Matches or Mismatches? Exploring Shifts in Individuals' Beliefs About Written Corrective Feedback as Students and Teachers-to-be

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Abstract: This qualitative study was conducted to investigate participants' beliefs about the different types of written corrective feedback (WCF) when they were students and to explore their beliefs about the same issue when they became teachers-to-be. The study also examined the types of feedback that the teachers-to-be provided on an essay to identify any (mis)matches between their beliefs and actual performance. A total of 52 participants took part in this research, and the data were triangulated from a variety of sources: pre-participation essays, two rounds of semi-structured interviews with the participants (when they were students and when they became teachers-to-be), and the participants' own WCF on an essay. The data analysis revealed that the majority of the participants expressed positive attitudes towards WCF both as students and as teachers-to-be. Interestingly, their beliefs about the different types of WCF at those different stages were found to be generally congruent. When they were students, they expressed the preference for indirect, global, and unfocused WCF, and as teachers-to-be, they preferred the provision of direct, indirect, global, and focused WCF. Furthermore, the textual analysis of the participants' WCF revealed the presence of all types of feedback and that their beliefs matched their performance to a great extent. The study concluded with a discussion of the pedagogical implications of the findings and suggestions for further research.

1. INTRODUCTION

The extent to which written corrective feedback (WCF) can help second language (L2) learners improve their writing has been debated at length since Truscott (1996) argued that the practice is unproductive, destructive, and should be terminated. This debate has been fueled by the methodological issues in studies investigating this practice, which have led to conflicting findings (Ferris, 2004, 2006; Guenette, 2007). Nonetheless, a large number of scholars (e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Hyland, 2003; Ellis, 2008; Loewen, 2012; Sheen et al., 2009; van Beuningen et al., 2012) believe that WCF is indispensable for reducing errors and thus improving writing accuracy. As Schmidt (2001, p. 30) succinctly explains, "people learn about the things they attend to and do not learn much about the things they do not attend to."

Despite the substantial amount of research investigating the effectiveness of WCF in English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts, there is a scarcity of research on teachers' and students' beliefs about this practice. Although stated beliefs are not always reflected in actual performance (Borg, 2003), an awareness of teachers'

beliefs is needed when evaluating their pedagogical practice (Fives & Buehl, 2012). Previous empirical studies (e.g., Lee, 2009; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019; Montgomery & Baker, 2007) have provided evidence that teachers' beliefs and actual practices may conflict due to the presence of several constraints in the teaching context (e.g., institutional policy, exam requirements, and time limitations). Surprisingly, a common finding of the majority of those studies was that the students preferred to be corrected much more than their teachers believed was sufficient. This incongruity between teachers' and students' beliefs may have negative consequences on learning since students whose needs are not met may withdraw from the learning process (McCargar, 1993).

In this paper, I argue that in order for WCF to improve L2 writing, there should be sufficient correlation between students' and teachers' beliefs, on the one hand, and between teachers' beliefs and practices, on the other hand. Scholars (e.g., Barcelos, 2003; Kalaja, 2003) have emphasized the dynamic nature of beliefs, as they have been found to fluctuate and evolve over time. The current study, therefore, attempts to trace the possible shifts in individuals' beliefs when they take on different roles, more

specifically, when they progress from being English students to being English teachers-to-be (i.e., those who are fully trained and intend, at some point in the future, to become teachers). Encouraging teachers to reflect on their beliefs through their own perspectives as students could result in greater empathy for their students and greater awareness of the intricacies involved in writing. It could also represent a significant step forward towards making learning environments more learner-centered than teacher-centered, which could result in not only improved writing but also better overall language learning. This area of research is especially important in Saudi Arabia, where English is widely taught and used throughout the country as a foreign language. To the best of my knowledge, no similar study exists in the WCF literature. Previous empirical studies (e.g., Barcelos, 2003; Diab, 2005; Hamouda, 2011; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019; Montgomery & Baker, 2007) have investigated the possible differences in beliefs about WCF between teachers and students as separate groups of individuals.

