by the on-time group align with Shintani and Aubrey's (2016) findings that immediate feedback yields more beneficial results for language development.

Furthermore, these quantitative findings establish an empirical foundation for the perceptions of the learner that were collected qualitatively. The significant decline in MLT for the delayed group substantiates the learners' qualitative reports. They mentioned that they “forgot their sentences” and were thus “unable to address feedback given.” They illustrate a tangible cognitive consequence of the delay. Conversely, the success of the on-time group, particularly in complexity, validates their reported “sincere gratitude for the timing.” This allowed them to “immediately work on correcting their errors”.

The results of this study suggest that on-time written corrective feedback is considered a greater educational approach for enhancing L2 writing development. They show a great enhancement in the syntactic complexity of MLT in the essay writings of Jordanian college students. These benefits are primarily achieved by modifying the cognitive demands typically associated with delayed correction.

D. Learner Perceptions

The study aims to explore the perceptions of the learners of the two types of feedback, in addition to the performance of those learners' results. The collected data of such a qualitative method, gained from semi-structured interviews, showed a strong preference for feedback that is conducted on time. Participants increased their awareness of the quality and errors in their writing. These results align with the findings of Fong et al. (2018), who stated that notable immediate feedback raises the sense of accountability. It also encourages learners to engage actively with their writing.

Conversely, some learners showed dissatisfaction with the delayed feedback method. They claimed that the delay hindered memory retention, making them unable to apply corrections effectively to their original work. This aligns with the findings of Chevalier et al. (2022). They argue that delayed feedback can cause an over-reliance on external support. It is potentially stunting learners' ability to self-correct. Immediate feedback provides a context for real-time learning. It enabled learners to correct errors on the spot. It reinforces their understanding and enhances their writing skills in a foreign language.

This study contributes to the ongoing debate regarding the best timing of feedback in language learning. While some researchers support delayed feedback due to its potential for promoting deeper cognitive processing (Mandouit & Hattie, 2023), the findings of this study suggest that immediate feedback is more effective for developing structural complexity. The results here strengthen the case for immediate feedback as a more effective strategy to be applied for enhancing linguistic performance. As stated in the literature by Skehan (2009), the Trade-Off Hypothesis suggests that learners can only focus on one feature of language learning at a time. The findings also indicate that on-time feedback may allow those learners to engage more comprehensively with linguistic complexity, accuracy, and fluency. They also improve overall language proficiency.

Moreover, this study highlights that there is a necessity for English instructors to provide timely feedback as a prior step in their teaching of writing practices. Teachers should be well-trained to use digital tools that facilitate immediate feedback and improve learning outcomes. This recommendation is stated by Humphrey et al. (2021) and Yassen (2025). By adopting these approaches, educators can significantly contribute to improving the outcomes of learners and overall language proficiency.

In summary, the findings of this research show support for the significant role that feedback timing plays in language learning. It also shows that corrective feedback in a timely manner can improve learners' linguistic competence.

V. CONCLUSION

The findings of this research highlight the important role that feedback timing plays in the language learning process within the Jordanian EFL context. Quantitative evidence demonstrates that on-time corrective feedback significantly enhances syntactic complexity and fluency, as evidenced by the increase in mean length of T-unit (MLTU) and ratio of clauses per unit (RCPU) for the immediate feedback group. In contrast, delayed feedback resulted in a decline in MLTU, suggesting that the interval between task completion and feedback delivery places a cognitive strain on learners, leading to simplified output.

Qualitative data further support these outcomes, revealing a strong learner preference for on-time feedback. Participants expressed that immediate intervention fosters greater awareness and engagement, whereas delayed feedback often leads to memory retention issues where students “forget their sentences,” among other things. This study reinforces the idea that immediate feedback is a superior educational approach for improving linguistic performance and managing the cognitive demands predicted by the Trade-off Hypothesis.

Teachers should make it a priority to give students feedback as soon as they finish their writing tasks to help them learn better. To do this well, schools should provide training for teachers on how to use digital tools that allow for instant communication and corrections. It is also recommended that instructors use a mid-focused approach, which means focusing on a specific number of errors rather than every single mistake, to keep the student from feeling overwhelmed. By giving feedback quickly, teachers can help students write longer, more interesting sentences and keep them excited about learning.

The authors recommend further research to investigate the extent to which feedback timing influences long-term language acquisition. This can be applied by analyzing the appropriateness of the best mix of types of feedback to inform impactful second language teaching.

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