

# Attitudes and Perceptions of Teachers and Chinese Students Towards Corrective Feedback in L2 Writing

Ruiying Cai

Department of Foreign Languages, Huizhou University, Huizhou, China

**Abstract**—Corrective feedback is a concept of second language acquisition (SLA). Previous studies have investigated the definitions, categories, and effectiveness of corrective feedback from myriad perspectives, often choosing English as a second language to conduct research on ESL students. Writing is a challenge for most L2 learners, and written feedback is part of overall corrective feedback. Much research has emphasized the effectiveness of corrective feedback, but how different types of corrective feedback influence L2 learners differently remains unknown. Few studies have combined students' with teachers' perceptions of written corrective feedback. Most only emphasized students' preferences and few studies concentrated on Chinese students. As such, this paper aims to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of teachers and Chinese students towards written corrective feedback in L2 writing, which is beneficial to determine whether teachers can have awareness of students' perceptions and satisfy their needs according to individual situations, helping them facilitate the accuracy of L2 writing. The results reveal that differences exist between Chinese students' and teachers' preferences for written corrective feedback in L2 writing. Both groups think written corrective feedback is effective to enhance L2 writing, and most Chinese students and teachers affirm that different strategies of written corrective feedback should be given according to different error types. Finally, in teachers' opinions, the most appropriate written corrective feedback for Chinese students is direct corrective feedback and metalinguistic feedback (e.g. using error codes and metalinguistic codes), while Chinese students believe that the most appropriate written corrective feedback is direct and indirect corrective feedback.

**Index Terms**—direct corrective feedback, indirect corrective feedback, metalinguistic feedback, reformulation

## I. INTRODUCTION

As a part of negative evidence, corrective feedback plays a considerable part in second language acquisition and pedagogy, which has aroused SLA researchers' interests in how L2 learners acquire a target language and how to help L2 learners correct errors during the process of language learning. In terms of L2 writing, the efficacy of written corrective feedback is a focus of research in the ESL classroom (Truscott, 1996; Ferris, 1999). Traditionally, teachers are considered as the providers of written corrective feedback. Students are regarded as the receivers of written corrective feedback (Saeli, 2019).

Some researchers have investigated the influence of different types of written corrective feedback on L2 learners (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Sheen, 2010). For example, Brown (2009) indicated that perceptions of learners and teachers have been a major concern in language learning and teaching. Hence, much research has focused primarily on students' preferences and perceptions of written corrective feedback (Ferris, 1995; Radecki & Swales, 1988), while other researchers have continued to examine teachers' preferences and perceptions of this issue (Ferris, 2014; Ferris et al., 2011). Some studies have also compared the similarities and differences between students' and teachers' preferences for written corrective feedback (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Lee, 2008).

By investigating how teachers and Chinese students perceive written corrective feedback in L2 writing, as well as uncovering the reasons behind these perceptions, the current study can provide further guidance for teachers' teaching and assist students enhance their learning abilities, especially in L2 writing. By means of questionnaires and interviews, the results show that Chinese students prefer unfocused written corrective feedback, while teachers prefer focused written corrective feedback in L2 writing, and both think corrective feedback is effective in L2 compositions. Furthermore, different strategies of written corrective feedback must be given to correspond to different error types. Finally, Chinese students believe that the most appropriate corrective feedback are direct and indirect corrective feedback, while teachers think direct corrective feedback and metalinguistic feedback are the most appropriate corrective feedback for Chinese students.

The paper comprises five chapters. Chapter 2 provides an overview of previous studies on written corrective feedback in L2 writing, from general to specific. Chapter 3 addresses the methodology, including participants in the study, data collection, validity, and reliability of the method. Results are reported in two parts, the interviews and the questionnaires, in Chapter 4. The questionnaires comprise students' and teachers' questionnaires. Finally, Chapter 5 concludes the paper, outlining fundamental findings, limitations, and suggestions for further research.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section offers a literature review of previous studies on written corrective feedback, from general research pieces to more specific ones. It also contains previous studies of corrective feedback and errors in SLA, classifications of written corrective feedback, written corrective feedback in L2 writing, and teachers' and students' attitudes towards written corrective feedback. A theoretical framework is also introduced, and research questions are proposed finally.

### A. *Corrective Feedback and Errors in SLA*

Russell and Spada (2006) defined corrective feedback as "any feedback that provided to learners, from any source, that contains evidence of learner error of language form" (p. 134), consisting of oral and written, or implicit and explicit, feedback from different perspectives. Corrective feedback in this study is provided by teachers, allowing the learners to be aware that their native language does not match the target language when making mistakes. Teacher feedback consists of positive feedback, which identifies teachers' positive evaluations and praise for students, and negative feedback, which focuses on errors (Chaudron, 1988).

