Teachers' Stated Beliefs on Coded Unfocused Corrective Feedback in EFL Writing at a Saudi University

Hamdan Farhan Alzahrani*

King Abdulaziz University, English Language Institute, Saudi Arabia

Abstract

This paper reports on a study exploring English language teachers' stated beliefs on coded unfocused corrective feedback in improving learners' writing accuracy at King Abdulaziz University (KAU). A questionnaire with both closed and open ended items was taken by ten participants. The results of the study indicate that many participants in the study believe that coded unfocused corrective feedback, currently employed at KAU, is comparatively effective in improving learners' writing accuracy, and that it is more suitable for high level learners who are motivated enough to deal with all errors. Also, this study reveals that unfocused corrective feedback is useful to produce a better second draft; however, some learners' errors still recur in new writing despite the continuous corrections offered by teachers. Participants in this study further believe that using codes to mark learners' errors is not as beneficial as it should be, and it would be more effective if used selectively.

Keywords: teachers' beliefs, coded unfocused corrective feedback, EFL writing

Introduction

This study explored English language teachers' stated beliefs regarding the effectiveness of coded unfocused written corrective feedback in improving learners' writing accuracy at an English language institute.

Coded feedback is defined by Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) as the strategy of identifying the exact location of errors with codes and using the codes to indicate the type of error, for example, using *SP* to indicate issues with spelling. In addition, unfocused feedback is defined by Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2008) as the correction of all learners' errors in a piece of writing.

When all errors in a piece of writing are marked, then the label unfocused feedback is used, which is different from correcting only one or two types of errors, which is called focused feedback. Focused feedback is sometimes called selective feedback and unfocused feedback is also referred to as comprehensive feedback. Both types of feedback are the main categories for written corrective feedback, yet some strategies can be used within both focused and unfocused feedback, such as indirect corrections, e.g., only indicting an error place or using codes. Another strategy used with both focused and unfocused corrective feedback is direct corrections where an error is indicated and corrected. This study focuses on coded unfocused feedback as it is the type of feedback utilized in the context in which the study took place, and which might resonate with similar practices pertinent to written corrective feedback in other international contexts.

*Email: hfalzahrani@kau.edu.sa. Tel. +00966503511015. Address: Saudi Arabia, Jeddah, Naseem Dist, Ameen Khalid Al-Jundi 3485, Jeddah 6673-23233

Since coded unfocused corrective feedback (see Figure 1) has been implemented in the ELI at King Abdulaziz University, thousands of learners and hundreds of teachers have been affected by it; a considerable number of teachers have constantly discussed and questioned its effectiveness. Due to this discourse, I selected teachers' beliefs regarding corrective feedback to be the focus of my study in order to gain a greater understanding of coded unfocused corrective feedback through teachers' own voices and experiences.
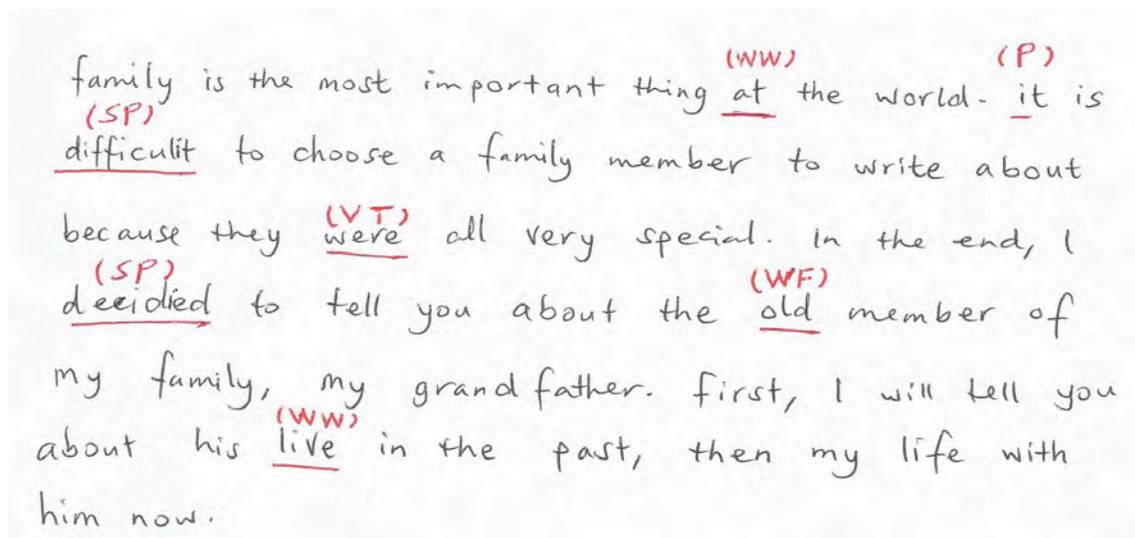

