DIRECT AND INDIRECT WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON THE USE OF PAST TENSE AMONGST ESL LEARNERS

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2020

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DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

FACULTY OF LANGUAGES AND LINGUISTICS
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR

2020

UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA

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Matric No: TGB140018

Name of Degree: MASTER OF ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

For decades, a considerable amount of attention has been given to written corrective feedback (WCF) in the field of second language acquisition (SLA). In the early development of WCF, Truscott (1996) raised a few theoretical issues which led studies on WCF to be carried by researchers opposing his claims. He claimed that 1) a simple transfer of information cannot be expected to be beneficial due to the well-established SLA insights about the complex and gradual nature of the process of acquisition, 2) if WCF approach is employed at a time that is not consistent with the natural order, it could not be effective and 3) an ESL learner learns anything from the employment of WCF approach, the learning is likely to be only 'pseudo-learning.' Hence, this study aimed to explore the extent to which ESL learners' accuracy in past tense use improves as a result of direct and indirect WCF and other factors that may contribute to ESL learners' accuracy in past tense use resulting from direct and indirect WCF. A mixed-method design was employed in this study. Quantitative data was collected using a pre-test, an immediate post-test, and a delayed post-test whilst qualitative data was collected via interviews. A total of eighty UM undergraduates took part in this study, and they were divided into two treatment groups equally. Both groups were given direct and indirect WCF, respectively. The analysed quantitative data showed that the direct WCF group performed better than the indirect WCF group. As for the qualitative data, three main themes (factors) emerged from the thematic analysis. They were learners' attitudes toward the WCF provided, learners' thinking effort, and scaffolding. Findings from this study cannot be generalised as the study collected data only from one local university in Malaysia.

ABSTRAK

Selama beberapa dekad, banyak perhatian telah diberikan kepada maklum balas pembetulan kesilapan bertulis (WCF) dalam bidang pemerolehan bahasa kedua (SLA). Dalam perkembangan awal WCF, Truscott (1996) membangkitkan beberapa isu teori yang menyebabkan kajian mengenai WCF dijalankan oleh para penyelidik bagi membangkang pendirian Truscott (1996) itu. Truscott (1996) mendakwa bahawa 1) pemindahan ilmu yang mudah tidak dapat dijangka akan memberi manfaat kepada para pelajar disebabkan oleh pemahaman SLA yang sedia ada berkenaan dengan sifat pemerolehan bahasa yang kompleks dan beransur-ansur, 2) jika pendekatan WCF digunakan pada masa yang tidak konsisten mengikut peringkat secara semula jadi, ia tidak dapat berkesan, dan 3) sekiranya seseorang pelajar ESL belajar apa-apa hasil daripada pendekatan WCF; pembelajaran tersebut mungkin hanya 'pembelajaran-pseudo'. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk menilai sejauh mana ketepatan para pelajar ESL dalam penggunaan kata kerja masa lalu meningkat adalah hasil daripada pendekatan WCF langsung dan tidak langsung, serta faktor-factor yang lain yang mungkin menyumbang kepada ketepatan para pelajar ESL dalam penggunaan kata kerja masa lalu hasil daripada pendekatan WCF langsung dan tidak langsung. Reka bentuk kaedah campuran digunakan dalam kajian ini. Data kuantitatif melalui pra-ujian, ujian pasca segera, dan ujian pasca tertunda, sementara data kualitatif pula dikumpulkan melalui temubual. Sebanyak lapan puluh mahasiswa UM mengambil bahagian dalam kajian ini dan mereka dibahagikan kepada dua kumpulan rawatan. Kumpulan 1 diberi WCF secara langsung manakala Kumpulan 2 diberi WCF tidak langsung. Data kuantitatif yang dianalisis menunjukkan bahawa keputusan kumpulan WCF langsung adalah lebih baik daripada kumpulan WCF tidak langsung. Bagi data kualitatif pula, tiga tema utama (faktor) muncul dari analisis tematik. Faktor-faktor tersebut adalah sikap pelajar terhadap WCF yang berikan, usaha pemikiran pelajar, dan *scaffolding*.