Since corrective feedback is related to errors, some core issues concerning errors must be considered. Whether errors should be corrected in SLA has been debated for many years. Some researchers have stated that corrective feedback can facilitate SLA. L2, unlike L1, must be conscious. Corrective feedback can enhance the noticing of learners, helping them identify errors (Corder, 1973). Moreover, the second concern about errors is which errors should be corrected, which can be divided into three dimensions: errors that influence communication, errors that have an adverse effect on listeners or readers, and errors that occur frequently. Finally, how to correct errors is another problem. Different types of corrective feedback have different strategies; written corrective feedback is focused on below (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012).

### B. *Category of Written Corrective Feedback*

Based on Ellis (2008), the six basic strategies of written corrective feedback are direct written corrective feedback, indirect corrective feedback, metalinguistic corrective feedback, the focus of feedback, electronic feedback, and reformulation. The biggest difference between direct and indirect corrective feedback is the degree of feedback explicitness. In terms of direct corrective feedback, teachers provide the correct form directly, including deleting unnecessary words and phrases or adding missing ones (Lalande, 1982; Bitchener et al., 2005; Ferris, 2006). As regards indirect corrective feedback, teachers do not provide the correct form but alert students to the existence of errors by underlining, drawing circles, or marking error types (Robb et al., 1986; Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

In addition, metalinguistic corrective feedback, one of the strategies, uses "error codes" or provides "brief grammatical descriptions" (Ellis, 2008, p. 98). When using error codes, teachers use capital letters to represent the error (e.g. SS=sentence structure, WW=wrong word). Furthermore, in some situations, the teacher may number the errors and write grammatical descriptions for every error (Lalande, 1982; Chandler, 2003).

Ellis (2008) stated that the focus of feedback comprises two parts: unfocused/comprehensive corrective feedback and focused corrective feedback. As an intensive approach, unfocused feedback means teachers correct as many types of errors as possible (Sheen, 2007). With focused corrective feedback, teachers do not mark every error but choose some specific error types to correct.

The final two methods to correct errors are simpler. And electronic feedback is not relevant here. Finally, reformulation consists of helping students rewrite the text in a more native-like language while maintaining the original meaning of the content (Sachs & Polio, 2007).

### C. *Efficacy of Different Written Corrective Feedback*

A mainstream discussion is ongoing about whether different written corrective feedback influences students differently (in ESL learning and ESL writing). Thus, there are two research emphases: the efficacy of direct/indirect written corrective feedback versus focused/unfocused written corrective feedback.

#### (a). *Direct/ Indirect Written Corrective Feedback*

Some researchers have argued that direct written corrective feedback is clearer and more explicit, allowing students to quickly understand what they need to correct to avoid spending time guessing teachers' intentions (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Komura, 1999; Ferris & Helt, 2000). By contrast, others argue that indirect written corrective feedback guides students to solve problems during the learning process and enhances their ability to discover errors and internalise language, which helps them make long-term progress (Lalande, 1982; Ferris, 2002). Finally, some argue that there is no difference in effectiveness between direct and indirect corrective feedback (Robb et al., 1986; Semke, 1984).

It is worth noting that Van Beuningen et al.'s (2008) study is more reliable and valid than the previous studies. Their participants comprised four groups: a direct and an indirect written corrective feedback group (experimental groups), a practising writing group, and a self-correction group (control groups). Both the experimental and control groups were tested before, during, after, and post-hoc. The results revealed that although direct and indirect written corrective feedback could improve students' accuracy of writing (in terms of making less mistakes), which can be found in revision and new pieces of writing (post-test and post-hoc test), direct written corrective feedback was more effective than indirect written corrective feedback because it continued to exert a positive influence on students, even in the

post-hoc test period.

(b). *Unfocused/Focused Written Corrective Feedback*

On the one hand, it is possible that unfocused written corrective feedback causes students to be overwhelmed by information, since it corrects all types of errors. Thus, some researchers have concentrated on focused, written corrective feedback for certain grammatical errors (Bitchener, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007). According to Bitchener and Knoch (2009), three strategies (direct written corrective feedback with oral and written metalinguistic explanation; direct written corrective feedback with written metalinguistic explanation; direct written corrective feedback) make a positive impact on the use of two English articles (*a* and *the*). Sheen (2007) further demonstrated that focused written corrective feedback has a positive impact on learners. Nevertheless, others, including Bruton (2009) and Evans et al. (2010), have noted that focused corrective feedback may not be a practical teaching method due to the limitation of involving language structures.

