

# Saudi EFL Learners' Preferences of the Corrective Feedback on Written Assignment

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## Abstract

The aim of the current study is to investigate the Saudi English as a foreign language (EFL) learners' preferences for corrective feedback on written assignments. This mixed-method study used a closed-ended Likert scale questionnaire that was adopted and adapted to suit the participants under investigation. Additionally, an open-ended question was used to gain more insight. Both instruments were completed by 114 Saudi female EFL learners whose ages ranged from 12 to 13 years old and who were studying in the seventh grade at a private school in Jeddah. The instruments were given to the learners after 6 weeks of implementing three different types of feedback on written assignments. The quantitative part of the study was descriptively analysed using SPSS to find the learners' preferences in corrective feedback, and a one-way ANOVA was used to find the differences between learners' preferences among groups. The qualitative part of the study was thematically categorised and manually analysed using Excel. The findings revealed that the learners' preferences did not vary according to the type of corrective feedback. However, the vast majority of learners preferred having constructive feedback on how to correct their mistakes. Additionally, learners preferred the use of electronic devices to receive corrective feedback. This study suggests that teachers consider learners' preferences on corrective feedback so that they can incorporate these into their teaching plans.

**Keywords:** English as a Foreign Language (EFL), corrective feedback, learners' preferences, Padlet, electronic feedback

## 1. Introduction

English language teachers use corrective feedback (CF) to enhance and support the learning process. As a result, teachers tend to vary the method in which they give feedback in English classrooms regarding the student's skills, types of mistakes and the situation. Consequently, English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers use different strategies, direct and indirect CF, so that learners can become aware of their errors and try to avoid them in the future. Moreover, Chen Hsieh, Wu and Marek (2017), Kaya (2015) and Sangeetha (2016) used electronic feedback since most electronic tools have engaging features. Some studies have shown that students learn better when utilising electronic CF (Al-Kathiri, 2015; Al-Okaily, 2013; Al-Shehri, 2011). Despite the varied strategies of giving CF, English teachers might provide learners with CF that is not effective or sometimes does not match the learners' preferences. Hence, it is essential in the learning and teaching process to consider EFL learners' preferences in order to promote English learning. Therefore, the aim of this study is to examine EFL learners' preferences of the CF that they receive from their English teacher on their written assignment.

### 1.1 Learners' Preferences

Preference, as defined by Aydin and Ayranci (2018), is when a person selects one thing over another because they favour it. Questionnaires and interviews are used in research to measure EFL learners' CF preferences. According to Ferris (as cited in Ellis, 2017), although the positive effect on learning EFL has been confirmed, perceptions of CF are varied.

In this regard, EFL teachers need to be aware of the differences between their learners' preferences and their own and prioritise the former (Chung, 2015; Diab, 2015; Han, 2015) Mohammad & Rahman, 2016; Zarifi, 2017). Consequently, Al Hajri and Al-Mahrooqi (2013) encouraged teachers to give clear written CF using the student's preferred type, as this helps learners improve their writing abilities and skills and motivates them to take charge

of their own learning (Hosseiny, 2014; Mohammad & Rahman, 2016; Rassaei & Moinzadeh, 2011; Zarifi, 2017). Teachers are required to carefully plan for written CF strategies (Ferris, Lui, Sinha, & Senna, 2013; Han & Hyland, 2015), and learners need to be trained on how to use the provided CF (Diab, 2015; Elwood & Bode, 2014). Moreover, Diab (2015) and Mohammad and Rahman (2016) suggested that learners' mistakes should be discussed orally so that the students can become more aware and understanding of the CF. Studies in this respect have shown various preferences among EFL learners at the university level, the school level and in other contexts.