The present study aims to address this gap in the literature by examining the participants' beliefs about the different types of WCF when they were students. It then follows up the participants to investigate their beliefs about the same issue when they became teachers-to-be, with the ultimate goal of exploring the extent to which their beliefs about WCF might have changed. The study also looks at the types of feedback the teachers-to-be provide on an essay to identify the possible (mis)matches between their beliefs and practices. The research was guided by the following questions:

(1) What were the participants' beliefs about the effectiveness of WCF and its different types when they were students?

(2) A. What were the participants' beliefs about the effectiveness of WCF and its different types when they became teachers-to-be?

B. Did the beliefs of the teachers-to-be change from when they were students?

(3) A. What types of WCF did the teachers-to-be offer on the provided essay?

B. To what extent did the performance of the teachers-to-be match their beliefs?

2. PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON WCF

Corrective feedback can be defined as "any feedback provided to a learner, from any source, that contains evidence of learner error of language form. It may be oral or written, implicit or explicit" (Russell & Spada (2006, p. 134). Several classifications of WCF have been proposed and employed in the literature (see, for example, Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Chandler, 2003; Ellis, 2008; Montgomery & Baker, 2007; van Beuningen et al., 2008). The two main types of WCF are direct and indirect feedback (Ellis, 2008). The former refers to the provision of the correct form of the learner's error, while the latter involves the indication of

the presence of an error without supplying the correct form. This can be carried out through several techniques, such as underlining, circling, highlighting, or coding the error. Research on direct and indirect WCF has provided evidence that they both can be effective for developing accuracy in student writing, due to their different functions. Direct WCF provides the learner with a model of the correct L2 form, whereas indirect WCF offers the learner the opportunity to develop independence and problem-solving skills. Both Chandler (2003) and Nicolás-Conesa et al. (2019), for example, reported the positive effects of direct WCF over the indirect form. Furthermore, a few studies (e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Sheen et al., 2009) have examined the influence of direct WCF on the use of specific grammatical forms (e.g., articles, the copular verb be, past tense forms, and prepositions) and have reported noticeable linguistic gains. In contrast, the findings of Robb et al. (1986) and Ferris and Roberts (2001) revealed that both direct and indirect WCF are useful in improving writing. Van Beuningen et al. (2008) also found short-term benefits for both types of WCF. Nonetheless, in a later study, van Beuningen et al. (2012) distinguished between their effects according to the type of error made. For example, only direct WCF was found to be effective with structural errors, whereas indirect WCF was more effective with nonstructural ones. These findings led researchers to suggest that "comprehensive CF is a useful educational tool that teachers can use to help L2 learners improve their written accuracy over time" (van Beuningen et al., 2012, p. 1).

WCF can also be local or global. The former focuses on the accuracy of the form, such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation, whereas the latter is concerned with how the writing content is presented, such as the organization of ideas and text coherence (Ashwell, 2000; Montgomery & Baker, 2007). Ashwell (2000) argued that both types are effective, but that it would be best to start by providing feedback on the content (i.e., global WCF) followed by feedback on the form (i.e., local WCF).

Furthermore, WCF can be focused (i.e., selective) or unfocused (i.e., comprehensive). Focused WCF refers to the provision of feedback on selected types of errors, whereas unfocused WCF involves the provision of WCF on most or all errors (Ellis, 2008). Previous empirical studies have yielded conflicting findings regarding the effectiveness of each type over the other. Kassim and Ng (2014), for example, found that focused WCF was more effective for promoting writing accuracy, whereas van Beuningen et al. (2012) reported that the students in their study gained more from unfocused WCF. Ellis et al. (2008) carried out an experimental study on the use of articles by Japanese EFL students and found that both focused and unfocused WCF were effective for developing accuracy in student writing.

Since different types of feedback have been found effective in different contexts, Larsen-Freeman (2019, pp. 104–105) argued that "it is far from clear which error

correction techniques are the most efficacious …. It is unlikely that there is one feedback strategy that is better than others for all occasions." Loewen (2012, p. 35) also proposed that "given that there is no consensus on the superiority of one type of feedback over another, it could be best to include a variety of feedback options."

