

# Perspectives and Practices Regarding Written Corrective Feedback in Swedish Context

A Case Study

Aparna Balachandran

Dept. of Language Education  
Course code: USX2AK  
Degree project 15 hp, second cycle  
Language Education  
Autumn 2017  
Supervisor: Tore Nilsson



Stockholms  
universitet

# Perspectives and Practices Regarding Written Corrective Feedback in Swedish Context

## **A Case Study**

**Aparna Balachandran**

## Abstrakt

Denna studie undersökte uppfattningar om praktiker när det gäller skriftliga återkopplingsmetoder för två lärare i engelska på ett svensk gymnasium. Projektet som utformades som en fallstudie undersökte också de kontextuella faktorerna som påverkar lärarnas kunskaper, övertygelser och skriftliga återkopplingsmetoder genom att samla in data med hjälp av Think-Aloud protokoll sessioner, halvstrukturerade intervjuer och analys av kommenterade studenttexter. Resultaten tyder på att det finns skillnader i lärarnas uppfattningar och faktiska praxis när det gäller att lära sig att skriva och tillhandahålla skriftlig återkoppling på grund av de kontextuella faktorerna. Resultaten visar också att lärarnas akademiska identitet, erfarenhet och institutionella krav tillsammans med andra faktorer som betyg, tid, studentmotivering och klassrummstorlek har påverkat lärarens beslutsprocess.

### **Keywords**

Written Corrective Feedback, Teacher cognition, Teachers as decision makers, Contextual factors

# Contents

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1. Aim and research questions .....	4
<b>2. Background</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1. Theoretical background .....	4
2.1.1 Teacher cognition .....	5
2.1.2 Written corrective feedback: Objectives and effectiveness .....	6
2.1.3 Recommended written corrective feedback practices .....	7
2.1.4 Written corrective feedback in instructional context.....	8
<b>3. Method</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1. Think-aloud protocol .....	9
3.2. Interview .....	10
3.3. Participants and setting.....	10
3.4. Data collection: Think-aloud Protocol and interview .....	10
3.5. Data analysis.....	11
3.6. Validity and reliability .....	12
3.7. Ethical considerations .....	12
<b>4. Results and analysis</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1. Approaches to teaching writing .....	13
4.2. Teachers' WCF philosophies and practices .....	14
4.2.1. Approaches to WCF .....	14
4.2.2. Type of errors to correct.....	15
4.2.3. Type of feedback.....	17
4.2.4. Challenges .....	18
<b>5. Discussion</b>	<b>19</b>
5.1. Teachers' stated beliefs and practices about WCF.....	20
5.2. Contextual factors determining teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices .....	21
5.3. Conclusion .....	22
<b>References.....</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Appendix 1.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Appendix 2.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Appendix 3.....</b>	<b>29</b>

# 1. Introduction

Written corrective feedback (WCF) is considered to have a pivotal role in second language (L2) writing and therefore, feedback and error correction strategies have been studied extensively from different theoretical perspectives. According to Hyland and Hyland (2006), research in the field of second language learning is constantly evolving and recent theories of language learning have resulted in significant changes in pedagogical practices which in turn have established the role of various feedback techniques in writing pedagogy. As a result, product oriented summative feedback has been supplemented by a more process oriented formative feedback, involving a variety of feedback strategies at different levels by combining teacher written feedback and peer or collaborative feedback. This shift from product oriented writing to process oriented writing from the 1970's onwards has underlined the significance of feedback in L2 writing and various theories of language learning such as the dialogic nature of writing, socio-cultural theories of learning promoting peer and collaborative feedback, genre theories about the nature of writing and theories about process oriented writing highlighted the potential of corrective feedback in generating opportunities for learning and student motivation. (Hyland & Hyland, 2006)

The existing body of research on written corrective feedback focuses mainly on its impact on student learning. There is an ongoing debate on the effectiveness of various types of corrective feedback (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2004; Truscott, 1996) but researchers have agreed upon the fact that there is no conclusive evidence regarding the effectiveness of written corrective feedback in different contexts. It should be noted that feedback provided by teachers is the most commonly practiced form of corrective feedback in classroom contexts and hence, attention should be given to the philosophies and practices of language teachers regarding corrective feedback. Even though error correction and feedback are closely associated with classroom practices, the majority of the existing literature on teacher cognition regarding corrective feedback is based on data elicited from outside the classroom contexts (Borg, 2015). Storch also points out that most of the data for understanding teacher cognition and feedback research is generated in laboratory-like conditions resulting in the lack of ecological validity and pedagogical relevance (Storch, 2010). Researchers have therefore emphasized the need for a context specific approach based on the actual practices within various pedagogical contexts. As a result, teachers' beliefs and feedback practices have gained importance in language learning research in recent years (Lee, 2014). Hence, it is essential to include teachers' voices in feedback research to address the issues and challenges in providing written corrective feedback.

Hyland & Hyland point out that despite the extensive research on corrective feedback conducted for the past three decades, many questions regarding feedback practices remain unanswered leaving teachers unsure about its full potential (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 83). Several reviews of the existing literature on corrective feedback also have identified a sizable gap in the research in inquiring what the teachers actually do while responding to student writing and why do they do it that way (Ferris, 2014, p. 7). So, in order to understand the needs of language instructors and learners, and to bridge the gap between research and practice, written corrective feedback research should be shifted to naturalistic pedagogic contexts. Moreover, Lee observes that the majority of feedback research has been carried out in first language (L1) and English as Second Language (ESL) college contexts in English-dominant countries (Lee, 2014, p. 2) and therefore, there is a growing need for the inclusion of the under-represented scenarios such as English as Foreign Language (EFL) and elementary and secondary school education contexts across the world. This project, therefore, intends to investigate the actual classroom practices

of high school teachers in providing written corrective feedback in the Swedish context in order to understand the current issues regarding written corrective feedback.

## **1.1. Aim and research questions**

This project aims at analyzing the beliefs and the actual written corrective feedback practices of two teachers in a high school in an urban area. Based on data obtained from qualitative research methods such as Think-Aloud Protocol (TAP) and semi-structured interview, the study intends to investigate teachers' knowledge and beliefs regarding written corrective feedback and the role of contextual factors in shaping language teachers' cognition and written corrective feedback practices. The study is designed after the research questions:

- What are teachers' stated beliefs about written corrective feedback?
- What are the contextual factors determining teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices?

# **2. Background**

## **2.1. Theoretical background**

This project analyses written corrective feedback practices in the Swedish context from the perspective of teacher cognition. As mentioned earlier, the majority of the research in corrective feedback practices is focused on the effectiveness of corrective feedback in enhancing student learning based on the data elicited from outside the pedagogical context (Chandler, 2003; Ellis, 2009a; Ellis, 2009b; Ferris, 2014; Borg, 2003; Truscott, 1996). Hence, incorporating teacher cognition as a variable in written corrective feedback research will be substantially beneficial in better understanding the issues and challenges faced by language instructors in providing corrective feedback (Mori, 2011).

Barnard and Burns state that “the management, motivation and sustainability of learning can be understood only by exploring what teachers believe and do in their specific working contexts” (Barnard & Burns, 2012, p. 2) because teachers as decision makers are responsible for putting into practice the principles and procedures mandated by various theories and methodologies. Kumaravadivelu also emphasizes the challenges faced by teachers as practitioners of methods in realizing these principles and practices in its purest form in the actual classroom contexts because the theoretical assumptions are not always derived from realistic classroom experiences (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 29). This implies that it is essential to consider how teacher cognition works in language learning in order to bridge the gap between theory and practice. According to Mori (2011), any additional information from the point of practitioners will be useful for researchers to understand the complex cognitive process behind teachers' corrective feedback practice, which is not represented extensively in existing feedback research. Such an understanding about the ways in which teachers respond to student writing will enable methodologists and curriculum developers to update and adapt the existing concepts and procedures in language teaching. Hence, it is important to take teachers beliefs, experiences and knowledge into account in order to implement new concepts and principles effectively in classrooms (Mori, 2011; Barnard & Burns, 2012).

### **2.1.1 Teacher cognition**

A conceptual change in the study of teaching had marked its beginning in the late 1960's as a result of the developments and innovations in cognitive psychology. This resulted in a growing interest in the impact of thinking on behavior, the recognition of teachers' role as active thinking individuals and the recognition of the limitations of the existing approach in conceptualizing a generalizable model of teacher effectiveness based on that (Borg, 2015). The implication of this conceptual change in education research, according to Borg, was a growing interest in the unobservable cognitive aspects behind teachers' classroom practices to deal with the growing challenges and demands in instructional settings (Borg, 2015, p. 7). Teacher cognition research therefore, takes its beginning in cognitive psychology with a strong interest in the ways in which knowledge and beliefs influence human actions.