### *1.2 University Learners' Preferences*

Regarding EFL learners' perceptions of CF at the university level, several studies have been conducted and have revealed contradictory results. For example, university-level EFL learners in the studies by Marzban and Sarjami (2014), Sato (2013) and Wang (2014), which were conducted in Japan, Iran and China, respectively, agreed that peer CF is effective. However, Wang (2014) discovered that this effectiveness decreases over time according to learners' relationships, attitudes, proficiency levels and knowledge in addition to the time allocated to the CF. In contrast, the results found in Hajian, Farahani and Shirazi's (2014) study showed that Iranian EFL learners prefer teachers' correction over peer and self-correction. Hernández Méndez, Cruz and del Rosario's (2012) results agreed on the effectiveness of teachers' correction in addition to oral CF. Chen, Nassaji and Liu (2016) examined 64 Chinese university EFL learners' perceptions and preferences regarding written CF and found that the participants had positive attitudes towards CF and preferred direct over indirect CF. Chung's (2015) and Ishii's (2011) studies came to the same conclusion due to the lack of understanding that occurs with indirect CF (Zheng & Yu, 2018). However, the results of an Indonesian study conducted by Mohammad and Rahman (2016) indicated that learners prefer indirect CF, as they believe that the provision of clues that they can use to correct their mistakes improves their writing performance.

Elwood and Bode (2014) examined 410 male and female EFL learners in Japan to determine their perceptions and preferences for teachers' CF in their writing classes. The learners showed positive attitudes towards CF in general and preferred being given handwritten details on their mistakes concerning content and mechanics. While the participants had no preference regarding corrections being made with red or blue ink, the female participants indicated their preference for direct, detailed CF. Likewise, Oman, Al Hajiri and Al-Mahrooqi (2013) found that the 60 EFL learners surveyed preferred for CF to be clear, positive and grammar focused.

### *1.3 School Learners' Preferences*

The results of several studies concerning EFL learners' preferences for CF at the school level have also varied. For instance, Orts and Salazar (2016) implemented a questionnaire in Spain to study 53 high school EFL learners' written CF preferences. The results demonstrated that the learners' preference for written CF was not affected by their age or English proficiency; however, less proficient older learners who were more concerned with grammar preferred direct CF. Likewise, a qualitative study conducted by Zarifi (2017) on 10 female EFL learners from Iran showed that the participants preferred direct CF and comments on some of their mistakes. Li and He (2017) conducted a mixed-methods study on 84 Chinese EFL learners and 27 teachers to determine the learners' preferences for three types of CF: direct, indirect and metalinguistic. The study revealed that the learners preferred indirect CF, which was also the type most frequently used by their teachers.

### *1.4 Saudi Learners' Preferences*

In the Saudi context, Alshahrani and Storch (2014) investigated teachers' CF practices and beliefs regarding EFL learners' written work and CF learners' preferences. The participants in this quasi-experimental study were all male and included three teachers and 45 Saudi university EFL learners. The study's findings, collected via interviews with the teachers and a questionnaire for the learners, revealed that the teachers and learners believed that CF is important for preventing error fossilisation. The findings also showed that the teachers were affected by institutional guidelines that sometimes clashed with their beliefs. Moreover, the teachers provided indirect CF despite the learners' preference for direct CF. Alshahrani and Storch (2014) also recommended that teachers communicate to learners the reasons behind the application of any form of CF, as this has the added benefit of allowing the teachers to reflect on their own beliefs and practices regarding CF. In addition, Hamouda (2011) examined 200 male Arabic-speaking EFL learners' and 20 teachers' preferences for CF at Qassim University. The learners favoured teachers' correction over peer and self-correction; moreover, they do not prefer having detailed CF. However, the results from Alqurashi's (2009) study of 24 male EFL learners showed their preference for peer feedback, believing that it helped to improve their writing skills.

Many studies have examined learners' preferences in the context of EFL across cultures and ages, demonstrating the importance of students' preferences in the learning process. Additionally, several studies have revealed

differences between teachers' and learners' preferences regarding CF, which may explain why Saudi EFL learners receive CF that contradicts their preferences and thus might hinder improvements in their writing performance (Mustafa, 2012).

With regard to studies related to learners' preferences, most Saudi studies have focused on male learners, specifically in an undergraduate setting (Alqurashi, 2009; Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Hamouda, 2011). To the knowledge of the researchers, no such studies have been conducted with females. Additionally, there seems to be a particular gap in the literature related to the CF preferences of females in the seventh grade. Thus, the current study implemented three methods of CF on seventh grade learners that have not yet been examined in this context in order to understand the learners' preferences at this age. The study used a questionnaire to measure learners' preferences after the implementation of the experiment.