Teachers' beliefs generally refer to "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true" (Richardson, 1996, p. 103). Similar to the results on the effectiveness of different WCF types, previous studies have not reached a consensus on the correlation between teachers' beliefs and their pedagogical practices. Some researchers have found them to be compatible, whereas others have reported that teachers' actual practices do not always reflect their stated beliefs. Montgomery and Baker (2007), for instance, investigated students' perceptions and teachers' self-assessments of WCF and their actual practices in an intensive English as a second language program. The findings revealed a good match between students' perceptions and teachers' self-assessments. Nonetheless, the students reported receiving more feedback than what their teachers reported giving. Therefore, the teachers' self-assessments and actual practices did not coordinate well. The same study also found that the teachers provided more local than global WCF on the students' errors, although they believed otherwise. Similarly, Lee (2009) examined the beliefs and practices regarding WCF of 26 teachers in Hong Kong. The results showed a general mismatch between their beliefs and practices, such as focusing on providing direct, local, and unfocused WCF despite stating a preference for indirect, global, and focused feedback. Although the teachers believed in the importance of students' taking responsibility for their own learning, their feedback did not offer the students enough opportunities to do so. Furthermore, the teachers used error codes, although they believed the students might not be able to interpret them well. Lee (2009, p. 19) concluded her research by pointing out, "while teachers in the study tend to attribute their practices to constraints imposed by institutional context and values, like exam pressure and a school policy that highly values error feedback, it is not certain whether these are real explanations for the mismatches or mere excuses that teachers use to justify their practices." The findings of the studies reviewed so far reveal that the way in which teachers' beliefs translate into their pedagogical practice is so complex that a complete alignment or misalignment should not be anticipated. A more recent study was carried out by Mao and Crosthwaite (2019), using a questionnaire and interviews with five writing teachers in China. The data analysis showed a general alignment between the teachers' beliefs about WCF and their pedagogical practices. However, there were several areas of discrepancy. The teachers were found to provide more indirect and local WCF than direct and global, although they stated the opposite. Moreover, the teachers were never observed to specify the total number of errors in each essay, although they believed they regularly did so.

The role of the learners' beliefs in L2 learning has attracted increasing interest in second language acquisition research. Studies have found that learners' beliefs can affect their attitudes towards the learning process, which will eventually impact their L2 development (Dörnyei, 2005; Gabillon, 2005). However, while WCF is a widespread practice across L2 writing contexts, there is a scarcity of studies investigating teacher and student beliefs about it in Saudi Arabia and the Arab world in general. Only two studies were located in this regard. Diab (2005) investigated Lebanese EFL students' preferences and beliefs about effective WCF. The findings revealed that most students preferred indirect and global WCF. In the Saudi Arabian context, Hamouda (2011) carried out a quantitative study to examine Saudi students' and teachers' preferences and attitudes towards WCF. The analysis of the questionnaire data showed that both teachers and students had positive attitudes towards WCF. Similar to Diab's (2005) study, the majority of the teachers and students expressed a preference for indirect WCF, especially in the form of underlining or circling the errors. A few students also stated a desire for direct WCF on their errors and a preference for local WCF. They gave priority to grammar correction, followed by spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary. This finding conflicts with that of Diab (2005), which suggests that contextual factors could influence students' preferences for specific types of WCF. Furthermore, unlike what their teachers believed, most students preferred to receive unfocused feedback on their writing.

3. METHOD

This section describes the participants in the present study and their selection process. This is followed by a description of the instruments used to collect the data and the procedures used in the data collection and analysis.

A. Participants

Snowball sampling was used to select the participants, based on the researcher's personal contacts and the participants' willingness to take part in the study. The potential participants were then requested to recruit additional participants from among their acquaintances (Ness Evans & Rooney, 2013). As Creswell (2003) pointed out, sample size in qualitative studies should be sufficiently large to obtain the data needed to illustrate the phenomenon of interest adequately. Creswell (2003) suggested including 5–25 participants for phenomenological research and 20–30 for grounded theory. Patten (2005) and Charmaz (2006) added that to obtain an adequate sample size in qualitative research, the criterion of saturation should be taken into account. Conceptual categories are considered saturated "when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of your core theoretical categories" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 113). Both suggestions were taken into consideration when determining the sample size for this study; therefore, the final sample size consisted of 52 participants (28 females

and 24 males). The participants' first language was Arabic, and their ages were between 22 and 24, with the average 23.3. All participants signed an informed consent form and were assured that taking part would be completely anonymous, and that all data would be treated confidentially and used for research purposes only.