On the other hand, two studies have compared the effectiveness of unfocused and focused written corrective feedback (Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen et al., 2009). Ellis et al. (2008) found that both unfocused and focused written corrective feedback influenced the experimental groups compared to the control, and the difference between them was significant. However, the focused corrective feedback group received more feedback than the unfocused group, which makes it unfair to compare their effectiveness. Sheen et al.'s (2009) study also has some limitations. They found focused written corrective feedback to be more effective for learners than unfocused corrective feedback, but unfocused written corrective feedback in their experiment occurred only for five types of errors without correcting other errors. This kind of corrective feedback is not systematic, which results in confusion among students. In this case, the validity of these studies must be improved.

(c). *Efficacy of Written Corrective Feedback for Different Errors*

Many researchers have affirmed that written corrective feedback cannot be effective for all types of errors (Ferris, 1999; Truscott, 1996). Lalande (1982) investigated the efficacy of written corrective feedback for 12 types of mistakes and found spelling errors the easiest error type to correct. Conversely, Bitchener et al. (2005) found past tense and article errors to be easily corrected compared with preposition errors.

(d). *Teachers' and Students' Attitudes and Perceptions Towards Written Corrective Feedback*

Most researchers are concerned about students' attitudes and perceptions. Semke (1984) suggested that students may prefer written corrective feedback in terms of the content of L2 writing, instead of grammatical or structural errors. Moreover, studies such as Ashwell's (1991) have found that students may concentrate on both written corrective feedback on the content of their writing as well as grammatical errors, structural errors, and so on. Lee (2008) demonstrated that when students reacted to teachers' written corrective feedback practice, they preferred teacher-generated corrective feedback and unfocused corrective feedback on grammatical errors.

Conversely, teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards written corrective feedback in L2 writing are also essential, for example, whether the written corrective feedback they provide meets students' needs should be discussed. Some research shows that agreement exists between students and teachers in some fields, but there are also discrepancies. For example, it has been suggested that both students and teachers believe written corrective feedback to be a useful tool. However, most students prefer comprehensive corrective feedback, while teachers believe selecting some specific errors to correct to be better for students. Crucially, teachers are typically aware of students' attitudes and perceptions (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010).

D. *Theoretical Framework*

When investigating questions about written corrective feedback, it is appropriate to use the theoretical framework of Ellis (2010), presented as follows:

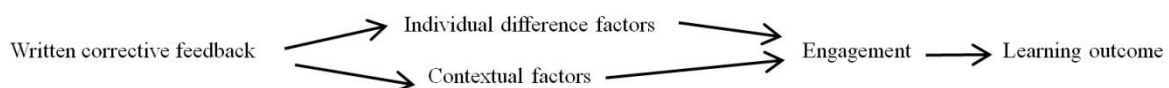


Figure 1. Framework to Investigate Corrective Feedback

In this case, individual difference factors refer to “age, language aptitude, memory, learning style, personality, motivation, language anxiety, and learner beliefs” (Ellis, 2010, p. 339). Furthermore, they interact with contextual factors, which impact learning outcomes. On the one hand, these factors prove that outcomes are determined by how learners react to written corrective feedback. On the other hand, how teachers think and behave in terms of written corrective feedback also varies with the learning outcomes of learners. It is evident that students' and teachers' goals do not always align, which could be a problem.

Additionally, contextual factors are involved in “macro factors related to the setting in which learning occurs (e.g. L2 settings) and micro factors related to the nature of the activity the learners are participating in when they receive correction” (Ellis, 2010, p. 340). Researchers have argued that written corrective feedback is effective in FL, SL, and

immersion circumstances. Both individual difference factors and contextual factors interact with engagement which means learners' reactions of receiving corrective feedback, and the final stage is learning outcome. There are some standards: whether learners grasp the "new linguistic features", whether the accuracy increases, and whether progress has been made to "characterize the acquisition of grammar features" after written corrective feedback is given (Ellis, 2010, p. 344).

### *E. Research Questions*

Although previous studies have investigated how students and teachers perceive written corrective feedback in L2 writing, some gaps remain. Compared with other L2 students, Chinese students may possess certain characteristics. In this case, it is helpful for teachers to guide their teaching and enhance students' learning abilities.

Thus, the current study answers the following research questions:

1. What are the differences between teachers' and Chinese students' preferences for written corrective feedback in L2 writing?
2. What do teachers and Chinese students perceive as written corrective feedback in L2 writing?
3. What kinds of written corrective feedback do teachers and Chinese students think are most appropriate for Chinese students in L2 writing?

## III. METHODOLOGY

The paper adopts a survey design, using semi-structured interviews and questionnaires as methods for data collection. This chapter introduces the participants, data tools and collection, validity, and reliability.