In his seminal work on teacher cognition, Simon Borg defines teacher cognition as the 'unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching' which constitutes what teachers think, believe and know (Borg 2003, p. 81). According to Borg (2003), teacher cognition research ventures to answer some key questions such as what constitutes teacher cognition, how does it develop and how does it interact with teachers' learning and practices in the classroom. In an effort to answer these questions and to clarify the conceptual ambiguities associated with teacher cognition research, Borg reviewed 64 studies on teacher cognition, published between 1976 and 2002. He arrived at the conclusion that there are four major factors shaping teacher cognition at different levels and in various degrees and they are teachers' previous education, professional education and coursework, contextual factors and classroom practices. While teachers' early cognitions are shaped by their schooling followed by teacher training programs and professional coursework, contextual factors and actual classroom practices modify their existing cognitions. For instance, Borg points out that newly graduated teachers tend to follow recent pedagogical theories and methods that they have learnt during their professional training while experienced teachers create and internalize specific instructional practices according to the situational needs. Hence, contextual factors such as curriculum, instructional needs, student motivation and time have a significant role in teachers' decision making and professional development. (Borg, 2003)

Similarly, Dona M Kagan (1992) also suggests that since teaching as an activity situated in person, teachers' professional development is extremely subjective depending on various factors among which the uncertainties associated with classroom instruction plays a significant role. This implies that teaching is a form of problem solving in which teachers create and internalize an elaborate system of knowledge and beliefs to adapt their practice to the situational needs (Kagan, 1992). The teachers' role as decision makers is also emphasized as one of the characteristic features of the post-method era, which advocated a shift from the conventional single method approach in teaching to a context sensitive language education (Kumaravadivelu 1994). This implies that teachers as practitioners have to construct classroom oriented theories of practice out of their theoretical knowledge, classroom experience and experimentation (Kumaravadivelu, 1994). This process of constructing teacher autonomy is a part of the 'unobservable cognitive dimension of teaching' otherwise known as teacher cognition (Borg, 2003). The body of research on teacher cognition and its implication on education for the past two decades recognizes teachers as "active, thinking decision-makers who make instructional choices by drawing on complex, practically-oriented, personalised, and context-sensitive networks of knowledge, thoughts, and beliefs" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). An implication of this assumption is that teacher cognition is highly personalised by teachers' previous learning experience, professional training, institutional and contextual factors such as curriculum, textbooks and classroom practices. This means that teachers generate context specific classroom oriented instructional practices out of their knowledge, experience, assumptions and beliefs within the academic and administrative constraints. This applies to every aspect

of language instruction of which written corrective feedback has a pivotal role in writing pedagogy. In the classroom context, while responding to student writing, teachers make critical decisions on various aspects such as the choice of errors to respond, the appropriate corrective feedback strategies and the timing of corrective feedback (Ellis, 2009b). Written corrective feedback as response to student/ peer writing is an interactive and contextual real-world practice. It is therefore important to consider how teachers react to student writing and the factors determining teachers decision making in providing corrective feedback in specific classroom contexts.

### **2.1.2 Written corrective feedback: Objectives and effectiveness**

Hattie and Timperley give a broad definition of feedback as “information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one’s performance or understanding” (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 81). Feedback can be both positive and negative. Positive feedback is a confirmation from the teacher to validate a correct linguistic utterance by the student in order to encourage learning. Negative feedback on the other hand, is an oral or written comment from the teacher following an incorrect response by the student. Corrective feedback (CF) is therefore a form of negative feedback as it involves error treatment. It can be both oral and written. One distinction between oral corrective feedback and written corrective feedback (WCF) is that oral CF is mostly provided as part of the instruction within the classroom. WCF, on the other hand, is usually written responses provided by the teacher after reviewing student writings, which is not an immediate response as oral feedback. Hence, while providing WCF, teachers may have to address a number of issues in individual student writing ranging from mechanical errors to content problems using different strategies and methods. By doing so, teachers help students to “notice the mismatch between their interlanguage and target language” (Chandler, 2003, p. 293) which facilitates second language acquisition. WCF is therefore an important tool in drawing students’ attention to linguistic form.

However, the effectiveness of WCF is a topic of debate and there is no conclusive evidence regarding this. The debate on WCF started with Truscott’s (1996) case against the effectiveness of WCF in which he argued that WCF feedback is not only ineffective, but also damaging (Truscott, 1996). Based on Krashen’s assumptions, comprehensible input is sufficient for second language learning and if that condition is fulfilled, the learner will automatically acquire the necessary grammatical knowledge via Language Acquisition Device (Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013, p. 160). Error correction, on the other hand, makes students defensive and hence they avoid using complex linguistic constructions which in turn affects language learning. Drawing on Krashen’s observation, Truscott argued that WCF generates only a superficial form of knowledge which is called *pseudolearning* (Truscott, 1996, p. 345) which has a negative effect on learning. Hence, Truscott’s objections against WCF are that it can affect student motivation as it leads to stress and anxiety leading to simplified writing, and that error correction is a time consuming process that affects productive learning (Truscott, 1996). Pienemann & Keßler (2012) have also made a similar observation that it is impossible to teach a grammatical form through correction or by any means if the learner has not attained the right level of proficiency or in other words, the developmental readiness to acquire language (Pienemann & Keßler, 2012).

It should be noted that researchers have different opinions regarding the nature of L1 and L2 acquisition. While some researchers argue that it is sufficient to provide the same type of instructions to L2 learners as L1 students, others argue that L2 acquisition is significantly different from L1 acquisition. Therefore, research in the field of L2 acquisition should address the L2 learners’ linguistic gap in comparison with native speakers (Ferris, 2003, p. 16). Hence, Swain (2005) challenges Krashen’s (1987) argument that exposure to rich comprehensible input is the only requirement for L2 acquisition based on the empirical

evidence from French immersion classrooms in Canada (Swain, 2005). She emphasized that output as an active communication process promotes learning by encouraging the learners to test their acquired linguistic knowledge in authentic contexts. By doing so, learners pay attention to the structure of the target language and the gaps in their L2 knowledge and production. Hence, inviting learners' attention to specific linguistic features in the communicative process helps them to attain proficiency in L2 setting (Abbuhl, Gass, & Mackey, 2012). Long (1988) also holds the view that some attention to linguistic form is necessary in L2 instruction (Long, 1988). According to Bitchner and Storch, a growing body of research in recent years have reported potential advantages of WCF in L2 development and many of these studies are focused on the effects of WCF on the accuracy of L2 learners' written output (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). One of the advantages of L2 writing and WCF in L2 development, according to Bitchner and Storch, is that the written output is permanent unlike oral output and hence can be revisited by the learners, which provides an opportunity to develop metacognitive awareness about language learning. Furthermore, in written output, learners have additional time to think and therefore plan their linguistic utterances in writing (Bitchener & Storch, 2016).

### **2.1.3 Recommended written corrective feedback practices**

Studies on the effectiveness of WCF have systematically investigated the reasons for the failure to design effective corrective feedback strategies focusing on the impact of different variables such as the type of feedback, timing of feedback and other external contextual factors in L2 writing context. Summarizing the research of composition scholars, Ferris (2003), points out that teacher commentary on student writing is criticised as it is often used as a means to justify grades with excessive focus on errors and with a tendency to appropriate student writing. In this context, teacher commentary can demotivate students and make them comply with the teachers' wishes rather than focusing on the actual problems in writing. To avoid this, teachers should replace vague directives with text specific comments to communicate effectively with students. Moreover, teacher commentary should be treated as an ongoing conversation between the teacher and the learner in a larger classroom context. (Ferris, 2003)

Researchers have also examined the potential of different types WCF in second language learning based on the focus and form of the corrective feedback and also the types of errors teachers should address in teaching writing. According to Ellis, Loewen and Erlam,

Corrective feedback takes the form of responses to learner utterances that contain an error. The responses can consist (a) an indication that an error has been committed, (b) provision of the correct target language form, (c) metalinguistic information about the nature of the error, or any combination of these (Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006, p. 340)