B. Instruments and Data Collection

The data collection consisted of two stages. The first stage took place when the participants were senior students majoring in the English language, while the second one started approximately six months later, after the participants had graduated and were ready to become English teachers (i.e., teachers-to-be). The researcher collected the data from the female participants, while a male colleague with the same qualifications (PhD in Applied Linguistics and more than ten years' experience in EFL teaching) collected the data from the male participants. No type of recording was used, so extensive notes had to be taken.

In the first stage, the students were requested to write a descriptive essay in English about their role models. The researcher then provided WCF on the essays and presented them to the students during the semi-structured interviews to elicit their beliefs about the feedback provided. Subsequently, the researcher interviewed the students about their beliefs regarding the importance of WCF and their preferences for its different types (research question 1). The benefit of semi-structured interviews is that they typically include prepared questions, but the interviewer can depart from these to probe significant themes that emerge during the interviews. This type of interview thus offers great flexibility and yields rich data (Edwards & Holland, 2013). The interviews were conducted in English and lasted between 25 and 35 minutes.

The second stage started by conducting semi-structured interviews with the same participants, who were teachers-to-be by that time, to elicit their beliefs about the importance of WCF and its different types (research question 2). To examine the extent to which the participants' beliefs were reflected in their actual performance, they were requested to provide WCF on a descriptive essay provided by the researcher (research question 3). The interviews were conducted in English and lasted between 40 and 55 minutes.

C. Data Analysis

The data analysis consisted of two parts: (a) thematic analysis of the notes taken during the interviews and (b) textual analysis of the participants' WCF on the essay provided to them. The thematic analysis was carried out by coding the data and identifying general themes using the qualitative data analysis software NVivo. This was followed by revising and refining the categories and subcategories that emerged in light of the data obtained from the other sources. Finally, the frequency of each theme occurrence was calculated (see Braun & Clarke, 2006, for more details on this method).

The analysis of the participants' WCF started by coding each written intervention as a "feedback point" (see Hyland, 2003, p. 220). All feedback points, regardless of their locations (e.g., within the essay or in the margins), were included in the analysis and categorized according to the feedback type direct/indirect, local/global, and focused/unfocused. The total number of feedback points in each category was subsequently calculated.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Before discussing the results, it should be pointed out that the data analysis revealed several thought-provoking themes and subthemes pertaining to WCF effectiveness and types. However, due to space limitations, only those relevant to the research questions are presented in this study. Since no similar studies investigating the possible shifts in individuals' beliefs as they progress from being English students to being English teachers-to-be exist in the literature, the results of this study will be generally compared to the previous findings on WCF in the areas of EFL learners' beliefs, teachers' beliefs, and teachers' pedagogical practices.

Research Question 1

As students, all participants expressed positive attitudes to their previous teachers' WCF and believed it was indispensable for enhancing their writing. Only a small percentage of the students (13.46%) commented that they occasionally felt overwhelmed by their teachers' feedback, especially when their writing contained a relatively large number of errors that needed to be amended. Nonetheless, unlike the finding reported by Han and Hyland (2015), this feeling did not negatively impact the students' engagement with the feedback. Approximately two-thirds of the students (67.31%) reported that they always understood their teachers' feedback, and a similar percentage (65.39%) mentioned that they were often able to utilize the feedback to revise their writing. This finding is significant, as students' ability to interpret and act on their teachers' feedback is considered an essential component for evaluating the effectiveness of the feedback (see, for example, Simard et al., 2015). The students expressed a general preference for indirect, global, and unfocused WCF, as Table 1 shows.

TABLE 1. STUDENTS' PREFERENCES FOR WCF TYPES

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Direct	11	21.15
Indirect	41	78.85
Local	15	28.85
Global	37	71.15
Focused	13	25.00
Unfocused	39	75.00

As we can see, most students preferred making their own corrections to receiving corrections from the teacher. They welcomed the opportunity to figure out the correct forms of their errors rather than receiving them directly from their teachers. One student explained, "I have always been independent in my learning. I can use our coursebook and library references to work out the correct forms." Another commented, "I really prefer to correct my own mistakes. I find this technique quite effective in helping me remember the correct form in the future." This finding is in line with those reported by Diab (2005) and Hamouda (2011), whose participants were more inclined to receive indirect rather than direct WCF from their teachers.