Figure 1. A Sample of Using Coded Unfocused Corrective Feedback

The Role of Teacher's Beliefs in Language Teaching

Teachers' beliefs are notoriously difficult to define because they are "a messy construct" (p. 307) as noted by Pajares (1992). Borg (2011) defines teacher beliefs as "propositions individuals consider to be true and which are often tacit, have a strong evaluative and affective component, provide a basis for action and are resistant to change" (p. 370). Here, Borg emphasizes many aspects of beliefs such as their implicitness, evaluative and emotional nature, and tendency to become fossilized.

Pajares (1992) states that the findings of research pertinent to teachers' beliefs reveal that there is a strong correlation between teachers' beliefs, their educational decisions, planning, and most importantly their practices. In a similar vein, Fang (1996) argues that teachers' beliefs might be represented in what teachers anticipate about learners' performance and their personal theories regarding different educational areas, and therefore teachers' beliefs can influence learning and teaching in different ways.

Because of the significant role teachers' beliefs play in learning and teaching, a great deal of literature has addressed teachers' beliefs in regards to a considerable number of educational issues. However, very little attention has been paid to teachers' beliefs on corrective feedback in second language writing (e.g., Lee, 2009; Schulz, 1996). Lee (2009) for example, compares teachers' practices regarding different types of corrective feedback and their stated beliefs. The study reveals ten discrepancies between teachers' stated beliefs and practices. One of these mismatches is that teachers believe that focused corrective feedback is suitable for their learners, but their actual practices did not reflect that as they tended to use unfocused corrective feedback. Teachers justified this by saying they were following the policies of their institutions in this regard, even though it went against their beliefs. The rationale provided by these teachers affirms Borg's (2006) argument that teachers who are required to do tasks which are not in harmony with their educational beliefs will experience a tension between what they believe and what they are required to do, which may lead to poor practice. On the other hand, I contend that it is difficult for decision makers to consider all teachers' preferences based on their educational beliefs; however, new initiatives and tasks should be negotiated with teachers, and reshaped where possible, according to what most teachers believe as suitable for a certain context.

Despite the fact that written corrective feedback is practised widely in EFL and ESL classrooms, its

effectiveness has been questioned and challenged by some researchers (e.g., Kepner, 1991; Truscott, 1996, 2007). Truscott (1996) for instance, claims that written corrective feedback is not effective because it does not consider the nature of learning, i.e., the developmental stages of learning. However, several other researchers (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Ferris, 1999; Ferris & Robert, 2001) are in favor of corrective feedback and do not accept Truscott's claims.

Looking at corrective feedback in L2 writing from practitioners' perspectives, Evans, Hartshorn, and Allen (2010) conducted a survey which was taken by 1,053 teachers from 96 countries focusing on what extent teachers provide corrective feedback in L2 writing. The study also tackled the reasons that teachers gave for giving corrective feedback as well as the rationales provided by teachers who choose not to give corrective feedback. The findings of the study showed that corrective feedback in second language writing is extensively utilized by the majority of participants. Furthermore, according to the study in question, the main reasons teachers gave for providing feedback were that corrective feedback is important to assist learners in improving their writing, and also that learners need it. On the other hand, the few teachers who do not give feedback provided two reasons: First, they think that rhetoric, content, and organization are more significant than corrective feedback, and second, learners should take care of their own errors.