Based on this definition, Ellis (2009a), has further summarised the discussions regarding the choice of errors to correct and the choice of corrective feedback strategy. Regarding the type of errors to correct, researchers suggest teachers should pay attention to global errors rather than local errors in student writings. Global errors are the errors that affect the comprehensibility of the text while local errors are the minor errors affecting single elements in a sentence. Ellis points out that there are two issues regarding the choice of errors and they are whether to correct all the errors or to select specific errors in student text. The former approach is extensive and unfocused while the latter is intensive and focused. Ellis highlights that methodologists often advise focused WCF as the best practice and emphasize the need to focus attention on a few types of errors rather than commenting on all the errors in student writing. Similarly, indirect feedback where the error is located and indicated without providing correction is advocated by researchers as it encourages self-correction (Ellis, 2009a; Ellis, 2009b; Ferris, 2014). According to Ferris (2014) indirect feedback is perceived to be beneficial in long-term student development when compared to direct feedback and similarly, Ellis (2009b) highlights the advantages

of indirect feedback over direct feedback as it facilitates guided learning and problem solving. He also reviews a number of studies, comparing the effectiveness of using metalinguistic clues or error codes to indicate an error, and concludes that using error codes or brief grammatical descriptions in the margin promotes noticing and hence enhances accuracy. The use of electronic resources in providing WCF is also mentioned by Ellis (2009a) in which he observes that providing a brief comment on each error and with links to resources showing the correct form can encourage self-correction and metalinguistic awareness in students. (Ellis, 2009a; Ellis, 2009b)

#### **2.1.4 Written corrective feedback in instructional context**

In an instructional context, WCF can have multiple functions such as to inform students about their expectations and evaluation of the assignment and also used as ‘feed forward’ for students to improve and enhance their performance in future writing. According to Ferris (2003) written feedback aims at informing students whether or not their text conveys the intended meaning effectively, helping them understand the potential questions and concerns from the perspective of an audience to encourage self-evaluation and finally provide students with a motive for revision (Ferris, 2003) . However, a number of factors can influence teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding corrective feedback. According to Diab (2005), the form and focus of teachers’ commentary on student writing are significantly varying depending on the genre, the setting, limitations such as time and the size of the class and other factors such as the specific time during the semester and also the requirements of the students. Similarly, contextual factors such as teachers’ academic identity, institutional and curricular demands and teachers’ own personalities can have an impact on their beliefs and practices (Diab, 2005; Li & Barnard, 2011).

In a case study conducted in a high school in Hong Kong, Amy Tsui (1996) describes the contextual factors creating problems for the teacher and the teacher’s decision making in the instructional context to resolve the problem. In an attempt to resolve students’ anxiety and demotivation to write, the teacher was asked to introduce process writing in her classroom which turned out to be highly effective according to the teacher and the students. However, the teacher had to revert to product writing as it required much longer time to complete each task and the students ended up writing fewer texts in comparison with other classes. Another problem the teacher experienced was that the students started to slip in terms of grammatical accuracy which would disadvantage students in examinations and assessments. Consequently, the teacher was not encouraged to continue with process writing by the institution. According to Tsui, this is an example of how curricular constraints override teachers’ attempts to execute methodological innovations in teaching. However, the case study reveals that the teacher, out of her dissatisfaction with product approach, adapted her practice by modifying process approach by integrating process and product-oriented approaches. Tsui points out that this demonstrates how teachers create their own personal knowledge system out of situational needs. (Tsui, 1996)

## **3. Method**

This project is designed as a case study involving two participants for a number of reasons. The aim of this project is to understand how the knowledge, beliefs and experiences of teachers shape their written corrective feedback practices in classroom contexts. Hence, this project resorts to case study as a methodology as it is effective to analyse the WCF practices of teachers in detail. Moreover, it is effective

and practical to conduct case studies as it involves a limited number of participants and sites. Small samples can however, provide data that is otherwise not represented in research involving large sample size. Since case studies can provide insights into the complex and dynamic aspects of language learning and human interaction, this method is particularly useful in studying the perspectives and practices of teachers about corrective feedback. (Duff, 2012)

This case study is guided by the conceptual framework based on teacher cognition research, theories and previous research and assumptions on corrective feedback. Since this project aims at having an in-depth understanding about the feedback practices of teachers in a specific context, qualitative research methodology is used to elicit data. Qualitative research method is considered as an effective practice in studying participants in their naturalistic setting and hence it suits the purpose of this study (Richards, 2009). According to Mackey and Gass, “the term qualitative research can be taken to refer to research that is based on descriptive data that does not make (regular) use of statistical procedures” (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 162). Qualitative research aims at the careful and detailed description of data elicited from studying individuals and events in their natural setting, without altering the contextual factors. Since this project intends to take the contextual factors affecting teachers’ decision making into account qualitative research method will be effective to get an insight into the phenomenon at a micro level. In other words, qualitative research will be helpful in getting an emic perspective, an understanding of the concept from the perspective of the participants, which is the objective of this study (Mackey & Gass, 2005, pp. 163-164). Therefore, this research involves data triangulation by using multiple data types to obtain an objective understanding of the phenomena from the perspective of the participants in their natural context. The methods used to elicit data for this study are Think-aloud protocol, semi-structured interview and written text samples from students.

### **3.1. Think-aloud protocol**

Originally used in psychological research, Think-aloud protocol (TAP) is considered as an effective method for understanding cognitive processes involved in context-free tasks (Barnard & Burns, 2012, p. 129). TAP is a type of verbal report in which participants are required to speak aloud their thought while they perform a given task. Verbal reports are categorized based on the temporal frame and the level of details in recording. TAPs are concurrent verbal reports as it is collected while the participants perform the task. Concurrent verbal reports are further categorized as non-metalinguistic, in which the participants verbalize their thoughts per se, and metalinguistic in, which the participants are required to verbalize additional details such as explanations and justifications for the actions involved in performing a task. Non-metalinguistic concurrent verbal reporting is used in this project because this project is interested in analyzing how teachers think while they evaluate student writing. While evaluating a student text, the teacher has to make decisions based on a number of factors such as the ways in which he or she has prepared the students before carrying out the task, the rubric and the knowledge requirements, the knowledge level of the student, her own knowledge and experiences. Based on that the teacher has to choose appropriate feedback strategies considering the type of errors, feedback timing and even the effectiveness of different types of feedback. This involves complex and dynamic cognitive procedures which are otherwise unobservable. TAP is therefore, a suitable method to observe the cognitive aspects of teachers’ decision-making process by encouraging them to verbalize what they actually think while they carry out the task. In that way, the strategies used by the teachers to treat different types of errors can be observed. (Bowles, 2010)

## **3.2. Interview**

Interview, on the other hand, is one of the most commonly used instrument for data elicitation that has an important role in case studies (Friedman, 2011). Interview as a data elicitation method helps to investigate the problem at hand from the participants perspective. The purpose of the interview questions and the aim of the interviewer is to stimulate participants reflections on a specific topic. The interviewer shouldn't therefore, dominate the interview, but provide supportive feedback to encourage the participants to discuss the topic in detail. It is therefore, an effective tool in case studies as it helps the researcher to investigate different perspectives of the participants. Hence, this project employs semi-structured interview, which falls between unstructured and structured interviews, as a data elicitation method. In a semi-structured interview, the interviewer prepares an interview protocol with a set of questions focusing on the topic and the research questions. Unlike structured interviews, semi-structured interviews use open ended questions, which can be further developed according to the participants response and the needs of the research. Friedman identifies some generalized guidelines for semi-structured interviews and the need to avoid closed ended questions is one of them. Similarly, 'leading questions' imposing a point of view or leading to specific types of responses should be avoided. Interview questions should be comprehensible, and they should not be complex. The interviewer should be focused on one thing at a time rather than asking multiple questions at once. (Friedman, 2011)

## **3.3. Participants and setting**

Two teachers in English from a high school in Stockholm participated in this study. Teacher 1 has both English as her first subject and Spanish as her additional subject and she is working with students who attend Social Science programme. Teacher 2 has English as his first subject and German, Leadership and Organization Economics as his additional subjects. He belongs to the Economics department. Teacher 1 has less than ten years of experience in teaching while teacher 2 has been working since 1999 and he has been participating in various continual teacher education programmes during his career as a teacher. Both teachers are from Sweden and Swedish is their native language. This case study focuses on the WCF practices of the teachers in teaching their first subject, English in their classrooms.

## **3.4. Data collection: Think-aloud Protocol and interview**

The teachers were asked to carry out a writing task in their respective classes. A writing task from a previous National Test in English was used for this purpose for authenticity and the task was to write to a weekly magazine discussing different kinds of temptations people today are faced with. The teachers were asked to prepare the students as they usually do, and the students wrote the task as an in-class essay during a one-hour lesson. The essays were then collected, and two random texts were chosen for each teacher to evaluate as part of the TAP sessions at a suitable time and place. The interviews were scheduled two days after the respective TAP sessions. Both the TAP and the interview were carried out entirely in English.