Moreover, most students believed global issues deserved more focus than local ones. They gave priority to the development and organization of ideas, followed by supporting those ideas with adequate details. For example, one student commented, "When I wrote this essay. I spent a long time organizing my ideas and providing examples. That is why I was so glad to see you mostly concerned with the content of my essay." Another mentioned, "My main focus was on providing as many details as I could remember. I gave priority to the content and did not overwhelm myself with grammar or spelling." Although this finding supports that of Diab (2005), it conflicts with Hamouda's (2011) results, which showed that students preferred to receive more feedback on local issues, especially grammar. This inconclusiveness in findings supports Larsen-Freeman's (2019) argument that different types of feedback are more effective in different contexts, such that "it is far from clear which error correction techniques are the most efficacious …. It is unlikely that there is one feedback strategy that is better than others for all occasions" (Larsen-Freeman, 2019, pp. 104–105).

Furthermore, the students in this study believed that unfocused WCF was effective for developing not only L2 writing accuracy but also overall proficiency. One student stated, "I am not embarrassed by those red marks on my essay. Instead, I feel this feedback has provided me with a wealth of information that I can use to give a big boost to my English language learning." Another explained, "I really appreciate your effort in picking up all the mistakes in my essay. I believe that is what a good writing teacher should do. I feel more confident now about writing my next draft, as it will definitely be more polished than this one." This finding agrees with Diab's (2005) study, which revealed that most students favored unfocused feedback on their writing. It also supports van Beuningen et al.'s (2012) conclusion that the students in their study gained more from unfocused WCF.

Research Question 2

As teachers-to-be, the majority of the participants (94.23%) strongly supported the practice of providing students with WCF. An important consideration stressed by all of them was that the feedback should be constructive and should not discourage or diminish the students. More

than two-thirds of the teachers-to-be (71.15%) suggested that, in order for WCF to be effective, the student's proficiency level should be taken into consideration. For example, rather than overwhelming low-proficiency students with a large amount of WCF on their writing, teachers should aim to make their feedback as direct and focused as possible. This suggestion concurs with Lee's (2004) recommendation that teachers should provide direct WCF to beginners and indirect WCF to advanced learners. Zheng and Yu (2018, p. 22) also proposed that "teachers should intentionally explain or clarify their feedback to LP (low-proficiency) students to reduce confusion and enhance their cognitive engagement. They can do this by increasing the written explanations accompanying their feedback, especially when the feedback is indirect."

Only a small percentage of the participants (11.54%) expressed concerns about the students' interest in and appreciation of the teachers' feedback. This concern was also reported by a few teachers in Lee's (2009) research, who felt discouraged by their students' attitudes. More than half of the participants (53.85%) in the present study believed that to get around this issue, teachers should attempt to accommodate their students' preferences when providing WCF so they can utilize it in the most efficient way when revising their writing. The importance of accommodating students' preferences and catering to their needs has been emphasized by several researchers in the field of L2 writing (see, for example, Barcelos, 2003; Diab, 2005; Hamouda, 2011; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019; Montgomery & Baker, 2007). Table 2 presents the beliefs of the teachers-to-be about the efficacy of the different WCF types.

TABLE 2. BELIEFS OF TEACHERS-TO-BE ABOUT THE EFFICACY OF WCF TYPES

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Direct	25	48.08
Indirect	27	51.92
Local	11	21.15
Global	41	78.85
Focused	38	73.08
Unfocused	14	26.92

Although the participants expressed a strong preference for indirect WCF when they were students, Table 2 demonstrates that the number of teachers-to-be who preferred direct WCF was almost equal to those who preferred indirect WCF. The majority of the teachers-to-be, however, highly valued the provision of global and focused feedback on students' writing, in comparison to local and unfocused WCF. In line with the findings of Mao and Crosthwaite (2019), it appears that the difference in the participants' beliefs about the provision of direct vs. indirect WCF pertained to "their beliefs regarding whether the teacher or students should take responsibility for learning" (Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019, p. 54). Several

empirical studies have reported positive effects of both types of feedback on L2 writing (see, for example, Ferris & Roberts, 2001; van Beuningen et al., 2008, 2012). Some of the teachers-to-be in this study believed that direct WCF was easier for elementary-level students to comprehend and utilize for revising their compositions. For example, one participant mentioned, "I really believe that direct feedback on mistakes is much clearer and less challenging for students to use for revising their essays." Another mentioned, "Correcting mistakes, especially grammatical and lexical ones, directly can help students to recognize their mistakes immediately. They can then remember to be careful about them the next time."