As a language practitioner, I believe that providing learners with corrective feedback is pivotal. Nevertheless, if a teacher aims to help learners improve their writing fluency, i.e., their ability to convey their thoughts effectively, they might delay focusing on grammatical and form errors.

In their study on whether correcting all learners' errors or only some errors in a piece of writing is more effective, Ellis et al. (2008) compared focused corrective feedback to unfocused corrective feedback using an experimental study whose respondents were 49 Japanese learners. One of the main findings was that learners' writings exposed to both focused and unfocused corrective feedback show that both are effective. However, Ellis et al. add that this area requires more research.

In a similar vein, Sheen (2007) investigated the effectiveness of selective or focused corrective feedback. Ninety-one adult learners of different first language backgrounds took part in this study in which their writing accuracy was examined focusing on the definite article (the) and the indefinite article (a). The study had three groups: a group which was provided with direct corrections, a second group which was given meta-linguistic or coded feedback, and a control group. The effectiveness of the provided feedback was measured by pre-tests, post-tests, and delayed post-tests. This study concluded with the finding that the two groups which were provided with direct corrections and coded corrections selectively, i.e., focusing only on some errors, performed much more competently than the control group.

Building on the above study and attempting to compare focused corrective feedback with unfocused corrective feedback, Sheen, Wright, and Moldawa (2009) conducted a study in an American college which offers an English language programme to international and immigrant students. Eighty of the students had their writing examined focusing on the impact of the focused and unfocused feedback on their writing accuracy. The articles, verb (to be), regular and irregular past tense, and propositions were selected for the focused corrective feedback. Participants were divided into four groups: a focused corrective feedback group, an unfocused corrective feedback group, a writing practice group, and a control group. The study in question revealed that the focused, or selective, corrective feedback group scored the highest accuracy results for articles alongside the other grammatical structures. Consequently, the study reached the conclusion that focused corrective feedback is much more effective than unfocused corrective feedback in improving learners' accuracy in second language writing. However, it can be argued that such a finding cannot be generalised as there are intricate complexities within different contexts and, therefore, teachers as decision makers should be granted the opportunity to decide which kind of corrective feedback is 'suitable' for their learners based on a context analysis.

Research Questions

This study is an attempt to answer the following questions:

1. How do the English language teachers at the ELI see the effectiveness of marking all learners' errors in a piece of writing to improve learners' writing accuracy?

2. What do the English language teachers at the ELI think of using codes to indicate learners' errors in a piece of writing?
3. What strategies would teachers use if they had the choice when marking learners' writing based on their educational beliefs?

Methodology

The Context of the Study

The study was conducted in the ELI at King Abdulaziz University in Saudi Arabia. The ELI offers an intensive English language program which is taken by thousands of Saudi undergraduate learners and taught by a large number of teachers from different parts of the world. Four supplementary level tailored writing booklets are taught over one academic year where learners are required to write short compositions following a process writing approach twice per week. All the English language teachers are required to mark learners' errors using coded unfocused corrective feedback.

The Participants of the Study

Ten English language teachers took part in this study; four of them are native speakers of English. Of these four, two hold BA degrees while the other two have master's degrees. The other six teachers are non-native speakers and all of them are MA holders. Three out of ten have been teaching less than five years and the rest have been teaching English language for more than five years.

Data Collection Procedures

This study is mainly qualitative. I selected a questionnaire with open-ended and closed items to be the research method for my study. I devised a questionnaire with three sections: the first part consists of seven Likert scale items with five options; part two with three open questions; and part three with three closed biographical questions (see Appendix 1 for a sample of the questionnaire used in this study).

I piloted my questionnaire by sending it to two ELI colleagues via email. Their answers to the questionnaire questions gave me insights about some pitfalls with the design of the questionnaire, and more importantly the content. The second part of my questionnaire consists of three open ended questions and the aim behind it was to give teachers a space to elaborate on some of their given choices on Likert scale items and more importantly to state their beliefs regarding coded unfocused corrective feedback.