Before evaluation, the teachers were provided with an informed consent form (Appendix 1), and information on the procedure of TAP session as follows:

You are expected to verbalize whatever comes to your mind while evaluating the text. You should keep talking. You may ask question while doing the task, but I may not answer them. I will not tell you when

to stop the task. You can stop whenever you feel the task is complete or if you feel uncomfortable with the task (Appendix 3).

Two texts were chosen for each teacher and the first task in the TAP sessions were carried out as a trial. Permission from the teachers were sought to be present during the TAP sessions to make field notes.

The TAP sessions were started with greetings followed by an informal briefing of the procedure as mentioned above. I repeated the information in the consent form orally for them and their permission was sought before recording the sessions. The participants were asked if they have any further questions before they started the evaluation. Once they started the TAP session, I sat down against the participants in order to make field notes and to observe their facial expressions and body language while doing the task. I remained silent throughout the sessions and did not interfere during the sessions other than gesturing them to speak whenever necessary. However, I reviewed the pilot session of the TAP with my participants and suggested improvements in the process before they started the actual task. The time, date, venue and the name of the participants were marked in the field notes.

The follow up interviews, spanning approximately 30 minutes, were carried out two days after the TAP sessions. The interview questions (Appendix 2) were formed after listening to the Think-Aloud recordings and the questions were open ended. Such information as justifications and explanations for their decision making was elicited through interview questions and discussions formulated considering the verbal reports and the marked student texts. Hence, the semi-structured interview incorporates stimulated recall to certain extent as it is conducted after the TAP sessions and the questions were prepared in reference to that, seeking clarifications for the strategies used by the participants in providing WCF. For instance, the question number (8), *Do you attempt to correct all the mistakes in the text?* (Appendix 2) has sub questions seeking for clarifications on the teachers' practices regarding selecting specific errors in student texts. In the interview protocol, the interview ends with a discussion with the participants by asking for further clarifications on the marked student texts. However, the interview questions were designed after the data obtained from the TAP and starting with the direct written questions in the interview protocol, the interviewer already initiates discussions on teachers' feedback practices during the interview itself. Furthermore, this project focuses also on the typology of written corrective feedback, based on Ellis' classification (Ellis, 2009a), and hence the questions from number 5 – 9 are formulated after this, without directly referring to the terminology provided by researchers. This is to make sure that the questions are not very complicated with theoretical jargons so that the participants feel comfortable to discuss their reflections on their use of different strategies in classroom.

Following the interview, the participants were asked to respond to a single preference survey question in which they were required to mark how important it is for them to address different error types, such as mechanical errors, lexical errors, grammatical errors, organizational problems and content problems in student essays (Appendix 2). The TAP sessions and interviews were audiotaped using a mobile phone voice recorder application to avoid filtering of information. Field notes were taken to supplement any missing data. Finally, the marked student essays were collected from teachers as a support material for analyzing the TAP sessions and the interviews. Moreover, the marked student essays have written comments from the teachers, which is an important source of data.

### **3.5. Data analysis**

A thematic content analysis of the collected data was done after transcribing the recorded interviews and TAP sessions. Content analysis, according to Friedman, is an approach to analyse qualitative data

by finding patterns using systematic coding procedures (Friedman, 2011, p. 191). In order to understand teachers stated beliefs and practices regarding WCF, the data was categorized based on the type of errors (Global/Local), Type of feedback strategies used based on Ellis' (2009a) classification and the challenges faced by teachers in teaching writing and providing feedback. Data from both interview and TAP is thus analysed and categorized to find patterns. The results obtained were developed and refined to look for the contextual factors determining teachers WCF practices.

### **3.6. Validity and reliability**

Bowles (2010) points out that the challenges to validity can vary according to the type of verbal reports and the potential challenge to the validity of concurrent reports is reactivity because “it is not known whether the act of verbalizing while completing a task is reactive, acting as an additional task and altering cognitive processes rather than providing a true reflection of thought” (Bowles, 2010, p. 14). In other words, the act of verbalising the thoughts while performing the task imposes an additional cognitive processing on the participants which can affect the way in which they perform the task. However, non-metalinguistic verbalisations are largely non-reactive because the participants are not required to provide additional information during verbalization of their cognitive process (Bowles, 2010, pp. 14-15). Hence, according to Bowles (2010), non-metalinguistic verbal reports are fairly accurate even though they might slow down processing as the participants might take additional time to verbalize their thoughts. In order to minimize reactivity and to ensure validity, this project has employed non-metalinguistic TAP and additional information and explanations were gathered using semi-structured interviews, conducted two days after TAP sessions. Interviews were purposefully scheduled two days after TAP in order to avoid giving the participants explicit details that might affect the accuracy of verbal reports. Moreover, the semi-structured interview was designed to supplement the data obtained from non-metalinguistic TAP sessions, stimulating the participants to explain and justify their decisions during task performance. Furthermore, this project has followed the guidelines provided by Bowles (2010) to ensure validity of TAP sessions by providing uniform verbalization instructions to both participants. Instructions included a short description of the project, the rationale for thinking aloud and general instructions about how to think aloud (Appendix 3). The participants were given opportunity to perform a warm-up task and to ask for clarification before they started the actual task. The participants were reminded to continue thinking aloud throughout the process using gestures without disturbing the cognitive process. (Bowles, 2010, pp. 120-121)

Finally, this project has used multiple data types which can be compared for validation of results. The use of multiple data types generates both etic and emic perspectives which is effective in terms of validity but can be logistically challenging (Duff, 2012). Triangulation of data in which multiple research methods and multiple sources of data are used in a single investigation is recommended as it helps in ensuring reliability and validity of research (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

### **3.7. Ethical considerations**

The participants in this study were contacted via email along with a letter of information describing the aim and the design of the research. Since the data collection methods involved recording the TAP sessions and interviews using a voice recorder application, this project has followed the guidelines provided by Swedish Research Council by assuring anonymity of the participants (Swedish Research Council, 2017, p. 15). A consent form (Appendix 1), assuring that the materials collected will only be

used for this project and that any use of the information contained in the material would not reveal the participants name and identity. Moreover, the consent form informed the participants that both the TAP and interview would be recorded and disguised extracts from the material would be quoted in the thesis. The participants were also informed about their right to withdraw from this study at any time without providing any specific reason to do so. In addition to that, the information in the consent form is repeated orally and the consent for recording the tasks were sought before each TAP sessions and interview.

## 4. Results and analysis

The results of this research are presented and analysed in this chapter with reference to the research questions. The findings and their interpretation are presented under the thematic categories discussed in data analysis section.

### 4.1. Approaches to teaching writing

When asked about their approach to teaching writing, both teachers emphasized the significance of pre-writing activities in providing sufficient input in their classroom. The pre-writing activities consisted of brainstorming for ideas and discussions on various perspectives, themes and focus of the writing task. Both teachers reported that they always tried to provide examples, which are often advanced texts so that the students will be familiar with various textual patterns. Both teachers mentioned that they prepared their students to be familiar with the genre or the type of the essay they are going to write, as shown in Extracts 1 and 2.

I try to show them essays where there is structure in it so that they not only hear it from me, but they can also actually see a good example for what structure is .... try to exemplify many times, as often as I can... (Extract 1: Interview, teacher 1)

According to teacher 2,

So, whenever they select the subject, they need to focus on having lots of possible angles to that subject, in order for them to write a convincing essay... I try to... in different ways, exemplify that... I have sample text. Very often I can have quite an advanced one... (Extract 2: Interview, teacher 2)

Teacher 1 reported that she prefers to focus on the overall structure of the essay and language as a whole rather than providing explicit grammar instructions during the prewriting activities or while providing WCF.

“(When) we talk about writing, we talk less about grammar and more about structure and language as a whole. More that you have to be formal and have a big variation in your language..., should have a more advanced language than what you have when you speak” (Extract 3: Interview, teacher 1).

Teacher 2 also suggested the importance of cohesion in writing and he reported that he prepared his students to write a ‘convincing’ essay.

So... I work with building the subject, building the perspective, building the angles... for the students. ‘How can I address this? What’s my point? What is a convincing introduction? Why would I want to continue reading that...?’ (Extract 4: Interview, teacher 2)

Therefore, pre-writing activities in class included discussions on how to write thesis statements, topic sentences and convincing introduction. However, it is evident from the interview that the teachers

mentioned some of the linguistic features of writing tasks such as, how the language of writing differ from everyday spoken language, the use of passive form in formal writing and the strategies to achieve cohesion in writing. For instance, teacher 1 made the contradicting statement (see Extract 3), that she chose to talk about grammar in particular during pre-writing and when she provides feedback because of the knowledge requirement dictated by the curriculum in which fluency is an important aspect.