Therefore, the current study aims to answer the following questions:

1. Are there any significant differences between EFL learners' preferences regarding teacher feedback on written assignments in terms of the method of CF (oral with written indirect, written direct with written indirect or written indirect)?
2. What are EFL learners' preferences for CF on written assignments?

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Participants

The participants of this research were 114 female EFL learners between the ages of 12 and 13 years old studying in the seventh grade at Albayan Model School for girls in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. They were native speakers of Arabic who were distributed into six classes, with less than 20 learners in each class. The participants had mixed proficiency levels in English ranging between A1 and B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Participants were taught from the *Elements of Language* textbook series, which is the introductory level published by Harcourt, for 7 hours per week. All English classes were taught following the skill-based teaching and the flipped classroom methods. Accordingly, one teacher was assigned to teach the same skill to all six classes, and learners were fully aware of how to use technology, as each one had her own iPad device to use in class.

### 2.2 Instruments

The instruments used in this study were carefully designed to achieve the purpose of the research. These included a closed-ended Likert scale questionnaire to examine learners' preferences and an open-ended question to gain deeper understanding of the results. Both were distributed at the end of the experiment. The researchers prepared the instruments in separate links using Google Forms.

### 2.3 Closed-Ended Questionnaire

This questionnaire was intended to assess learners' preferences regarding the CF method and the use of Padlet as a tool for providing CF. It was adapted from Hamouda (2011) and developed by the researchers to meet the purposes of this study. As presented in Appendix 1, the questionnaire included 20 items and three dimensions: (1) CF content, (2) motivating methods in CF and (3) methods of utilising CF. The questionnaire was distributed with a five-point Likert scale and was written in Arabic to ensure better understanding of the items, since the participants were native Arabic speakers. The questionnaire was also piloted on 40 female EFL eighth grade learners in the same school. Moreover, the reliability and validity were checked before and after the implementation.

**Reliability.** Cronbach's alpha test revealed a score of .71 in the pilot study which is considered as a highly reliable score in (Dörnyei, 2007). Moreover, the data for all 114 students were included to assess the internal consistency of the scale. Cronbach's alpha was used for this purpose, and it showed a high level of reliability for the total scores of the scale (Cronbach's alpha = .848). Cronbach's alpha was also calculated for each dimension of the scale: the values were .741, .709 and .745 for CF content, motivating methods in CF and methods of utilising CF, respectively. Hence, the scale total scores and sub-scores of the three dimensions were reliable.

**Validity.** The questionnaire was validated by three expert teachers at the school, and modifications were verified upon their comments. Pearson's correlation was used to test the correlations between items and total scores of each dimension and the whole scale. As revealed in Table 1, the correlations between items and the total scores ranged between  $r = .313$  and  $r = .698$ , revealing medium to high correlations. In the CF content dimension,  $r$  varied between .586 and .715. A similar range of correlations was found for motivating methods in the CF dimension ( $r = .734$ – $.597$ ). The correlations between items in the third dimension and the sub-score for the

dimension ranged between .582 and .642. All correlations were significant ( $p < .001$ ). The scores of the dimensions highly correlated with the total score:  $r = .816$  for CF content dimension,  $r = .81$  for motivating methods in CF dimension and  $r = .787$  for methods of utilising the CF dimension ( $p < .001$ ).

Table 1. Correlations between scale items and sub and total scores regarding questionnaire validity

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Correlation with Dimension Score</i>	<i>Correlation with Total Score</i>
CF Content	1	.619	.425
	2	.623	.490
	3	.715	.534
	4	.680	.600
	5	.586	.435
	6	.606	.529
	7	.586	.582
Motivating Methods in CF	8	.597	.484
	9	.600	.360
	10	.734	.698
	11	.647	.480
	12	.600	.516
	13	.668	.575
	14	.660	.600
Methods of Utilising CF	15	.621	.564
	16	.699	.633
	17	.628	.333
	18	.582	.313
	19	.592	.487
	20	.642	.603

\*(CF) corrective feedback

#### 2.4 Procedure

According to Dörnyei (2007), random sampling depends on probability and is more representative than non-random sampling, so each class was manually assigned to a specific group by randomly selecting one class and then blindly attaching it to one of the conditions to form three groups: 39 learners in the first experimental group (EG1), 38 learners in the second experimental group (EG2) and 37 learners in the control group (CG). All groups were given a weekly assignment on Padlet and three kinds of CF: oral with written indirect for EG1, written direct with written metalinguistic for EG2 and written metalinguistic for CG. After 6 weeks of experimentation, the participants were given the closed-ended questionnaire and the open-ended question.