The administration of the questionnaire was as follows: I contacted the academic coordination unit head at the ELI and sought their approval for disseminating my questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent to fifty teachers via email, and only three of the teachers who were teaching during summer school completed the questionnaire. After sending a follow-up email to teachers, I received seven additional completed questionnaires.

In an effort to address my research questions for the current study, I have made the research questions the benchmarks for my decision making throughout the process of the study. Given that teachers' beliefs are tacit, any research method used would not have been completely sufficient to give comprehensive, high quality data. Borg, in a published interview with Birello (2012), pointed out that:

> Methodologically the challenges have been for us to find ways of eliciting beliefs and the only way to do this is by getting teachers to tell us what their beliefs are, or to produce work in which their beliefs are implied. (p. 89)

Realizing that any research method has its merits and limitations, I selected a questionnaire with closed and open items to explore teachers' stated beliefs. Dornyei and Taguchi (2010) state that the use of questionnaires might culminate with three kinds of data: factual, behavioural, and attitudinal, adding that attitudinal questionnaires cover a broad range of categories such as opinions, beliefs, values, attitudes, and interests.

However, other methods have been utilized by scholars to study teachers' beliefs more often than questionnaires, such as stimulated recall, observations, and interviews. Nonetheless, my goal was not to surface

teachers' beliefs by exploring the sources of their beliefs as this is a lengthy process which may have required other methods. Also, I did not compare teachers' stated beliefs to their practices as it was not feasible in my context because coded unfocused corrective feedback is a requirement of the program. Therefore, I selected a questionnaire to be my research method as questionnaires are among the research methods used in studying teachers' beliefs (e.g., Borg 2011; Lee 2009). Lee (2009), for example, used a questionnaire in addition to follow up interviews and text analysis to compare teachers' beliefs to their practices regarding corrective feedback.

Additionally, I selected a questionnaire with closed and open ended items with the assumption that it would be taken by English language professionals, and therefore they would provide thoughtful responses, particularly because the questionnaire is short and straightforward and there is space to rationalize their responses. I believe that the participants in this study gave thoughtful responses which helped me to gain useful data. However, one of the disadvantages of using questionnaires is that participants' responses might carry some kind of generalization as is argued by Dornyei and Taguchi (2010); one of the disadvantages of questionnaires is the 'halo effect' where we as human beings have an inclination to generalize, e.g., if we have a general positive view regarding something, we might tend to consider everything related to it positively, or just the opposite (Dornyei & Taguchi, 2010).

For ethical purposes, my questionnaire structure starts with a short introduction to the goal of my research and for whom I am conducting it, and more importantly informing the participants that taking part in the questionnaire is voluntary and highly confidential. I started with Likert scale questions because starting with open ended questions might put off some participants since they require more concentrated thinking. In the last part of my questionnaire, I only asked participants about three pieces of biographical information, namely teaching experience, native language, and their highest qualification. I only utilized the responses to the biographical items to give an introduction to the participants in my research report.

Data Analysis Procedures

For processing data obtained from Likert scale questions, numbers from 1 to 5 were used as codes. For example, number one represents strongly disagree, two represents disagree, three stands for unsure, four represents agree, and five represents strongly agree. Using spreadsheet software, I obtained the frequency of responses for each item.

When it came to processing the data gained from the open ended questions, I followed the technique of using my research questions, which are closely represented by the questionnaire's open ended questions, as a predetermined category under which the responses of all participants were synthesized; word processing software was used for this process. I analyzed the data deductively, where themes based on the questionnaire questions were used, e.g., the effectiveness of unfocused corrective feedback, and inductively using emergent themes from the data as sub-categories, such as learners' levels of proficiency and learners' motivations. I synthesized similar responses together using numbers, e.g., 6 out of 10, to show the trends for each category or subcategory.

I implemented two strategies to describe the analyzed data. I used my own wording to convey the main idea for each category or subcategory when responses were similar and in some cases I quoted participants' responses when they provided more vivid representations of their beliefs through their original voices.