In contrast, other teachers-to-be were against offering direct WCF to the students, arguing that providing the correct forms directly could be counterproductive, such that the students might become increasingly dependent on the teacher. This would deprive them of the opportunities they need to develop self-learning. These participants thus believed that, in the long run, indirect WCF was a more effective technique for students to correct their errors and enhance their writing proficiency. For example, one participant explained, "I would rather provide indirect feedback and urge the students to correct the mistakes by themselves. I do this for their own benefit as I do not want them to completely depend on me, which can be harmful to the whole learning process." Similar to the teachers in Diab's (2005) and Hamouda's (2011) studies, most of the teachers-to-be who favored indirect WCF (88.46%) indicated that their favorite form was underlining the error and providing an error code above it. They all agreed that error codes were a key component of the feedback.

In congruence with their beliefs as students, the majority of the teachers-to-be expressed a preference for offering feedback on the global issues of students' essays, mainly regarding the development and organization of ideas. They were less inclined to provide WCF on local issues, especially grammar and spelling. One participant explained, "What I am interested in when reading a composition is its content, how everything is woven together to make a nice, coherent piece of writing. So, the students should be encouraged to focus mainly on developing and organizing the ideas of their essays, and that's how they should be assessed as well." Another participant argued, "Grammar and mechanics are surely important, but I consider the ability to express one's ideas clearly and support them with sufficient details to be more important." This preference for providing global over local WCF confirms the findings of previous studies conducted in other EFL settings (e.g., Lee, 2009; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019; Montgomery & Baker, 2007).

Lastly, most teachers-to-be believed that WCF should be focused on the specific elements of students' writing. While this finding mismatches their preference for unfocused WCF when they were students, it is not unexpected. As students, the participants appreciated unfocused feedback more because they considered it a valuable opportunity to learn from their mistakes, which could eventually improve not only their L2 writing accuracy but also their overall proficiency. However, as teachers-to-be, they reported the importance of employing specific criteria for selecting feedback targets, which can be grouped as follows: relation to the course objectives, effect of the error on intelligibility, and frequency of the error. For example, a participant mentioned, "Teachers should mainly target the elements that are included in the syllabus in order to focus the students' attention on them." Another commented, "I prefer to focus on those errors that alter the intended meaning in order not to overwhelm the students with too many comments." Yet another participant stated, "Teachers need to draw the students' attention to the errors that take place over and over, so they do not continue to make them every time." Interestingly, these findings support those reported by previous studies on in-service teachers' beliefs about WCF in different L2 writing contexts (e.g., Han & Hyland, 2015; Kassim & Ng, 2014; Lee, 2009).

Research Question 3

The textual analysis of the WCF of the teachers-to-be on the essay provided to them revealed the presence of all types of feedback, although in different proportions. The total number of feedback points provided by the participants was 831, as presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3. WCF OF TEACHERS-TO-BE ON THE ESSAY

Type	Frequency	Percentage
Direct	439	52.83
Indirect	392	47.17
Local	228	27.44
Global	603	72.56
Focused	163	19.62
Unfocused	668	80.38

As we can see, the majority of the participants provided a mixture of direct and indirect, global, and unfocused feedback, which generally matched their stated beliefs. They provided the correct forms for some errors, while for others, they only indicated that an error was present and provided a related code for students to refer to when revising the essay. Almost an equal amount of direct and indirect WCF was found across the essays, which matched the participants' stated beliefs. Regarding the forms of indirect feedback, the participants predominantly underlined the errors and provided codes above them. This finding concurs with Lee (2009) and Mao and Crosthwaite (2019), who found that the teachers' beliefs and practices were congruent regarding the provision of error codes, in spite of the teachers' uncertainty about the students' ability to fully comprehend them and thus to subsequently utilize them when revising their compositions.