#### 2.5 Analysis of the Method

Since the study followed the mixed-method design, it consisted of two kinds of data. The quantitative data represented by the closed-ended questionnaire were analysed using the statistics program SPSS. Descriptive analysis was used to find the learners' preferences for CF, and a one-way ANOVA was used to find the differences in learners' preferences among groups. Moreover, the qualitative data represented by the open-ended question were thematically categorised and manually analysed using Excel.

### 3. Data Analysis and Results

#### 3.1 Quantitative Data

##### 3.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

The questionnaire used a five-point Likert scale, with 5 corresponding to strongly agree and 1 to strongly disagree. Since the questionnaire contained 20 items, the minimum score was 20 and the maximum was 100.

Using SPSS, the means and standard deviations were extracted for each dimension. As presented in Table 2, it seemed that learners had similar preference for all dimensions, with a slightly higher score for the dimension of the motivating methods of CF ( $M = 3.864$ ,  $SD = .154$ ), followed by CF content ( $M = 3.704$ ,  $SD = .144$ ) and methods of utilising CF ( $M = 3.546$ ,  $SD = .087$ ). Although the motivating method dimension had the highest average score among all dimensions, the CF content dimension included three items with a score greater than 4, while the motivating method dimension included two items with scores greater than 4. The frequency of responses to each item in the questionnaire was calculated by collapsing the two positive answers in one category, the two negative responses in one category and the neutral responses.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of each item and each dimension in the learners' preferences questionnaire

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Standard Deviation</i>
CF Content	1	4.193	0.911
	2	4.035	0.995
	3	3.552	1.082
	4	3.553	1.183
	5	2.939	1.365
	6	4.079	1.082
	7	3.579	1.088
	Average	3.704	0.144
Motivating Method of CF	8	4.175	0.934
	9	4.254	0.984
	10	3.623	1.132
	11	3.351	1.382
	12	3.921	1.057
	Average	3.864	0.154
Methods of Utilising CF	13	3.649	1.088
	14	3.587	1.079
	15	3.763	1.066
	16	3.578	1.104
	17	3.263	1.262
	18	3.026	1.286
	19	3.763	1.115
	20	3.736	1.081
Average	3.546	0.087	

In Table 3, three categories are shown for each item: agree, neutral and strongly disagree. Table 3 presents the items for the CF content dimension, which included the highest percentage (85.09%) of agreement for the learners' preference of teachers' explanations on how they correct their mistakes.

The results show that 79.82% of learners preferred including textbook page numbers with the CF so that they could review their knowledge. Moreover, 74.56% of learners agreed that they preferred for the teacher to point out all their mistakes. However, regarding the item about having homework on the iPad, learners' responses varied, with no clear trend.

Table 3. Learners' responses for the first dimension

<i>Items</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>
I prefer the teacher explain how to check my mistakes.	5.26	9.6	85.09
I prefer the teacher point out all my mistakes.	7.02	18.4	74.56
I prefer the teacher use the same method of correction with all skills.	16.67	21.9	61.40
I prefer the teacher support me with resources so I can improve my abilities in grammar.	17.54	22.8	59.65
I prefer the teacher give me homework on the iPad.	41.23	20.2	38.60
I prefer the teacher include the page number of the textbook so I can review my knowledge.	7.89	12.3	79.82
I prefer the teacher's method of correcting homework.	17.54	20.2	62.28

The second dimension about the motivating methods of CF included five items, which was the smallest number of items of the dimensions. As revealed in Table 4, the majority of learners agreed with all statements, and the highest average agreement was 81.58% for preferring the teacher to use positive emojis when giving CF. In addition, 79.82% of learners preferred for teachers to use positive phrases in CF. Moreover, 73.68% of the learners preferred having discussions of outstanding answers in class.