Validity and Trustworthiness

As indicated earlier in this paper, this study is an attempt to explore and gain an understanding of what the English language teachers in the ELI at King Abdulaziz University think about the effectiveness of coded unfocused corrective feedback following an interpretative approach in which I do not aim to generalize the results. Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that the role of qualitative researchers is to provide rich and detailed descriptions of their research, and not to propose generalisations. Instead, readers of a qualitative piece of research should reach their own verdicts about the transferability of qualitative research.

Thus, the trustworthiness and credibility of this study have been considered by giving the details for the process of data collection, and also by means of transparent descriptions of data analysis procedures and the methods used to reach the results. In addition, I have provided a sample of the questionnaire used in this study (see Appendix) as well as a description of the context of the study. Shenton (2004) states that "thick description of the phenomenon under scrutiny…can be an important provision for promoting credibility as it helps to

convey the actual situations that have been investigated and, to an extent, the contexts that surround them" (p. 69).

Results and Discussion

In this section I analyze, interpret, and present the results of the analyzed data starting with the Likert scale data sets, using a table for ease of reference, followed by short descriptions and analysis of each statement. The Likert scale items are meant to give an overview of teachers' stated beliefs. In analyzing the data for Likert scale items, options like strongly disagree and disagree have been combined to mean disagree and agree and strongly agree have also been merged into one category. Afterwards, data gathered from open ended questions were analyzed.

At this juncture, it is worth mentioning that participants' stated beliefs in the first part of the analysis represent their beliefs about coded unfocused corrective feedback with no reference to the ELI context. However, the analysis of the qualitative data refers directly to the ELI context. In doing so, I had the opportunity to compare and synthesize participants' stated beliefs about coded unfocused corrective feedback and their beliefs about its suitability in relation to the context in question.

Table 1

An Overview of the English Language Teachers' Stated Beliefs on Coded Unfocused Corrective Feedback

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
1. Marking all learners' errors will help learners avoid making similar errors in future writing.	1	2	2	5	0
2. Marking all learners' errors will only help learners produce a better second draft.	0	3	1	5	1
3. Marking learners' errors using error codes, e.g., SP for selling mistake is useful.	0	1	0	7	2
4. Using error codes are not suitable for all learners' levels of proficiency.	0	2	0	4	4
5. Some types of errors still recur despite the continuous corrections provided by teachers.	0	0	1	4	5
6. It is useful to indicate errors but without identifying the type of error.	1	2	2	5	0
7. It is useful to indicate learners' errors and correct them directly.	1	3	2	2	2

Note. N=10

Table 1 shows teachers' views on coded unfocused corrective feedback based on their responses to the Likert scale items. Overall, most of the participants who took part in this study think that unfocused corrective feedback, marking all errors in a piece of writing, in additional language writing is useful; however, in their responses to the open ended questions they provided more clarification. Likewise, participants initially think that

using codes to mark learners' written errors is beneficial. A few participants revealed that coded unfocused corrective feedback is not appropriate for their learners. Moreover, some participants took a neutral position -by selecting (unsure) with regards to some Likert items- and that is understood to mean that other options did not reflect their beliefs.

As can be seen in Table 1, five participants believe that marking all learners' errors in a piece of writing will help learners avoid making similar errors in future writing. Three participants, however, did not share the same belief, and two participants were unsure. Six participants were in agreement with the statement that marking all learners' errors will only help learners produce a better second draft, yet, three participants did not agree with that statement. One participant was unsure.

In their responses to the third Likert scale item, nine participants thought that marking learners' errors using error codes was useful. Only one participant did not think so. Teachers' beliefs that using codes is effective when marking learners' errors is in line with Harmer's (2007) perspective that using codes "makes correction look less damaging" (p. 121). On the other hand, participants saw using error codes, e.g., SP for spelling, as not suitable for all learners' proficiency levels. Conversely, two participants deemed them adequate for all learners' proficiency levels.

Nine participants hold the belief that some types of errors still recur despite the continuous corrections provided by participants. One participant was not sure. Five participants indicated that a more implicit strategy for dealing with learners' errors would be useful, however, three participants do not believe so, and two were undecided. Four participants think that indicating learners' errors and correcting them directly is ineffective. On the other hand, four participants saw this strategy as effective and two were neutral.