We talk more about that (linguistic aspects), we talk about grammar because of the knowledge requirement...that, it needs to have fluency which you kind of lose if you don't have correct grammar, but that's like the only thing within the knowledge requirement which actually hints that you need to grade the grammar. (Extract 5: Interview, teacher 1)

According to her, the text loses fluency if the students make grammatical errors. For her, fluency is the only thing in the knowledge requirement that suggests the need to grade grammar according to the Swedish curriculum.

## **4.2. Teachers' WCF philosophies and practices**

This section presents a detailed analysis of the teachers' stated beliefs and practices regarding WCF according to the aspects identified in section 3.5. The analysis focuses on four such aspects, which are approaches to WCF, types of errors to correct, type of feedback and the challenges faced by teachers in providing WCF. The results are presented and analysed in the respective subsections.

### **4.2.1. Approaches to WCF**

Teacher 1 reported that she provides feedback, often oral feedback, on a regular basis to her students. She mentioned that she makes her students write two long essays every semester, which are assessed and graded by the teacher. Detailed feedback for those essays are given by the teacher orally and in writing. She talks to her students individually, justifying the grade and providing suggestions for the next time.

I try to talk to everyone whenever I hand their essays back... And when I give those back I always try to talk to them, like 'you have got this grade, and this is why...look at this...maybe you could improve this...think about this next time'... (Extract 6: Interview, teacher 1)

She mentioned that grading is also a motive for her to make students revise their written assignments. If she does not have enough material to grade a student, or if the students' performance is not satisfactory, she will make the students revise and improve the essay before grading.

I kind of test every knowledge requirement many times during the year. But if I can see, may be in March, or like beginning of April that I don't have enough to grade someone..., to give them a grade in June, I will make them rewrite. (Extract 7: Interview, teacher 1)

Teacher 1 also reported that she prefers to talk to them rather than provide WCF and that she does not make students rewrite their essays in normal cases. She chooses specific students to have individual writing conferences based on their performance and knowledge level.

Teacher 2 reported that he has an elaborate way of responding to student writing and he uses technology significantly in providing WCF. He makes his students share their written assignment on *Google Documents* so that he can watch them write and can provide comments instantaneously.

I give them feedback... in writing... in *Google*. They also can comment or disagree with me, in writing... like 'I don't agree. I think I actually pointed this out...' Sometimes we have an online discussion on certain aspect... (Extract 8: Interview, teacher 2)

All the student writings will be thus saved in a folder as a portfolio for each student, which both the teacher and the students can revisit to assess development. He makes sure that the students revise the texts based on his feedback by asking them to change the colour of the text once they have rewritten the specific sections or have resolved the issues in the texts. Also, he reported that he meets his students individually at least twice during the course to discuss their performance and to suggest improvements based on the portfolio. One of the advantages of responding to student texts digitally, according to him, is that the whole process becomes a communicative activity providing the teacher and the students with an opportunity to respond in real time. Teacher 2 believes that WCF is very efficient and effective, if combined with digital technology. Moreover, it helps him document students' progress over a period of time and the permanency of such a procedure helps students to revisit and reflect on their performance.

#### **4.2.2. Type of errors to correct**

Teacher 1 believes that the most important aspect of a written text is structure, both the structural framework and 'the inner structure'. By inner structure, she means the organisation of thoughts and ideas in an essay. She justifies this by quoting the phrase 'relativt strukturerat' from the criteria for grade E in curriculum (Skolverket, 2011, p. 61)

Immediate attention would be, if the texts lack structure completely, on both inner structure and the actual structure. It says... 'relativt strukturerat' on the E level of the knowledge requirement and if you can't find that in a text, it's definitely an F. No matter how good the text is. (Extract 9: Interview, teacher 1)

Therefore, teacher 1 strongly believes that WCF should only focus on the global errors such as errors that affect comprehensibility. Local errors, according to her, do not actually affect the flow of the text and hence are not a concern in writing.

If it is a linguistic error, I do nothing. Because, I think that doesn't matter... It doesn't stop the essay from having fluency, it doesn't stop the essay from being easy to understand and follow. It doesn't stop the structure and nothing like that... And someone who has English as their mother tongue wouldn't have a problem understanding the essay. (Extract 10: Interview, teacher 1)

She mentioned that she does not correct all the errors in student texts and if she finds a linguistic error in student writing, she normally leaves it untreated. According to her, a couple of errors in the text does not affect the comprehensibility of the essay. Neither does she provide the students with the correct linguistic form if she locates an error in a text, unless the students repeat the same errors, such as subject-verb agreement, in their writing. However, she gives the students suggestions to improve problems at content and organizational level.

On the other hand, teacher 2 believes that both the overall structure and the details matter in writing and even if grammar is not mentioned explicitly in the curriculum, it is an integral part of writing. According to him,

The broad strokes of the adaptation to topic or genre and all those things are really important... But I think also the, the grammar and vocab is very important, for the overall impression. If you have a great essay in terms of structure and adaptation, ...the fluency is lacking for the reader if there are lot of disturbing errors". (Extract 11: Interview, teacher 2)

Therefore, he emphasized that teachers should pay attention to errors concerning the overall content, organization and the structure of the essay and also, to the minor errors like grammar and vocabulary. However, the teacher believes that correcting everything in student texts is not a good practice. Therefore, he does not correct all the mistakes in student texts unless it is an exceptionally good essay. He said that he, normally focuses on providing positive feedback and always look for the trend in selecting specific errors to correct.

During TAP, Teacher 1 focused mainly on variation and fluency in the text and made explicit comments on the organization of the essay, as shown in Table 1. She commented also on the clarity of expression in the introductory paragraph and made remarks on the student's choice of words well adapted to the subject.

...short but efficient...hmm... introduction... about temptations and it makes...hmm... the subject pretty clear... (Extract 12: TAP, teacher 1)

It's well balanced... hmm...if you see to...to...hmm...the introduction and the main body and the conclusion(s)..., or...the conclusion. The conclusion is really good (Extract 13: TAP, teacher 1)

When the data obtained from TAP was colour coded, it was observed that teacher 1 focused mostly on organization and structure of the essay. She made fifteen comments on structure, organization, variation and fluency while six comments were on formal issues such as prepositions, spelling mistakes and subject-verb agreement. Moreover, most of the negative comments were on the formal issues in the text. Teacher 2, as shown in Table 1, made explicit and specific comments on both organization and form equally. The teacher expressed frustration when the student made repeated grammatical errors. For instance,

Hmm... sub-verb...*has...sees*...too bad she has so many verbs, that's a bit disturbing. (Extract 14: TAP, teacher 2)

Organization, content and form were given equal importance in his comments and he made altogether sixteen comments on the organization of the essay with special attention to thesis statement, topic sentence and cohesion. However, the teacher does not make explicit comments on fluency and variation. Teacher 2 commented on nineteen formal errors on grammar, such as genitive problem, subject-verb agreement and spelling during TAP.

The two participants, therefore have different preferences when it comes to the type of errors that should be given immediate attention. When the marked student texts were examined and compared with the interview and TAP data, it became evident that teacher 1 has left many local errors untreated. Those errors were not located in the text while she commented extensively on the structural framework of the essay such as introduction, body and conclusion, along with fluency and cohesion. Her comments on language form were mostly focused on the implicit grammatical practices such as syntactic fluency and hence she encouraged variation in student writing. However, her statement that she occasionally corrected the errors repeated frequently in the text, was not consistent with her practice. Even though

*Table 1: An overview of the type of issues targeted by the teachers during TAP*

Type of issues	Teacher 1	Teacher 2
Content	4	4
Organisation	3	8
Fluency	3	0
Repetition	3	0
Style	2	4
Grammar	1	11
Mechanics	3	4
Vocabulary	2	4

the teacher commented on the informal use of language during TAP, she did not mark or provide any written comments on the student's use of contractions throughout the essay.

Teacher 2 on the other hand, holds the view that both global and local errors should be addressed while providing WCF. According to him, grammar and vocabulary is as important as content and organization of the text. Analysis of the TAP data and the marked student texts reveals that the teacher's approach conforms with his beliefs. He has made explicit comments on grammatical, lexical and mechanical errors in student writing along with content and organisational problems. However, the marked student text revealed that the teacher has commented on majority of the linguistic errors in the written texts on contrary to his statement that he does not correct all the mistakes in student texts.