Furthermore, unlike previous studies in other EFL contexts (e.g., Lee, 2009; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019; Montgomery & Baker, 2007), the beliefs that the teachers-

to-be stated about the value of global WCF was supported by their practices. Most of them provided more WCF on global than local issues. The most highlighted global issues pertained to the organization of ideas (approximately 32% of the global WCF provided), followed by providing supporting details (26%) and coherence (19%). On the other hand, local WCF addressed such issues as grammatical accuracy (approximately 39% of the local WCF provided), lexical choice (27%), and spelling mistakes (18%).

On the other hand, the data analysis revealed a strong tendency among the participants to provide unfocused WCF. They preferred to point out most of the errors they found in the essay. In this case, the participants' beliefs about the importance of providing focused feedback to the students were not confirmed by their practices. When they were interviewed about the possible causes of this misalignment, most of the teachers-to-be (82.69%) explained that when they were asked to provide WCF, they

instinctively felt responsible for improving the essay to the greatest possible extent, which resulted in the provision of

comprehensive rather than selective feedback. While this finding confirms that of Lee (2009), it does not support some previous studies (e.g., Diab, 2005; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019) in which the majority of the teachers were observed providing focused WCF to their students. This difference can possibly be attributed to contextual factors. Unlike the present study, in which the participants were teachers-to-be, most previous studies took place in college settings where in-service teachers were overwhelmed by the workload and large class sizes and thus needed to focus their WCF on a specific set of errors (see, for example, Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019).

To sum up the findings of the present study, the differences in the participants' beliefs about the WCF types as students and as teachers-to-be and their actual performance are presented in Figure 1.
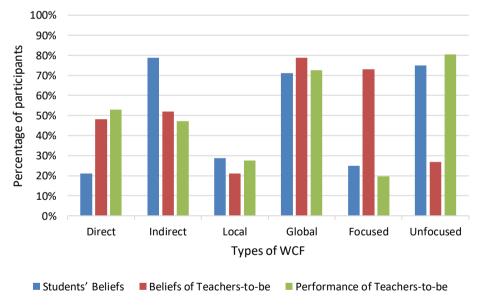

Figure 1. Differences in beliefs about WCF and performance

5. CONCLUSION

The majority of the participants in this study expressed positive attitudes towards WCF as students and as teachers-to-be. They generally believed that WCF was indispensable for developing L2 writing accuracy and overall proficiency. When they were students, they expressed the preference for indirect, global, and unfocused WCF. As teachers-to-be, however, they preferred the provision of direct, indirect, global, and

focused WCF. Interestingly, those beliefs generally matched the beliefs they expressed when they were students, which suggests that only a slight shift in their beliefs occurred. More specifically, the majority of the participants favored indirect and focused WCF when they were students, while when they became teachers-to-be, they preferred the provision of both direct and indirect unfocused feedback. The textual analysis of their feedback revealed the presence of all types of feedback and that their

stated beliefs matched their performance to a great extent. The only exception was their strong tendency to provide unfocused WCF despite their beliefs that they were more inclined to offer focused feedback.

Several pedagogical implications can be drawn from this study. First, identifying the beliefs that students and teachers hold about WCF could constitute the first step towards raising teachers' awareness about their students' needs and expectations around this important component of the learning process. Second, encouraging students to reflect on their WCF preferences could be a key element in creating effective student-centered learning environments. Lastly, teachers should realize that some mismatch between their beliefs and pedagogical practices is a normal occurrence that is not unexpected during one's professional career. Rather than regarding it as a performance deficiency, it could be utilized as an opportunity "to promote teachers' self-reflection and facilitate self-awareness of gaps that might exist between their stated beliefs and classroom practices, rather than to convince teachers to harmonize these two" (Kamiya, 2016, p. 218).

Although this study attempted to enrich our understanding of the relationship between teachers' and students' beliefs about WCF and their actual practices, much research in this area is still needed. First, there is a need for future replications in different educational settings, such as schools and colleges, especially in the Arab world. To expand on this area of inquiry, researchers might consider conducting longitudinal studies to explore the possible changes in beliefs about WCF and pedagogical practices as participants progress from being teachers-to-be to becoming in-service teachers. Furthermore, experimental studies examining the effect of teacher feedback on the accuracy in student writing would be of significant interest to both researchers and practitioners.

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