At this point I present the insights arrived at based on the analysis of the qualitative data regarding teachers stated beliefs on the coded unfocused corrective feedback approach. As you can see below, the research questions were used as the main themes under which the insights were arrived at.

Q1-How do the English language teachers at the ELI see the effectiveness of marking all learners' errors in a piece of writing to improve learners' writing accuracy?
Teachers stated their beliefs regarding the effectiveness of correcting all learners' errors in improving learners' writing accuracy in different ways. Six participants believe that correcting all learners' errors is partially effective in improving learners' writing accuracy, but they think two factors are important to consider, namely learners' motivation and learners' proficiency levels. One teacher noted the following:

> That depends on the learner's motivation. If the learner is only interested in completing the writing task and is not really bothered about improving his English, then NO. This method does not necessarily improve the learner's writing accuracy. However, I have had students that were eager to improve their writing accuracy and found this method very helpful. The students wrote again and did not make the same mistakes. I think this is totally down to the learner's motivation and the reason for their acquiring the English language.

In a study conducted in Hong Kong, Lee (2005) investigated the perspectives of 320 learners on corrective feedback. Interestingly, one of the findings of Lee's study was that the majority of learners (82.9%) showed interest in obtaining comprehensive or unfocused corrective feedback from their teachers and they preferred receiving codes to indicate their errors.

Nevertheless, three participants assertively think that correcting all learners' errors in a piece of writing is not effective. One said, "I believe that a learner can only focus on improving in one or two areas at a time. If a student has a piece of writing with several mistakes, he doesn't know which one he should work on improving and this only leads to demotivation."

It can be seen that the responses for the Likert and open ended items about the effectiveness of unfocused corrective feedback reflect that motivation is an overarching factor in the perceived usefulness of unfocused corrective feedback in improving learners' writing accuracy. Many participants feel that only motivated learners are capable of making use of unfocused corrective feedback. In contrast, only a few teachers believe that unfocused corrective feedback is the reason behind learners' demotivation as a result of it being too difficult for

them to handle all errors.

I argue that learners would prefer to receive comprehensive corrective feedback on their writing from their teachers, and in doing so, teachers might motivate their learners to exert more effort to improve their writing accuracy. What is more, marking all learners' errors in their writing may give them an indication that their teachers are very keen on their learning, and consequently this can create a level of motivation on the part of learners. Feedback could be paired with positive comments on learners' writing to mitigate the impact of indicating all learners' errors. However, I think the challenge lies in creating a balance between what learners prefer and what teachers believe is appropriate within a certain context.

Q2-What do the English language teachers at the ELI think of using codes to indicate learners' errors in a piece of writing?

In analysing and interpreting teachers' beliefs towards the effectiveness of using codes, the data shows that four participants believe using codes to mark learners' errors is useful. One teacher put it this way, "they allow the teacher and the learner to be able to identify which type of error the student is making and the frequency of it", yet, they believe that it would be more useful if the quantity of codes were minimized.

On the other hand, the other six participants consider codes to only be useful for high level learners as low level learners cannot understand the codes and they cannot correct their errors because their language is limited. A teacher expressed their belief about this issue by pointing out, "In my experience only the stronger ELI L104 [Intermediate level] learners are able to even understand the error codes. L101-L103 [beginner and elementary level learners] don't really benefit from them."

In considering participants' responses to the third Likert scale item, we find that nine participants agree that using codes is useful. Similarly, they expressed the same belief in their responses to this open ended item, but with more clarification. I believe that learners' levels of proficiency should play a role in determining what kind of feedback is used, and therefore, this is an area where teachers can use their understanding of their learners' needs and their contexts. As Ferris (2004) points out, "providing error feedback that will help students and not distract them or discourage them involves some decision making on the part of the teacher which considers the students' needs and background" (p. 59).

Q3-What strategies would teachers use if they had the choice when marking learners' writing based on their educational beliefs?

Only two participants would use unfocused corrective feedback if it was not standardized. One teacher points out that, "I think it is helpful. Many learners benefit from being made aware of their errors and take considerable time to reflect on the teacher's marking and try to avoid repeating the same errors in the future." A third teacher would use unfocused corrective feedback only with high level learners.