### **4.2.3. Type of feedback**

When asked about the type of feedback they provide, teacher 1 reported that she provides very little written feedback on student texts and when she does, she provides indirect feedback by locating the error by marking it in the text. She reported that she uses error codes to locate repeated errors, but never provides the students with the correct linguistic form. The teacher mentioned in the interview that she often uses metalinguistic clues to the nature of the error by using error codes. She reported that she provides elaborate comments on repeated errors but does not comment on every error in the text.

if it's something that keeps coming back...Yes. But I don't underline or circle or make comment to every mistake". (Extract 15: Interview, teacher 1)

Even though she commented on errors such as subject-verb agreement issues during TAP, she did not provide any kind of metalinguistic clue to the errors. On the other hand, she located the error by underlining it within the text. When asked about this, she mentioned that she preferred oral feedback to WCF and hence the errors were located for her to identify the issues in the text to discuss later with the student. However, this was in contradiction to the statements during interview.

Teacher 2 provided metalinguistic corrective feedback combined with electronic corrective feedback by using error codes and a hyperlink to a concordance file that explains and exemplify the correct usage. He keeps a separate document with explanations and examples for grammatical structure, vocabulary, phrases, organization, thesis statement, topic sentence and genre. He uses error codes while providing feedback with a hyperlink directing to this document which enables the students to refer to the linguistic forms with specific examples.

I have a link pasted, link to another *Google Document* that I use for improving English, which is focused primarily on grammar and vocab issues. I have a set number of abbreviations. So, they can always through the course access this document. So, there you have both grammar issues but also thesis statement and topic sentences. Both the broad strokes and the details..., everything from the spelling to interpunction to... or punctuation and... pronouns or word order or word formation and so on... (Extract 16: Interview, teacher 2)

He said that he normally focuses on providing positive feedback and always looks for the trend in selecting specific errors to correct. He also mentioned that he highlights the texts in different colours suggesting different levels of improvement needed so that the students will not be discouraged to see so many errors marked in their text. It should be noted that he works in the department of Economics and he teaches two other subjects, Leadership and Organization and German. Hence, he works with cover letters and job applications in his classroom and he mentioned that he is very strict with the linguistic features in such instructional contexts. He has a more extensive procedure when it comes to teaching writing cover letters and job applications and he usually prepares the students beforehand to write multiple drafts and to expect more comments on each draft.

When they write job applications and cover letters..., I am very strict with that. I have prepared them...that you are gonna be seeing a lot of corrections probably...so be ready for that. And then they work really hard to get better and then they will get another feedback... like still some red, but... it takes a lot of time to do that. (Extract 17: Interview, teacher 2)

The Data from TAP and the evaluated student texts were in confirmation with his claims. Also, his statement that he focuses on combining positive feedback with constructive WCF was in alignment with his practice. Teacher 2 expressed appreciation while reading the text such as “very promising”, “she has really improved”, “good”, “she has actually picked up” and “it’s good”. However, he provided corrective feedback on a number of grammatical, lexical and mechanical errors in the text by commenting on subject-verb agreement, verb form, punctuation, genitives and spelling, even though he reported that he only looked for recurring errors in such cases. Teacher 2 concluded his comments on student texts as follows:

If she improves...hmm... thesis statement in the introduction...and...works harder on subject verb agreement and...hmm...just more idiomatic phrases...hmm...she can reach even higher, but this will be a C. hmm...ya...she has improved. (Extract 18: TAP, teacher 2)

During the TAP sessions, both teachers provided positive comments on student texts. Teacher 1’s comments on the text were mostly positive; out of 300 words in the transcribed data, more than 200 words were positive. According to teacher 1,

And for comments to the students I would say... that even though a lot of the text is...hmm... it has a variation, you need to...perhaps find another word for ‘temptation’ because it keeps coming back throughout the text many many times and it...it’s...hmm...when you’ve read it a couple of times it’s the only...word...that you actually see... And look at for some...some...easy, silly, spelling mistakes and... Otherwise well done! (Extract 19: TAP, teacher 1)

She also mentioned the positive aspects of the text in the beginning, using words like “good”, “well-adapted”, “nice” and “positive”.

#### **4.2.4. Challenges**

According to teacher 1, the most challenging aspect in teaching writing is time. She reported that even though writing multiple drafts helps students to improve fluency and accuracy, it is impossible to do that every time the students perform writing tasks because of limited time and the size of the class.

I wish that... I did that every time... I try to do it as many times as possible... To have them write something and I will collect it and... give them comments and give it back and... keep doing that...because it takes forever and... I have 33 students in my classes. (Extract 20: Interview, teacher 1)

Therefore, she resorts to peer feedback as a means to overcome these constraints and also limits the revision process to larger essays that they write during the course.

According to teacher 2, teaching students how to plan an essay with a thesis statement, convincing introduction and logical paragraph divisions with topic sentences (Extract 4) is the challenging part in teaching writing, as the students may not always understand these concepts.

I stress the importance of that because it helps them... First, it’s like a... a bit challenging, like they don’t understand what is it and... what’s the point...? (Extract 21: Interview, teacher 2)

So, he provides advanced texts as examples to his students in order to make them notice how these aspects are used in ‘good writing’. He mentioned that he employs a genre-based approach and process writing approach in his class.

Both the teachers observed that time and workload are the most challenging aspects in providing WCF. Teacher 2 referred to institutional and contextual factors such as convincing the students why they received a certain grade. Both the teachers pointed out that they have 33 students in their classrooms and keeping up with deadlines and providing feedback to each student after completing every written task is time consuming. Moreover, making students understand what the problem is and how to resolve it is a demanding process. Teacher 1 pointed out that WCF may not be always worth the time invested by the teacher because the students are too young to process it in an effective and responsible manner.

I am not sure that they read, but I write...I have to say...I am not sure...if they read, I am not sure they understand what the problems are. (Extract 22: Interview, teacher 1)

It should be noted that the participants differ in their belief about the effectiveness of WCF which is reflected in their classroom practices. Teacher 1, for instance preferred to talk to her students and provide oral feedback because she believed that WCF is not an effective strategy with young learners. She believed that even if she writes comments on student writing, they may not read her comments or if at all they take the initiative to read her comments, they may not understand the problem and how to resolve that problem. However, teacher 2 believes that WCF is very effective if it is provided with positive feedback as well. According to him, WCF is necessary in the Swedish context because even if students are very fluent in speaking due to exposure to English language, they lack 'precision', or in other words, accuracy in writing.

Swedes tend to have too good self-confidence about their English skills...because they understand a lot, speak fluently very often. But they are not so precise... (Extract 23: Interview, teacher 2)

During the interview, he mentioned that from his experience he has learnt to adapt according to the needs of the students and to communicate his philosophies efficiently with his students. For instance, the teacher mentioned,

So, I have learnt more now...they need to feel that I am there...seeing what they do...they don't necessarily need to have my comment all over... (Extract 24: Interview, teacher 2)

While describing his approach to WCF during the interview, he reported that out of his experience, he has successfully learnt to prepare his students to take responsibility in their learning. Furthermore, both teachers mentioned that they attend teacher conferences and teacher improvement programs on a regular basis and hence they were aware and updated about the theories and methodologies in language teaching. However, as practitioners they have to negotiate with their professional environment to realize their beliefs and knowledge regarding language teaching.

## 5. Discussion

The aim of this research is to analyse the philosophy and actual practices of teachers in providing WCF in their classrooms and the contextual factors behind them. In this chapter, the results of the study are discussed to address the research questions in relation with background literature. The two research questions in consideration here are

- What are teachers' stated beliefs and practices about WCF?
- What are the contextual factors determining teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices?

The conclusion section which follows, includes the discussions on the strengths and weaknesses of this study, the didactic implications and future research.

## **5.1. Teachers' stated beliefs and practices about WCF**

The first research question in this study sought to investigate teachers' stated beliefs and practices about WCF, which is identified as a part of process oriented formative feedback by Hyland and Hyland (2006). Therefore, teachers' approaches to teaching writing were analysed in the previous chapter. The results from this study demonstrate that the teachers recognise the importance of process writing and the need to provide abundant comprehensible input in language learning as pointed out by Krashen and Truscott (Krashen, 1987; Truscott, 1996). Using advanced example texts as a guide, the teachers make their students familiarise and internalize the use of specific vocabulary, transition words, phrases and passive constructions so that the students can practice them in their own writing (see Extract 1 & 2, Approaches to teaching writing). However, disparities in beliefs and actual practice were observed during TAP. Even though the teachers discussed extensively on familiarising the students with different types of texts during the prewriting sessions, they did not make any comments on the genre of the essay during the evaluation process. It should be noted that the given student assignment demanded certain formal features in writing and the genre of the essay was relevant in the context of evaluation.