Table 4. Learners' responses for the second dimension

<i>Items</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>
I prefer the teacher use positive phrases.	5.26	14.9	79.82
I prefer the teacher use positive emojis.	6.14	12.3	81.58
I prefer the teacher use an encouraging method when correcting homework.	14.91	21.1	64.04
I prefer the teacher give grades for every item in the homework.	28.95	16.7	54.39
I prefer the teacher discuss outstanding answers in class.	11.40	14.9	73.68

The third dimension about the methods of utilising CF included eight items, which was the highest number of items among all dimensions (Table 5). The responses for this dimension varied, and all responses were below 70%. The highest responses of agreement ranged from 58.77% to 66.67% regarding their preference to have the teacher follow up with them after correcting the mistakes. The second highest response with 64.91%, demonstrating the learners' preference to search for a method to correct their mistakes. With almost the same percentage of agreement, learners preferred having others to help them correct their mistakes. However, two items showed varied responses and did not reveal a clear trend since the learners' agreement and disagreement were too closely matched.

Table 5. Learners' responses for the third dimension

<i>Items</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Neutral</i>	<i>Agree</i>
I prefer to immediately review my homework after correction.	13.16	27.2	59.65
I prefer to review previous homework before completing new assignments.	16.67	21.1	62.28
I prefer to search for a method on how to correct my mistakes.	7.02	23.7	64.91
I prefer to compare my mistakes on the writing homework.	16.67	24.6	58.77
I prefer to review my mates' homework after correction.	30.70	21.9	47.37
I prefer to compare between my homework and my mates' after correction.	40.35	17.5	42.11
I prefer others to help me correct my mistakes in the homework.	12.28	23.7	64.04
I prefer the teacher follow up with me after I correct the mistakes.	14.04	19.3	66.67

### 3.1.2 Inferential Statistics

In order to examine the differences in learners' preferences between the three groups (EG1, EG2 and CG), the researchers used one-way ANOVA, which showed no significant main effect for type of CF [ $F(2, 111) = .372, p = ns$ ]. For further exploration, a one-way ANOVA was used to examine the effect of the type of CF on each dimension of the questionnaire. Similarly, no significant main effect was found for type of CF on either dimension of the scale [ $F(2, 111) = .101, F(2, 111) = .163, F(2, 111) = .054, p = ns$ ]. Figure 1 shows the means and standard errors for learners' preferences regarding CF, indicating no significant effect of CF shown by the error bars.

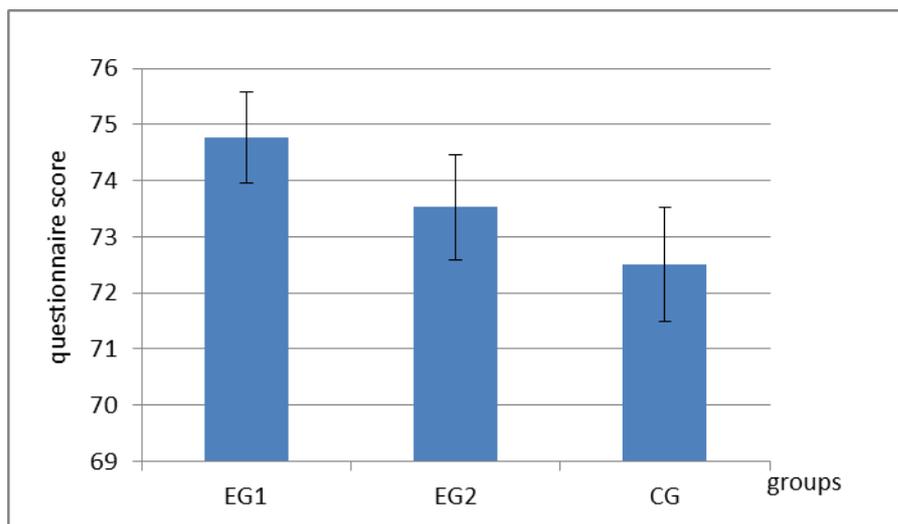


Figure 1. Means and standard errors for learners' preferences regarding the type of CF

### 3.2 Qualitative Data

The open question was as follows: What correction method do you suggest? Figure 2 displays the categories for the relevant responses. The most common response to this question agreed on the use of technology for electronic correction; this category received 35% of the responses. Some mentioned using Padlet and the iPad, while others only expressed their preference for technology in more general terms. Participant 12 gave a reason for her preference: 'Keeping the same way of correction because it is fast and the teacher gives regular feedback'.