Six participants would only correct some errors and two of those would use strategies like peer-editing and marking some errors and then allowing learners to look for similar errors. Teachers' preferences in this regard are justified as teachers' cognition is influenced by many factors, such as schooling, experience, professional education, and context (Borg, 2006).

Conclusion

In closing, most of the English language teachers who took part in this study believe that correcting all learners' errors is suitable for motivated and high level learners. Further, many teachers believe that using codes to indicate learners' errors is more useful for high level learners. Some see coded corrective feedback as effective only if used selectively, i.e., marking only some types of errors. These beliefs about the effectiveness of selective corrective feedback are in line with the findings of studies conducted by Sheen (2007) and Sheen et al. (2009), which were cited earlier in this paper. Also, a study conducted in a Colombian university Sampson (2012) demonstrates the effectiveness of selective corrective feedback by comparing it to comprehensive feedback: "corrective feedback should be…selective, depending on [a] learners' stage of inter-language, since comprehensive feedback may risk demotivating learners" (p. 501). On the other hand, Lee (2005) strongly stated that comprehensive corrective feedback was preferred by the learners who participated in their study. Therefore, I think that different contexts

and learners' needs should be considered when selecting a corrective feedback strategy; teachers should be given the opportunity to choose an appropriate corrective feedback strategy based on their understanding of their contexts.

To sum up, although the number of participants in this study is not large, this study may still provide researchers and practitioners with some insights into the importance of exploring English language teachers' beliefs about what they do on a daily basis in the classroom, such as giving written corrective feedback.

More studies are needed to examine different contexts and focus on what teachers believe, think, and practice, regarding different types of corrective feedback. These studies may help to reveal the relationship between what teachers believe and what they practice, which can inform teacher training programs, policy makers, and curriculum designers. Moreover, teachers' voices based on their educational beliefs regarding their corrective feedback practices can be shared with other teachers in similar international contexts. Finally, and most importantly, teachers should be empowered by being given some freedom to implement practices that are in line with their educational beliefs with regards to the appropriate corrective feedback approach for their contexts. Studies tackling this area will help raise awareness towards the crucial importance of considering teachers' educational beliefs.

References

Ashwell, T. (2000) Patterns of teacher response to student writing in a multiple-draft composition classroom: Is content feedback followed by form feedback the best method? *Journal of Second Language Writing, 9*(3), 227–257.

Birello, M. (2012) Teacher cognition and language teacher education: beliefs and practice. A conversation with Simon Borg. *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching and Learning Language and literature, 5*(2), 88-94.

Bitchener, J., Young, S., Cameron, D., (2005) The effect of different types of corrective feedback on ESL student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 9*, 227–258.

Borg, S. (2006) *Teacher cognition and language education: research and practice*. London: Continuum.

Borg, S. (2011) The impact of in-service teacher education on language teachers' beliefs. *System, 39*(3), 370–380.

Dornyei, Z. and Taguchi, T. (2nd ed.) (2010) *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration and processing*. London: Routledge.

Ellis, R., Sheen, Y., Murakami, M. and Takashima, H. (2008) The effects of focused and unfocused written corrective feedback in an English as a foreign language context. *System, 36*(3), 353-371.

Evans, N., Hartshorn, K. J., Allen, E. (2010). Written corrective feedback: Practitioner perspectives. *International Journal of English Studies, 10*, 47–77.

Fang, Z. (1996) A review of research on teacher beliefs and practices. *Educational Research, 38*(1), 47- 65.

Ferris, D. R. (1999) The case for grammar correction in L2 writing classes. A response to Truscott (1996). *Journal of Second Language Writing, 8*(1), 1–11.

Ferris, D. R. (2004) The "grammar correction" debate in L2 writing: Where are we, and where do we go from here? *Journal of Second Language Writing, 13*, 49–62.

Ferris, D. R., & Roberts, B. (2001) Error feedback in L2 writing classes. How explicit does it need to be? *Journal of Second Language Writing, 10*(3), 161–184.