When it comes to teaching writing, teacher 1 believed that the most important aspect to teach is the overall structure of the text. She stated that she talks more about structure and cohesion, during pre-writing instructions (Extract 3, Approaches to writing). However, she contradicted this statement later in the interview while describing her actual procedures (Extract 5, Approaches to writing). The data from TAP also suggested that the teacher looked for implicit grammatical aspects such as syntactic fluency, grammatical cohesive devices and the adaptation of grammatical structures according to the specific type of writing. Despite the disparity in her beliefs and practice, teacher 1 is referring to implicit linguistic features in writing by emphasizing the significance of fluency and variation in student texts. The importance of this practice is identified and discussed in detail by Frodesen (2014) as it helps writers to 'expand their repertoire of linguistic choices' (Frodesen, 2014).

The teachers' beliefs about teaching writing are reflected in WCF approach as well. Teacher 1 in this study believed that providing corrective feedback on global errors is beneficial in improving student writing rather than focusing on local errors. This is one of the recommended feedback practices by Ellis (Ellis, 2009b). The teachers believed that they provided focused or intensive feedback by commenting only on recurring errors in student texts. However, the data from TAP and the sample texts showed that teacher 2 commented extensively on student texts while the teacher 1 left even recurring errors untreated.

Teacher 1 stated that she preferred oral feedback to WCF for a number of reasons. She believed that her students are too young to process the comments on linguistic form. In other words, the teacher believed that error correction is not an effective strategy to teach her students grammatical forms as they may not have the developmental readiness to process her comments (Extract 22, Challenges). This belief is in alignment with the observations made by Pienemann and Keßler (Pienemann & Keßler, 2012). According to teacher 1, WCF is time consuming making it difficult to practice each time the students perform writing tasks (Extract 20, Challenges & Extract 17, Type of feedback). Researchers like Weigle have identified this as a disadvantage of WCF, that it is time-consuming and open to misinterpretation by the learners (Weigle, 2014, p. 233). Moreover, teacher 1 believed that written comments can have a

negative effect on student motivation as too many comments in the written text can trigger anxiety. This is one of the objections raised by Truscott in his case against WCF (Truscott, 1996).

Teacher 2 also agreed to this observation and hence he prepares his students to expect more comments while writing certain types of texts (Extract 17, Type of feedback). However, he believed that WCF as a communicative practice, is significantly effective in improving accuracy. According to him some attention to linguistic form is necessary in Swedish context as the students tend to slip in terms of accuracy in writing despite being fluent in oral production (Extract 23, Challenges). Therefore, teacher 2 believed that it is essential to incorporate WCF into the communicative context by making it a dialogue between the teacher and the student, using information and communication technologies (Extract 8, Teachers' WCF philosophies and practices). This reflects Ferris' (2003) observation that teacher commentary should be treated as an ongoing dialogue between the students and the teacher in the larger classroom context (Ferris, 2003).

Both teachers acknowledge WCF as a means to invite attention to the gaps in students' knowledge and language production by providing them information regarding their current writing skills (Extract 8, Teachers' WCF philosophies and practices). The teachers' approach to feedback strategies varied in the degree of details provided on student texts. It is evident that the teachers' choice of feedback strategies was motivated by their beliefs. For instance, teacher 1 located the errors in text without providing additional information using error codes or metalinguistic clues. She reported that she located the errors to understand the pattern of errors so that she can provide focused oral feedback on repeated errors. Consequently, she left many local errors in the student essay untreated, even though she noticed those errors and thought about them during verbal reporting sessions. Most of her comments were directed towards the organizational and content problems and she always had the knowledge criteria as reference while evaluating the text (Extract 9, 12 &13, Type of errors to correct). Teacher 2, on the other hand had an elaborate approach to WCF as he believed that accuracy is as significant as fluency (Extract 11, Type of errors to correct). Unlike teacher 1, he employed a range of WCF strategies such as error coding, metalinguistic clues and electronic feedback to make teacher commentary effective. The difference in approach can be attributed to their beliefs about the effectiveness of WCF and their preferences regarding fluency and accuracy which are determined by their personalised and context sensitive cognitive dimension of teaching as discussed by (Borg 2003).

## **5.2. Contextual factors determining teachers' knowledge, beliefs and practices**

Several researchers have recognized teachers as active thinking decision makers, constructing and internalising personalised theories of knowledge to adapt their practice to satisfy instructional needs in classroom contexts (Borg, 2003; Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Kagan, 1992). The second research question addressed the role of contextual factors in shaping the cognitions of the participants in this study. Here, a number of factors influencing the two teachers' decision-making process in providing WCF are identified.

As discussed earlier in the background literature, the difference in WCF approach is determined by factors such as the teachers' academic identity, experience, curricular demands, the need to justify the grades, time, setting and the size of the class (Diab, 2005; Tsui, 1996). In this study, both teachers have made explicit comments on these factors. Teacher 1 reported that even though she believed that process writing is significantly effective in teaching writing, time constraints and the size of the class makes it

difficult for her to practice it, in her class (Extract 20, Challenges). However, teacher 2, who has more than fifteen years of experience, has modified his approach to overcome this difficulty, by preparing his students to work intensively without anxiety (Extract 19, Type of feedback).

Teachers' academic identity plays a role in motivating their instructional choices. Teacher 1, for instance works with students who attend Social Science programme while teacher 2, belongs to Economics department. Therefore, teacher 1 focuses more on communicative activities that help students to develop necessary skills to understand, analyse and express ideas fluently in an organized manner (Extract 11, type of errors to correct & Extract 17, Type of feedback). On the other hand, teacher 2 focuses on English for specific purpose as he makes his students write cover letters and job applications on a regular basis. The need to focus on linguistic structures used to express the form-meaning relationship as discussed by Frodesen (2014) is significant in this context (Frodesen, 2014, p. 242).

Finally, both teachers mentioned the need to align their instruction and assessment according to the curricular needs and to justify the grade that they provide for students (Extract 6 & 7 Teachers' WCF philosophies and practices). In order to document and report both formative and summative assessments of each class consisting of 33 students, the teachers have adjusted and adapted their practices according to the contextual needs mentioned above. Previous research (Diab, 2005; Li & Barnard, 2011; Tsui, 1996), supports these observations made in this study based on the data from interview and TAP.

### **5.3. Conclusion**

In summary, the study confirms that teachers' beliefs, knowledge and practices are influenced by their background and contextual factors as recognised by previous research. Among other factors, grading, curriculum and institutional requirements determined their practice in classroom contexts. The study observed that there are discrepancies in the beliefs and actual practices of teachers in teaching writing and providing WCF due to the contextual demands. The findings in this study have pedagogical implications for practice as it addresses the challenges and frustrations experienced by teachers as practitioners. In that way, the study takes forward the discussion to help teachers understand, analyse and overcome such difficulties. It also emphasizes the need for teachers to evaluate and adapt their own practices to utilise the complete potential of WCF in language teaching.

Most of the challenges associated with this study was due to the difficulty in finding participants in limited time. Generalizations were made based on the available data and the case study did not intend to extent its scope to a larger context. For instance, this study has not addressed aspects such as teachers' previous educational and professional training. Research in teacher cognition emphasizes that teachers' experience as students is very significant in understanding their beliefs and practices. Therefore, this study analyses only a limited number of factors shaping teacher's philosophies and practices. Moreover, this project has also some limitations from the methodological perspective. This case study involves only two participants in a restricted setting, primarily because of practical limitations such as time and availability of participants. Furthermore, limitations in time made it impossible to carry out a pilot study and hence, the study encountered problems with data collection methods. However, these limitations were overcome to certain extent by conducting an in-depth analysis of teachers' practices and beliefs using multiple data types. Triangulation of data is the strength of this study as the data from different sources facilitates cross verification and hence ensure validity.

The follow up of this study therefore should pursue a closer examination of the WCF practices using a broader sample by overcoming the aforementioned constraints. Future research might extend the study

over a longer period of time and observe the effectiveness of WCF practices in improving student writing. It is essential to consider how and to what extent the students benefit from WCF. A diversity in participants and location, considering the multicultural classrooms in Sweden, can provide valuable insights into teacher identity and practice.