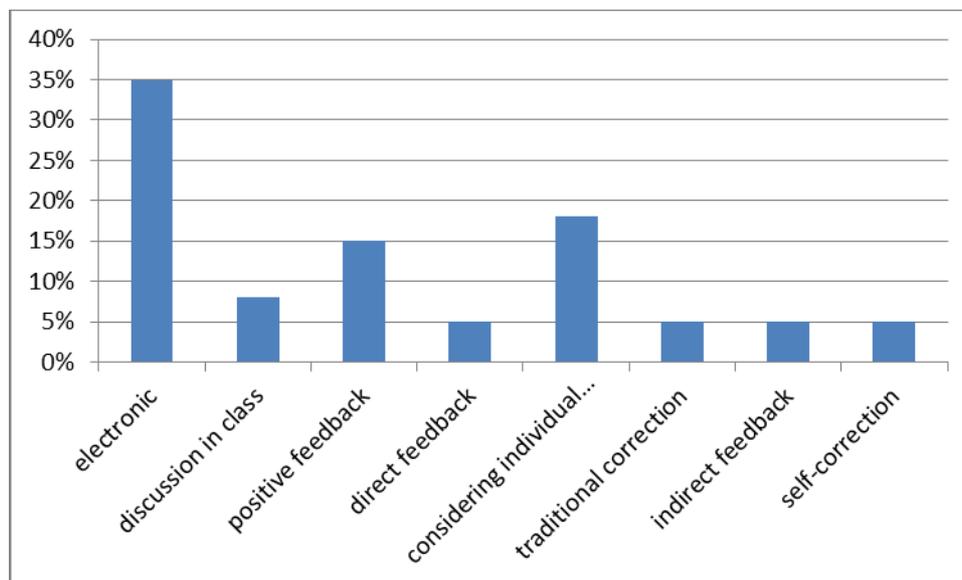


Figure 2. Participants' suggestions of the preferred CF

The second most preferred suggestion, with 18% of the responses, was that the teacher should consider individual differences among learners. Accordingly, the students preferred that the teacher correct their

assignments and give feedback. Additionally, they suggested one-on-one correction, giving students another chance to correct mistakes and have the teacher double check their assignment. Participant 13 said, 'I prefer to have a one-on-one session with my teacher to show me my mistakes'. In addition, Participant 14 said, 'I want my teacher to give me another chance to correct the assignment', and Participant 15 believed, 'The teacher's correction is better because she makes sure everything is corrected'.

The third highest suggestion received 15% of the responses and involved giving positive feedback when correcting. They described positive feedback from their teacher on their assignments as support and encouragement for them to become better. Moreover, they considered positive comments (in addition to the emojis, rewards and likes) and not using negative symbols as the most supportive feedback. For example, Participant 16 suggested, 'The teacher needs to write positive comments when correcting to support her learners', and Participant 17 confirmed, 'The teacher needs to use methods to motivate learners'. While Participant 18 emphasised positive CF, saying, 'Putting a happy face and giving three stars', Participant 19 refused negative CF, saying, 'The teacher corrects without putting question marks'. Moreover, Participant 20 suggested more positive CF: 'The girl who completes three assignments with no mistakes should receive a reward'.

Furthermore, 8% of the learners preferred to discuss the assignment with the teacher in class. They suggested having open discussion on assignments, previous lessons and best answers. For instance, Participant 21 said, 'I suggest that the teacher correct all assignments, then discuss the excellent answers in class'.

Additionally, the other four themes received an equal number of responses, with 5% each. The four themes considered the type of feedback given by the teacher and other suggestions for giving feedback. For example, some of the learners preferred direct feedback, as they wanted the teacher to support them with the correct answers. In contrast, some preferred having indirect feedback, as they wanted the teacher to only mention the mistakes. According to the suggestions, it seems that another group of learners preferred the traditional way of giving feedback using paper and red pen. Additionally, others wanted self-correction instead of correction by the teacher. In this regard, Participant 22 said, 'Each learner should correct her mistakes in the assignment, then show it to the teacher'. However, Participant 23 suggested, 'The teacher should correct the learner's assignment with the learner at the same time'. Moreover, Participant 24 mentioned, 'The teacher corrects the assignment and gives the correct answer to each mistake'. Additionally, Participant 25 preferred autonomous learning, saying, 'The teacher checks the assignment, showing the mistakes, and I look for the correct answer myself'.