### *A. Participants*

Participants included eight teachers and fifteen Chinese students in total: three teachers who teach post-graduate courses, two teachers in the language center, and fifteen Chinese students (ten students learning pre-sessional courses and five post-graduate students) at the University of Leeds. In addition, three teachers in China participated in the study. Questionnaires were completed by all the teachers, but only four teachers at the University of Leeds were involved in the face-to-face interviews. All students finished the questionnaires.

These teachers were chosen for investigating the research questions because they are a small part of a population that have the same characteristics as the overall population, which is useful to reflect its nature (Rasinger, 2008). It was impossible to investigate a large number of people due to limited time, money, and other factors. The logic behind this is clear: samples should relate to basic issues and important research questions (Mason, 2002). Purposive sampling was used in the study because it is quite typical (Salkind, 2010). Participating teachers were all experienced in L2 writing, having taught pre-sessional courses or post-graduate courses for many years. To compare the different attitudes between British and Chinese teachers towards corrective feedback, Chinese teachers were also recruited because they not only teach L2 writing but also understand students' writing errors, which are influenced by L1.

### *B. Data Tools and Collection*

In general, mixed research, which contains quantitative and qualitative data, is applied to collect data. In this case, it is a useful method to explain complex issues by developing specific aspects. This paper includes a combination of quantitative and qualitative research, and the basic design is a questionnaire with a follow-up interview. Mixed research enriches the data and helps researchers broaden their view (Dörnyei, 2007).

Interviews and questionnaires were used in this study. Data were collected in person or remotely via the Internet. Interviews and questionnaires are particularly appropriate for this paper; according to Arksey and Knight (1999), as a social research method, "Interviews may provide data on understandings, opinions, what people remember doing, attitudes, feelings... more exploratory and qualitative, concentrating on the distinctive features" (pp. 2-3). Among the three types of interviews, semi-structured interviews have been used, which follow a guideline of pre-prepared and open-ended questions but encourage interviewees to develop answers concerning core issues. This is a useful method to combine structured parts with semi-structured parts (Dörnyei, 2007). After being given the introduction of five strategies of written corrective feedback, all the participants were asked the questions.

Nevertheless, it is sometimes inadequate to only apply interviews to guarantee validity, which is the degree of correctness of measures aiming at satisfying the needs of measurement (Salkind & Rasmussen, 2007). Therefore, a multi-study combining interviews and questionnaires was needed (Arksey & Knight, 1999). Through questionnaires, the wide view and strength of interviews can be checked. Questionnaires can also be an optional choice in addition to interviews to complete answers from a sub-sample of respondents because the written format reflects directness and clarity (Breakwell, 1990). In this paper, questionnaires consist of two versions: students' and teachers' questionnaires. Overall, the interview questions parallel the questionnaires. A response scale was used during data collection to facilitate gaining a fundamental cognition of the different attitudes of teachers and Chinese students towards corrective feedback in L2 writing. In this case, a semi-questionnaire is necessary, conforming to a mode from controlled to flexible. For the teachers' version, at the beginning, a Likert-scale table was used to uncover the teachers' attitudes towards writing errors in L2, from 1 to 5 (1=mostly agree, 5=mostly disagree), followed by several open-ended questions. The

students' version comprised three parts: a Likert-scale table of students' attitudes towards the same statements compared to the teachers', another Likert-scale table for understanding how students evaluate five strategies of corrective feedback in L2 writing, and several open-ended questions.

### C. Data Analysis

Data from the interviews were analysed quantitatively, and questionnaires were analysed qualitatively. Based on interpretations, interview data were transcribed, coded, and categorized by grounded theory, which relates to interview transcripts. The approach tends to be inductive because it derives the meaning of content (Denscombe, 2010).

### D. Validity and Reliability

Validity and reliability are significant criteria for research. Reliability refers to the extent to which the results of a study are consistent and can be reproduced by others (Rasinger, 2008), while validity means the degree to which the measuring tools can actually measure what they are intended to (Balvanes & Caputi, 2001). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that validity is the pre-requisite and foundation of reliability in a study.

Validity can be divided into two categories: internal and external validity. Internal validity means some flaws occur within the study, such as "subject variability, size of subject population, time for collecting data and so on" (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 95). To validate the paper, a certain number of participants, including students and teachers, joined the study to the maximum extent. Data collection spanned one month. Conversely, external validity implies that research can be generalised to other contexts. Furthermore, some factors affect external validity, such as "population characteristics, data collection methodology, etc." (Seliger & Shohamy, 1989, p. 106). To make the sample representative, the samples were distinct in terms of gender (male and female), age (old and young), nationality (Chinese and British), and job (teacher and student). In addition, interviews and questionnaires as methods can be complementary to answering the same research question.