# References

- Abbuhl, R., Gass, S. M., & Mackey, A. (2012). Interactionist approach. In S. M. Gass, & A. Mackey, *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 7-23). London: Routledge.
- Barnard, R., & Burns, A. (2012). *Researching Language Teacher Cognition and Practice : International Case Studies*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Bitchener, J., & Storch, N. (2016). *Written Corrective Feedback for L2 Development*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Borg, S. (2003). Teacher Cognition in Language Teaching: A Review of Research on What Language Teachers Think, Know, Believe, and Do. *Language Teaching*, 36(2), 81-109.
- Borg, S. (2015). *Teacher Cognition and Language Education: Research and Practice*. London: Bloomsbury.
- Bowles, M. A. (2010). *The Think-Aloud Controversy in Second Language Research*. New York: Routledge.
- Chandler, J. (2003). The Efficacy of Various Kinds of Error Feedback for Improvement in the Accuracy and Fluency of L2 Student Writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12, 267-296.
- Diab, R. (2005). Teachers' and Students' Beliefs about Responding to ESL Writing: A Case Study. *TESL Canada Journal*, 28 -43.
- Duff, P. A. (2012). How to Carry Out Case Study Research. In A. Mackey, & S. M. Gass, *Research Methods in Second Language Acquisition : A Practical Guide* (pp. 95-116). Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell.
- Ellis, R. (2009a). A Typology of Written Corrective Feedback Types. *ELT Journal*, 63(2), 97-107.
- Ellis, R. (2009b). Corrective Feedback and Teacher Development. *L2 Journal*, 1(1), 3-18.
- Ellis, R., Loewen, S., & Erlam, R. (2006). Implicit and Explicit Corrective Feedback and the Acquisition of L2 Grammar. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 28(2), 339-368.
- Ferris, D. R. (2003). *Response to Student Writing: Implications for Second Language Students*. London: Routledge.
- Ferris, D. R. (2004). The “Grammar Correction” Debate in L2 Writing: Where are we, and where do we go from here? (and what do we do in the meantime ...?). *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 13(1), 49-62.
- Ferris, D. R. (2014). Responding to Student Writing: Teachers' Philosophies and Practices. *Assessing Writing*, 19, 6-23.
- Friedman, V. (2011). How to Collect and Analyze Qualitative Data. In A. Mackey, & S. M. Gass, *Research Methods in Second Language Acquisition: A Practical Guide* (pp. 180-200). Chichester: Wiley Blackwell.
- Frodesen, J. (2014). Grammar in Second Language Writing. In M. Celce-Murcia, D. M. Brinton, & M. A. Snow, *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 238-253). Boston: Cengage Learning.
- Hattie, J., & Timperley, H. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, 77(1), 81-112.
- Hyland, K., & Hyland, F. (2006). Feedback on Second Language Students' Writing. *Language Teaching*, 39(2), 83-101.
- Kagan, D. M. (1992). Implication of Research on Teacher Belief. *Educational Psychologist*, 27(1), 65-90.
- Krashen, S. D. (1987). *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall International.
- Kumaravadivelu, B. (1994). The Postmethod Condition: (E)merging Strategies for Second/Foreign Language. *TESOL Quarterly*, 28(1), 27-48.
- Lee, I. (2014). Feedback in Writing: Issues and Challenges. *Assessing Writing*, 1-5.
- Li, J., & Barnard, R. (2011). Academic Tutors' Beliefs about and Practices of Giving Feedback on Students' Written Assignments: A New Zealand Case Study. *Assessing Writing* 16, 137-148.

- Long, M. H. (1988). Focus on Form in Task-Based Language Teaching. *University of Hawai'i Working Papers in ESL*, 16, 35-49.
- Mackey, A., & Gass, S. M. (2005). *Second Language Research: Methodology and Design*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Mitchell, R., Myles, F., & Marsden, E. (2013). *Second Language Learning Theories*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Mori, R. (2011). Teacher Cognition in Corrective Feedback in Japan. *System*, 39(4), 451-467.
- Pienemann, M., & Keßler, J.-U. (2012). Processability Theory. In S. M. Gass, & M. A. *The Routledge Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 228-246). London: Routledge.
- Richards, K. (2009). Trends in Qualitative Research in Language Teaching Since 2000. *Language Teaching*, 42(2), 147-180.
- Skolverket. (2011). Läroplan, examensmål och gymnasie gemensamma ämnen för gymnasieskola 2011. Stockholm. Retrieved from Skolverket: [https://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publikation?\\_xurl\\_=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwtpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D2597](https://www.skolverket.se/om-skolverket/publikationer/visa-enskild-publikation?_xurl_=http%3A%2F%2Fwww5.skolverket.se%2Fwtpub%2Fws%2Fskolbok%2Fwtpubext%2Ftrycksak%2FRecord%3Fk%3D2597)
- Storch, N. (2010). Critical Feedback on Written Corrective Feedback Research. *International Journal of English Studies*, 10 (2), 29-46.
- Swain, M. (2005). The Output Hypothesis: Theory and Research. In E. Hinkel, *Handbook of Research in Second Language Teaching and Learning* (pp. 471-483). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Swedish Research Council. (2017). *Good Research Practice*. Retrieved from Vetenskapsrådet: <https://publikationer.vr.se/en/product/good-research-practice/?lang=2.235844289.1114807949.1517250881-447017702.1517250881>
- Truscott, J. (1996). The Case Against Grammar Correction. *Language Learning*, 4(2), 327-349.
- Tsui, A. B. (1996). Learning How to Teach ESL Writing. In D. Freeman, & J. C. Richards, *Teacher Learning in Language Teaching* (pp. 97-119). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Weigle, S. C. (2014). Considerations for Teaching Second Language Writing. In M. Celce-Murcia, B. Donna, & M. A. Snow, *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 230-245). Boston: Cengage Learning.

# Appendix 1

## Think-Aloud Protocol Informed Consent Form

I hereby acknowledge my free and willing participation in the Think-Aloud protocol session and the interview designed in connection with this research project.

I understand that \_\_\_\_\_ will take notes and record my interview and my speech as I “think aloud” while reading through the written texts I have agreed to evaluate, and that she/he will use these recordings only for research purpose.

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this study or decline to answer any question if I feel uncomfortable in any way during the TAP session or the interview.

I also understand (1) that no one except \_\_\_\_\_ will listen to my recording, (2) that the disguised extracts from the TAP- session and the interview may be quoted in the thesis and (3) that any use of the information contained in the recording will not reveal my name or other information that could identify me.

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Participant’s Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name, contact information and signature of recorder \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix 2

## Interview Protocol

### Interview Questions

1. Briefly describe your educational background and experience as a teacher
2. Describe your approach to teaching writing in your classroom (Do you provide writing prompts? How do you prepare students before writing tasks? Do you make students write multiple drafts? Do you use peer feedback? Do you use teacher-student writing conferences?)
3. In your opinion, what kind of errors in a written text should be given immediate attention?
4. Describe your approach to providing feedback to your students.
5. What are the strategies you use to respond to students writing?
6. Do you usually provide the students with the correct linguistic form?  
Yes – Why?  
No – Then what do you usually do? Do you underline/circle/locate the error in the text? Or Do you comment on the margin that there is an error?
7. Do you use error codes? Or Do you use numbers in the text to draw attention to the grammatical description provided in the margin?
8. Do you attempt to correct all the mistakes in the text?  
Yes – Why?  
No – Do you select specific errors? How and why?
9. Do you use electronic feedback? (hyperlink)
10. How do you respond to multiple drafts of student texts? To which draft do you usually provide error correction?
11. To what extent do you rely on the rubric/knowledge requirement by Skolverket? Do you find it difficult to interpret Skolverket's document?
12. For you what is the most challenging aspect in providing feedback to your students?
13. In your opinion, how effective is error correction in improving student writing?
14. How do contextual factors such as time, work-load, curriculum and institutional policies affect your approach?

How important it is for you to address the following issues in student texts?

Type of errors	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important
Mechanical errors				
Lexical errors				
Grammatical errors				
Organizational issues				
Content issues				

# Appendix 3

## Think-Aloud Instructions

### Background of the study

This is a research project designed in connection with the course *Självständigt arbete för ämneslärare i språk inom KPu, HT 17* for the partial completion of the teacher degree programme “*Kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning för ämneslärarexamen - humaniora och samhällsvetenskap*” at Stockholm University. I am interested in understanding the stated beliefs and attitudes of teachers in Swedish schools and this study is designed to analyze how teachers think when they give feedback to their students. This project aims at analyzing teachers’ stated beliefs and practices regarding WCF in the Swedish context by observing and recording the WCF practices of teachers in English and their knowledge and beliefs on WCF using TAP and interviews.

### Instructions

You will be asked to correct two randomly selected student texts and ‘think aloud’ while performing the task by trying to verbalize what you think when you do the correction which will be recorded with an audio recorder.

- I want you to say out loud everything you think while you correct the student texts. But you don’t have to explain or justify your thoughts.
- You will be provided with a warm-up task as a trial. I will record that as well. You may ask for clarifications before we start the actual task
- You can stop the task at any time if you become uncomfortable
- You may ask questions at any point in the process, but I may not answer them
- I will not tell you when you have completed the task; you must determine this on your own
- I am testing the process, not the participant. So, any difficulties are my fault, not yours

Stockholm University  
SE-106 91 Stockholm  
Telephone: +46(0)8 – 16 20 00  
[www.su.se](http://www.su.se)



**Stockholms  
universitet**