In general, all responses were categorised under these eight themes; however, only one learner suggested a different way of correction. Participant 26 said, 'Learners with the correct answers, after the teacher's approval, may take the responsibility to correct for their mates, so that they help the teacher and save time'.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 EFL Learners' Preference for Written CF

To measure the learners' preference of the written CF provided to each group, the researcher conducted a closed-ended questionnaire. The results of this questionnaire answered the first research question: Are there any significant differences between EFL learners' preferences regarding teacher's feedback on written assignment attributed to the method of CF (oral with written indirect, written direct with written indirect and written indirect)? The questionnaire consisted of 20 closed items divided into three dimensions: CF content, motivating methods in CF and methods of utilising CF.

Analysis of the learners' responses on the questionnaire did not show any significance in terms of the type of CF. Moreover, there was no significant effect for the type of CF on each dimension of the score. The results of previously conducted studies on learners' preferences in written CF showed preference for one type over the other, although the CF type preferred varied between studies.

#### 4.1.1 Content of CF Dimension

With regard to the content of CF, previous studies showed contradictory findings. For example, some studies have shown that learners prefer direct methods (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Chen et al., 2016; Chung, 2015; Ishii, 2011; Zarifi, 2017), whereas Mohammad and Rahman (2016) found that learners preferred indirect methods. Li and He (2017) showed that learners preferred direct, indirect and metalinguistic methods. In the current study, no significant differences were found regarding learners' preferences for the dimension of CF content.

#### 4.1.2 Motivating Methods in CF

The second dimension of motivating methods in CF also revealed no significant results although the researchers expected a significant result for EG1, who received additional oral CF, considering the effectiveness of oral CF (Hernández Méndez, Cruz, & del Rosario, 2012). Further, Diab (2015) and Mohammad and Rahman (2016) suggested discussing mistakes in class so that learners become more aware of the CF. In addition, Zarifi (2017) indicated that learners prefer to have some comments in written CF because these comments motivate them.

#### 4.1.3 Utilising CF

The use of technology in giving CF has been shown to increase learners' utilisation of the CF (Al-Kathiri, 2015; Al-Okaily, 2013; Al-Shehri, 2011), indicating that technology enhances learner engagement. However, no study has yet been conducted comparing different types of technology use in CF on EFL learners' engagement. In this study, the results were non-significant for the third dimension of methods of utilising CF.

Accordingly, the type of CF did not affect learners' preferences, which might be explained by Mustafa's (2012) finding that Saudi EFL learners often receive CF that contradicts their preferences. Thus, learners must make use of the CF that is chosen and preferred by the teacher (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014). Instead, considering learners' preferences for CF when correcting assignments might be more effective. In addition, the type of CF needs to be communicated with learners (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014). Furthermore, the non-significant result could have been due to learners' attitudes and proficiency level (Wang, 2014).

#### 4.2 EFL Learners' Preferences for CF on Written Assignments

The second research question was about learners' opinions on the preferred CF they receive on written assignments. Learners' responses to this open-ended question were expected to support the quantitative data and to give more explanations to the previous data collected via the questionnaire. In general, some of the learners' responses were similar to the quantitative results. For example, most of the responses supported having CF via technology, and electronic CF was their most preferred method. This preference for technology might be related to the features available in the tool used for giving CF, for instance, immediate correction, convenience by providing access anywhere and at any time for both learners and teachers and appearance since most of the electronic tools used for assignments and CF have engaging elements (Chen et al., 2017; Kaya, 2015; Sangeetha, 2016).

Furthermore, learners preferred when the teacher's CF considered the individual differences between them. In this regard, teachers might need to spend more effort when planning and giving CF and consider more effective strategies to meet learners' needs (Ferris et al., 2013; Han & Hyland, 2015). According to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, teacher's guidance of the CF enables learners' scaffolding, which brings them to higher levels of proficiency (Nassaji & Swain, 2000). Hence, teachers might consider each learners' preferences for CF and make individual plans to use the type that matches their needs and preferences.