Reliability implies that the same conclusion can be drawn about the same research issue by other researchers (Silverman, 2005). To attain reliability, it is crucial to explain the methodology framework and strategies in the study by determining the meaning of the data, providing a description of the phenomenon, and explaining the process of forming constructs (Morgan & Drury, 2003). These factors influence reliability.

## IV. RESULTS

The results comprise two sections: interviews and questionnaires. The items and questions in the interviews and questionnaires are based on Ellis (2008) and Bitchener and Ferris (2012), but some items have been modified. SPSS was used to analyse the quantitative data, and NVivo was chosen to analyse the qualitative data.

### A. Questionnaires

The results of the questionnaires comprise two sections: students' and teachers' questionnaires; both contain Likert-scale formats and open-ended questions. According to the data in the Likert-scale tables, the percentages of people who chose each item are presented below, along with a detailed analysis with grounded theory to analyse open-ended questions by coding data.

#### (a). Students' Questionnaires

TABLE 1  
GENDER DISTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS

	N	Percentage
Male	3	20.0%
Female	12	80.0%

As shown in Table 1, two male and 13 female participants were involved in this research.

TABLE 2  
CHINESE STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS TEACHERS WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN L2 WRITING

1=Completely agree 2=Mostly agree 3=Neutral  
4=Mostly disagree 5=Completely disagree

Opinions	1 Completely agree	2 Mostly agree	3 Neutral	4 Mostly disagree	5 Completely disagree
1. Teachers should pay attention to every error to the same degree.	1 (6.67%)	5 (33.33%)	4 (26.67%)	4 (26.67%)	1 (6.67%)
2. Teachers should correct errors selectively.	3 (20.00%)	4 (26.67%)	2 (13.33%)	5 (33.33%)	1 (6.67%)
3. Teachers should adopt different corrective strategies according to types of errors.	11 (73.33%)	3 (20.00%)	1 (6.67%)	0	0
4. Teachers should use codes to identify errors and help students correct errors on their own.	7 (46.67%)	4 (26.67%)	4 (26.67%)	0	0

According to the table, most students mostly agreed that teachers should pay attention to every error to the same degree, with a percentage of 33.33%. Similarly, most students completely agreed that teachers should adopt different corrective strategies for different types of errors and use codes to identify errors and help students correct errors on their own, accounting for 73.33% and 46.67%, respectively.

By contrast, one person completely disagreed that teachers should pay attention to every error to the same degree, or 6.67%. Moreover, five participants mostly disagreed that teachers should correct errors selectively, which means most students preferred unfocused or comprehensive corrective feedback. Finally, students strongly believed that teachers should use different strategies flexibly according to different types of errors and that using codes was a helpful way to assist them in correcting errors by themselves; no one mostly or completely disagreed with this practice. In conclusion, most students held positive attitudes towards Items 1, 3, and 4, and they had a negative attitude towards Item 2. In their opinions, teachers should help them correct as many errors as possible, and teachers should focus on every error they make in L2 writing, regardless of grammatical errors or other types of errors.

TABLE 3  
CHINESE STUDENTS' EVALUATION OF FIVE STRATEGIES OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK  
1=Very helpful 2=Helpful to some extent 3=A little helpful 4=No help at all

Strategies of corrective feedback	1 Very helpful	2 Helpful to some extent	3 A little helpful	4 No help at all
5. Direct feedback	7 (46.67%)	6 (40.00%)	2 (13.33%)	0
6. Underlining errors	7 (46.67%)	6 (40.00%)	1 (6.67%)	1 (6.67%)
7. Using error codes	6 (40.00%)	3 (20.00%)	6 (40.00%)	0
8. Indicating the numbers and types of errors	3 (20.00%)	4 (26.67%)	8 (53.33%)	0
9. Reformulation	5 (33.33%)	7 (46.67%)	3 (20.00%)	0

The table indicates that most Chinese students (seven and seven, respectively) believed direct feedback and underlining errors to be very useful strategies of corrective feedback, at 46.67% each. It is complicated that the same number of students believed using error codes (metalinguistic feedback) to be very or a little helpful, with proportions of 40.00% each. However, most students (53.33% and 46.67%, respectively) considered indicating the numbers and types of errors (metalinguistic feedback) to be a helpful method to correct errors, and they believed reformulation to be a helpful strategy of corrective feedback, to some extent.

Although most Chinese students believed these five strategies of corrective feedback to be useful; one argued that underlining errors was not helpful at all, at 6.67%. Only a few believed direct feedback, underlining errors (indirect corrective feedback), and reformulation to be a little helpful, with percentages of 13.33%, 6.67%, and 20.00%, respectively.

In summary, direct corrective feedback and underlining errors (indirect corrective feedback) ranked at the top; most students believed them to be very helpful. Secondly, most considered reformulation as helpful to some extent. Conversely, most students did not approve of the strategy of indicating the numbers and types of errors (metalinguistic feedback), because they believed it to be only slightly helpful.