Harmer, J. (2007). How to teach English. Pearson Education Limited.

Kepner, C. G. (1991) An experiment in the relationship of types of written feedback to the development of second-language writing skills. *The Modern Language Journal, 75*(3), 305-313.

Lee, I. (2009) Ten mismatches between teachers' beliefs and written corrective feedback practice. *ELT Journal, 36*(1), 13-22.

Lee, I. (2005). Error correction in the L2 writing classroom: What do students think? *TESL Canada Journal/Revue TESL Du Canada, 22*(2), 1-16.

Lincoln, Y.S. and Guba, E.G. (1985) Naturalistic Inquiry, Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Pajares, M. F. (1992) Teachers' beliefs and educational research: cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research, 62*, 307-332.

Sampson, A. (2012) Coded and uncoded error feedback: effects on error frequencies in adult Colombian EFL learners' writing, *System, 40*(4), 494–504.

Schulz, R. A. (1996) Focus on form in the foreign language classroom: students' and teachers' views on error correction and the role of grammar. *Foreign Language Annals, 29*(3), 343-364.

Sheen, Y. (2007). The effect of focused written corrective feedback and language aptitude on ESL learners' acquisition of articles. *TESOL Quarterly, 41*, 255-283.

Sheen, Y., Wright, D., & Moldawa, A. (2009). Differential effects of focused and unfocused written correction on the accurate use of grammatical forms by adult ESL learners. *System, 37*, 556-569.

Shenton, A. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information, 22*, 63-75.

Truscott, J. (1996) The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language Learning, 46*(2), 327–369.

Truscott, J. (2007) The effect of error correction on learner's ability to write accurately. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 16*, 255-272.

Appendix

English language teachers' stated beliefs regarding the effectiveness of unfocused corrective feedback in FL writing

The below questionnaire will be utilized for the purpose of collecting some data for a study which aims to explore the English language teachers' beliefs in the English Language Institute (ELI) at King Abdulaziz University about the viability of the currently employed unfocused corrective feedback in improving learners' writing accuracy. Your participation in this questionnaire is voluntary and it is highly appreciated. The obtained data will be anonymous and confidential. If you agree to take this questionnaire, please proceed to answer the following questions.

The below questionnaire consists of three parts and it contains both open-ended and closed items and it will take you about 20 minutes to complete it. Thank you very much!

Part. 1

In this part, please indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree, or strongly agree with the following statements:

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree	
1	2	3	4	5	

(Example) If you agree with this statement, choose this:					
Swimming is my favourite sport.	1	2	3	**4**	5

1. Marking all learners' errors will help learners avoid making similar errors in future writing.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Marking all learners' errors will only help learners produce a better second draft.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Marking learners' errors using error codes, e.g., SP for selling mistake is useful.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Using error codes are not suitable for all learners' levels of proficiency.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Some types of errors still recur despite the continuous corrections provided by teachers.	1	2	3	4	5
6. It is useful to indicate errors but without identifying the type of error.	1	2	3	4	5
7. It is useful to indicate learners' errors and correct them directly.	1	2	3	4	5

Part.2

1. Do you think that the currently employed strategy of marking all learners' errors in a piece of writing in the ELI is helping learners to improve their writing accuracy? Why do you think so?

2. Do you believe in the usefulness of using codes to signal the types of learners' errors as it used in the ELI? Why or why not?

3. If the strategy of marking all learners' errors were not standardized in the ELI, would you use the same strategy of marking all learners' errors? What is your personal theory behind that?

Part 3.

1. How long have you been teaching the English language?

    A) 1- 5   B) 6 - 10   C) 11 -15   D) 16-20   E) 20+

2. Is the English language your first language?

    A) YES   B) NO

3. What is your highest qualification?

    A) Bachelors'   B) Masters'   C) Doctorate   D) Others

Thank you very much for taking the time to respond!

About the author:

Hamdan Farhan Alzahrani is an English language lecturer at King Abdulaziz University (KAU) with a BA in English language from KAU and an MA in TESOL (Teacher Education) from The University of Manchester. He has been teaching English as a foreign language for more than ten years.