In addition, learners showed interest in having different forms of positive CF, which also supports the quantitative results. Accordingly, teachers might need to vary in the positive CF given with consideration for learners' preferences; additionally, they could include CF in the syllabus so that learners are aware of it (Ferris et al., 2013; Han & Hyland, 2015). Moreover, teachers might also allow organised oral discussion in class, giving learners the chance to be more engaged in the learning process and to increase collaboration among the class since some of the learners' preferred discussing assignments and errors in class (Diab, 2015; Mohammad & Rahman, 2016).

Likewise, four responses received the lowest but equal percentage of agreement, which might be related to factors connected to the learners themselves, for example, diversity in their interests and proficiency levels (Wang, 2014). The results revealed that learners showed preference for four kinds of CF: direct, indirect, self-correction and traditional correction. Some of the learners preferred their teacher to provide them with the correct answer as this would help them to perform better on the next assignment (Chen et al., 2016). This preference might be due to the learners' lack of understanding with indirect CF, which is also consistent with the results found by Ishii (2011) and Chung (2015). In contrast, similar to Mohammad and Rahman (2016), some learners preferred that teachers point out mistakes and support the CF with some comments to help them find the correct answer by themselves. According to Rassaei and Moinzadeh (2011), supporting CF with comments on the errors was found to be effective. This also might explain learners' preference to self-correct themselves without the teacher's interference in the CF. Furthermore, only one learner suggested students with the correct answer correct their classmates' work with the teacher's approval. Hosseiny (2014) indicated that having learners practice correcting assignments increases the different types of CF. This result also supports involving

learners in the process of CF, which could positively affect their performance by helping them to become more autonomous and active learners.

## 5. Conclusion

This study attempted to examine EFL learners' preferences for CF on written assignments among Saudi female seventh graders. The findings revealed that the learners' preferences did not vary according to the type of CF, with most of the learners preferring constructive CF on how to correct their mistakes. In addition, learners showed their preference for using electronic devices for CF. Therefore, teachers should be aware of learners' preferences for CF and include these within their teaching plans.

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## Appendices

Appendix 1: The questionnaire in the Arabic language

لا أو ألقى بشدة	لا أو ألقى	محايد	أوافق بشدة	أوافق	البنود	
					أفضل أن تشرح لي المعلمة خطوات لتصحيح الخطأ	محتوى التغذية الراجعة:
					أفضل أن تشير المعلمة إلى جميع أخطائي	
					أفضل أن تتبع المعلمة نفس طريقة التصحيح في جميع المهارات (المفردات، علامات الترقيم...)	
					أفضل أن تقدم المعلمة المراجع المناسبة لتطوير مهاراتي في القواعد اللغوية	
					أفضل أن تعطيني المعلمة واجبات على الأبياد	
					أفضل أن تحدد لي المعلمة صفحة الكتاب لأراجع معلوماتي	
					أفضل الطريقة التي استخدمتها المعلمة في تصحيح الواجب	
					أفضل أن تستخدم المعلمة العبارات التشجيعية المفسرة لمواضع الأخطاء	وسائل التحفيز في التغذية الراجعة:
					أفضل أن تضع المعلمة صوراً تحفيزية	
					أفضل طريقة التشجيع التي تتبعها المعلمة عند تصحيح الواجب	
					أفضل أن تسجل المعلمة درجة لكل فقرة	
					أفضل أن تناقش المعلمة الإجابات المميزة في الفصل	
					أفضل الاطلاع على الواجب بعد تصحيحه مباشرة ولا أو جل الاطلاع عليه	أساليب الاستفادة من التغذية الراجعة:
					أفضل مراجعة تصحيحات المعلمة السابقة قبل كتابة الواجب الجديد	
					أفضل البحث عن طريقة لتصحيح أخطائي	
					أفضل أن أقارن بين عدد الأخطاء في كتابتي للواجب كل مرة	
					أفضل الاطلاع على واجبات زميلاتي بعد تصحيح المعلمة لها	
					أفضل المقارنة بين تصحيح المعلمة لواجباتي وواجبات زميلاتي	
					أفضل الاستعانة بالآخرين لتصحيح أخطاء وواجباتي	
					أفضل متابعة المعلمة لواجبي بعد تصحيح الأخطاء	

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