In addition, the open-ended questions of the questionnaires were also analysed qualitatively using grounded theory. The data were coded. To some extent, the findings of the open-ended questions can also provide evidence supporting the Likert-scale tables. Chinese students' perceptions of written corrective feedback comprised four dimensions: the most useful written corrective feedback, written corrective feedback that students preferred, errors that students hope teachers will correct first, and errors that should be paid most attention in L2 writing.

Based on frequency, the most useful written corrective feedback for students was indirect corrective feedback:

**Excerpt 1:** “[Indirect corrective feedback]. I could rethink my whole writing and let me know how I make the writing mistakes”.

Direct feedback followed:

**Excerpt 2:** “[Direct feedback] is the most effective way to correct the error. This is because there are many grammatical errors in the writing, and if the teacher corrects them directly, students will get the right information in a short time”.

Students found metalinguistic feedback (using error codes and indicating the numbers and types of errors) least helpful:

**Excerpt 3:** “[Using error codes]. Give students opportunities to do self-correction. Students can do more writing practice in English. Students are able to remember this error”; “Indicating the numbers and types of errors. This kind of feedback can give me instructions about my mistakes and give me space to change or correct the errors in my own way”.

In conclusion, the findings of students' preferences regarding written corrective feedback correspond with the most

useful written corrective feedback. In addition, the results of errors that students hope teachers will correct first were the same as those that should receive the most attention in L2 writing. Students were willing to let teachers correct grammatical errors first and believed it to be significant in L2 writing. Then, logical mistakes were another potential problem because they are vital in L2 academic writing, especially in universities.

(b). *Teachers' Questionnaires*

TABLE 4  
TEACHER DEMOGRAPHICS

		N	Percentage
Gender	Male	1	12.5%
	Female	7	87.5%
Nationality	China	3	37.5%
	United Kingdom	5	62.5%

	Mean value
Age	38
Teaching years	13.31

The basic situation of teachers is similar to that of students; there were more female (seven) than male (one) teachers as participants. As noted above, the teachers were from Britain and China, were not very young, and all have rich experience in teaching ESL and EFL writing, with an average teaching tenure of 13.31 years. It is better to investigate the research questions with the teachers, since they tend to be professional and share their ideas about teaching.

TABLE 5  
TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS STUDENTS' WRITING ERRORS IN L2 WRITING  
1=Completely agree 2=Mostly agree 3=Neutral 4=Mostly disagree 5=Completely disagree

Opinions	1 Completely agree	2 Mostly agree	3 Neutral	4 Mostly disagree	5 Completely disagree
1. Teachers should pay attention to every error to the same degree.	2 (25.00%)	1 (12.50%)	0	1 (12.50%)	4 (50.00%)
2. Teachers should correct errors selectively.	3 (37.50%)	2 (25.00%)	1 (12.50%)	2 (25.00%)	0
3. Teachers should adopt different corrective strategies according to types of errors.	7 (87.50%)	1 (12.50%)	0	0	0
4. Teachers should use codes to identify errors and help students correct errors on their own.	2 (25.00%)	2 (25.00%)	3 (37.50%)	1 (12.50%)	0

Compared with students, the largest proportion, half of teachers, completely disagreed that teachers should pay attention to every error to the same degree, which reveals that the teachers preferred focused corrective feedback. Furthermore, many teachers (37.50%) completely agreed that teachers should correct errors selectively, in correspondence with the last item of opinion. In terms of the third item, more teachers completely agreed that teachers should adopt different strategies of corrective feedback according to different errors, at 87.50%. Different from students, most teachers, at 37.50%, held neutral attitudes towards the opinion that teachers should use codes to identify errors and help students correct errors on their own, although some teachers completely (25.00%) or mostly agreed (25.00%) with this opinion.

Overall, most teachers preferred Items 2 and 3, while they showed negative attitudes towards Item 1. Notably, they were neutral about Item 4. Thus, there were also three aspects of teachers' perceptions of corrective feedback in L2 writing: the most appropriate corrective feedback for Chinese students, improvements after corrective feedback, and common errors.

Above all, teachers believed metalinguistic feedback by using error codes to be the most appropriate for Chinese students.

Using correction codes was helpful, but metalinguistic codes were the most appropriate ones.

1) Using correction codes, **Excerpt 4**: "It is important for student to engage and understand the mistakes they are making and try to self-correct themselves. However, it is important that there is follow-up on this with the teacher and any areas that are still unclear to the students are further explained / clarified".

2) Metalinguistic codes, **Excerpt 5**: "[Metalinguistic codes] can help the learners recognise and work on problems themselves, similar to implicit strategies".

Reformulation was also considered a useful form of corrective feedback in L2 writing.

3) Reformulation, **Excerpt 6**: "for recurring problems, I would give a model for students who may not have recognised their errors".

Finally, the combination of indirect and direct corrective feedback was also deemed suitable.

Furthermore, the teachers believed that students' writing could be improved after corrective feedback, which relates

to three factors: students' language level, follow-up, and the frequency of correction or exposure to language.

1) Students' language level, **Excerpt 7**: "Sometimes, for advanced students, they can quickly react to the errors I've already mentioned, and for other average students, I will choose to tell them the mistakes directly instead of implying them".

2) Follow-up, **Excerpt 8**: "Only if they engage with feedback and try to correct their errors on a continuous basis".

3) The frequency of correction, **Excerpt 9**: "[the frequency of correction] and follow-up as well as [exposure to language] is key to a student being able to become more accurate. The correction itself is not effective".

Finally, teachers preferred to focus on common errors, such as lexical and grammatical errors.

### B. Interviews

Based on grounded theory, the findings of the interviews comprise three parts: the results of open coding, the results of axial coding, and the results of selective coding. By consistently comparing, analysing, and shaping qualitative materials, a final theory can be developed and deduced (Charmaz, 2006).

TABLE 6  
OPEN CODING RESULTS

Interview texts	Category of open coding extraction	Frequency
"If you have a very low-level student, then the direct correct feedback is going to be the most important because they can't correct themselves at a low level."	Direct corrective feedback	13
"So for students who have higher level of proficiency, then I think you'd need to give... probably a combination of the direct corrective feedback and metalinguistic feedback."	Mixed	6
"If a tutor just underlines errors with no guidance and the students do nothing, it doesn't have much in effect."	Underlining errors	5
"Using error codes... but when I do that, I don't just correct grammar mistakes. I'll also have things like messages are unclear ideas... something like that. So it's the third one, using error codes."	Using error codes	6
"The type of that is indicated, but then, the student needs to error correct themselves."	Indicating the number and type of errors	3
"That might be... when I might just use a reformulation."	Reformulation	4
"Yes. I mean for example, a spelling mistake very often just needs a quick underline."	Underlining spelling mistakes	1
"On the other hand, if you have grammatical problems and the student obviously doesn't understand, then you're going to have to give examples and use it as a teaching opportunity to maybe give examples of how the grammar needs to be corrected."	Providing examples when encountering grammatical problems	1
"One of the most difficult is this reformulation, because sometimes the meaning is clear to a language teacher, but the meaning is not clear to someone who has no experience of teaching that nationality. And then really, we need to think about reformulating expressions."	Reformulation	1

TABLE 7  
AXIAL CODING RESULTS

Secondary category	Frequency	Main category	Frequency
Direct corrective feedback	13	Direct corrective feedback	13
Underlining errors	5	Indirect corrective feedback	5
Mixed	6	Mixed	6
Using error codes	6	Metalinguistic feedback	9
Indicating the number and type of errors	3		
Reformulation	4	Reformulation	4
Underlining spelling mistakes	1	Different types of errors influenced differently by error treatment	3
Providing examples when encountering grammatical problems	1		
Reformulation	1		

TABLE 8  
SELECTIVE CODING RESULTS

Main category	Frequency	Core category
Direct corrective feedback	18	Most appropriate
Indirect corrective feedback	5	
Metalinguistic feedback	9	
Mixed	6	
Reformulation	4	
Different types of errors influenced differently by error treatment	3	Different types of errors influenced differently by error treatment

According to the data in three tables above, teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards written corrective feedback in L2 writing can be analysed from two perspectives: the most appropriate corrective feedback for Chinese students and different types of errors being influenced differently by error treatment.

Therefore, the most appropriate written corrective feedback was direct correct feedback for Chinese students because a teacher stressed the importance of it.

Direct corrective feedback was most appropriate for students.

(1) Direct corrective feedback

**Excerpt 10:** "If you have a very low-level student, then the [direct correct feedback] is going to be the most important because they can't correct themselves at a low level".

Metalinguistic feedback includes using error codes, indicating the number and type of error, which was considered as important feedback.

(2) Metalinguistic feedback

A. Using error codes. **Excerpt 11:** "[using error codes], but when I do that, I don't just correct grammar mistakes. I'll also have things like messages with unclear ideas or something like that. so it's the third one, using error codes".

B. Indicating the number and type of errors. **Excerpt 12:** "The type of that is [indicated], but then, the student needs to error correct themselves".

Sometimes, mixture of directive feedback and metalinguistic feedback, indirect corrective feedback or even reformulation was necessary.

(3) Mixture of direct corrective feedback and metalinguistic feedback

**Excerpt 13:** "So for students who have higher level of proficiency, then I think you'd need to say what probably a combination of the [direct corrective feedback] and [metalinguistic feedback]".

(4) Indirect corrective feedback

Underlining errors. **Excerpt 14:** "If a tutor just [underlines errors] with no guidance and the students do nothing, it doesn't have much in effect, but the research suggests that when tutors give feedback... There is follow-up with the students, which is the most important".

In **Excerpt 14**, the teacher suggested that when giving indirect corrective feedback, for example, underlining errors, it is not very helpful for students. However, follow-up instructions are necessary.

(5) Reformulation. **Excerpt 15:** "I mean sometimes where something isn't good, I can see what the student is trying to say but perhaps there's just a lack of clarity. That might be... when I might just use a [reformulation]".

In regards to different types of errors being influenced differently by error treatment, teachers tended to use different corrective feedback to correct different types of errors. For instance,

(1) A spelling mistake very often just needs a quick underline.

**Excerpt 16:** "Yes. I mean for example, [a spelling mistake very often just needs a quick underline]".

(2) Examples should be given when encountering grammatical problems.

**Excerpt 17:** "On the other hand, if you have grammatical problems and the student obviously doesn't understand, then you're going to have to give examples and use it as a teaching opportunity to maybe [give examples] of how the grammar needs to be corrected".

(3) Reformulation

What this teacher thought is the same as in **Excerpt 15**; reformulation occurs when facing structural problems, which means students cannot build the arguments logically. Their writing can be understood by teachers, but the language must be clearer so it can become more native-like in L2. Furthermore, this situation is irrelevant to grammatical errors.

## V. CONCLUSION

In terms of the first research question, students' preferences were distinct from teachers'. Chinese students wanted teachers to correct every error that occurred in their L2 writing, which means they preferred unfocused corrective feedback and thought it necessary to put emphasis on all errors. However, it is not possible for teachers to correct every mistake in L2 writing; it is not only time consuming but also dangerous to some degree. Students will be overwhelmed by too much information, so they will not know which mistakes to focus on. In the long term, helping students correct every error cannot make them engage in corrective feedback or help them improve their L2 ability. Thus, teachers preferred to correct errors that appeared frequently or common mistakes by students.

In terms of the second research question, both Chinese students and teachers perceived written corrective feedback as useful, and students can make significant progress in L2 writing after being given written corrective feedback. There are some factors that affect the effectiveness of written corrective feedback: the level of students, whether there is follow-up when giving feedback, and how frequently the correction is given. For higher-level students, they can quickly understand the written corrective feedback mentioned by teachers and correct errors on their own. For lower-level students, they may not understand the gap between the languages, so they will not improve their L2 writing quickly. In addition, follow-up is important since students must correct errors on a consistent basis. Finally, if students receive written corrective feedback frequently, they will realise their errors in writing. In addition, most Chinese students and teachers affirmed that different types of errors should use different strategies of written corrective feedback.

According to the third research question, teachers believed the most appropriate written corrective feedback for Chinese students to be both direct corrective feedback and metalinguistic feedback (e.g. using error codes and metalinguistic codes). They argued that this is a useful tool to train students to correct themselves and save time in teaching. However, Chinese students believed the most appropriate written corrective feedback to be direct or indirect (e.g. underlining errors) corrective feedback. This is because students can easily notice errors and correct them in a short time.

Merits and limitations exist in the paper. Firstly, the sample size of interviews and questionnaires was not adequate due to limitations of time, money, and other factors. Furthermore, most participants were female, which may lead to bias and impact the reliability of the study. In addition, it is more difficult to generalise in a larger context. Additionally, there are only some basic strategies for written corrective feedback, and types of errors are common, so the analysis may not be comprehensive. Sometimes, students cannot sufficiently identify the differences in written corrective feedback or the types of errors. If time permits, follow-up interviews should be conducted among students to explain the research questions in detail and explore the reasons for their selection of written corrective feedback in L2 writing.

To sum up, further research can enlarge the sample size, by conducting follow-up interviews among students and adding more types of written corrective feedback, which would allow the research to become more reliable. Moreover, further research can compare the differences between Chinese teachers' and other international teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards written corrective feedback in detail. Finally, a comparison could be made between Chinese students' and other international students' attitudes and perceptions to generalise the characteristics of Chinese students.

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**Ruiying Cai** was born in Huizhou, China in 1996. She received her Master Degree in Linguistics and English Language Teaching from University of Leeds, UK in 2019.

She worked as an English teacher for teaching junior high school students in Congniao Educational Technology Company, China. She is currently a teaching assistant in the School of Foreign Languages, Huizhou University, Huizhou, China. Her research interests include second language acquisition and applied linguistics.