Penemuan daripada kajian ini tidak boleh digunakan untuk memberi gambaran secara umum kerana sebagai data yang dikumpulkan hanya dari satu universiti tempatan di Malaysia.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I offer my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Azlin Zaiti Zainal, whom has supported me throughout my journey of completing this report with her patience and knowledge whilst allowing me the room to work at my own pace and way. One simply could not ask for a better or friendlier supervisor.

Special thanks to Professor Dr Stefanie Pillai, Associate Professor Dr Surinderpal Kaur, and Dr Teoh Mei Lin for always willing to see and advise me during my studies at the University of Malaya where their advice has been keeping me motivated in completing this report. Not only that, I also cannot bring myself to forget another senior lecturer of mine, Dr David Yoong to whom I cannot thank enough, for, without him, I would not even have the slightest idea on how to plan for my research before I was assigned a supervisor.

Much gratitude also goes to all the lecturers from the Department of English Language who have taught me for without the knowledge they shared, I would not be able to complete my research independently.

Before I forget, I would also like to thank my childhood friends for always lending their time and ears whenever I asked. Finally, I thank my grandparents, parents, aunts, and siblings for supporting me throughout my studies at the university and for allowing me the space and time to complete my write-up.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATION

L2	:	Second language
MOE	:	Ministry of Education Malaysia
TL	:	Target language
ESL	:	English as a second language
WCF	:	Written corrective feedback
CEFR	:	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CF	:	Corrective feedback
MUET	:	Malaysian University English Test
SLA	:	Second language acquisition
FL	:	Foreign language
EFL	:	English as a foreign language
MEVI	:	Mastering English VI
TESL	:	Teaching English as a second language
IELTS	:	International English Language Testing System

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.0   Introduction

In today's world of technology, the ability to write effectively is becoming increasingly important in both our lives and the global community. As transportation and technology are advancing, which allows people of other nations and cultures to communicate and interact with each other, the ability to use English becomes ever more essential. As a result, the ability to speak and write in a second language (L2) is becoming more demanding over the years as a necessary skill for business, education, and other personal reasons. In Malaysia, the use of English is significant, given the bilingual education system nature where English is taught as an L2 (Darmi & Albion, 2013). In 2015, the English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015-2025 was launched by the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MOE). This roadmap was produced to address some of the fundamental problems that are faced by Malaysian youths today. With the rapid change in the globalised job market, the demand for effective communication in English is much higher than before. Thus, adequate support is needed to ensure that Malaysian youths can achieve the required proficiency level of English (Zuraidah & Marziah Hayati, 2019).

1.1   Background and problem statement

Mastering the English language provides more chances for the learners in tertiary learning institutions to carry out competently in attaining both academic and communicative proficiency. Where the importance of the language is highly emphasised, the increasing need for the language has spurred all tertiary institutions in Malaysia to offer varieties of English language courses to assist their learners in the mastery of the language upon their enrolment at the institutions. These varieties of English language offered are also in response to the great emphasis on the importance of

the English language as prescribed in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education) (2015). As reported in the blueprint, proficiency of the language, especially the English language, is crucial to succeed in the 21st century, and that has been highlighted by employers to be one of the many aspects that Malaysian graduates are lacking. Not only that, the report of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisations (UNESCO) on Higher Education in Asia, *Expanding Out, Expanding Up: The Rise of Graduate Education and University Research* (2014) has recognised language instruction as one of the five prominent factors influencing English as a Second Language (ESL) learners' preferences to select Malaysia as an education destination. With the many programmes at the higher learning institutions in Malaysia where English is the medium of instruction where it is also believed to be an essential language to be competent in to penetrate international job market, the mastery of the instructional language has become a need to survive at the tertiary education settings.

Based on Nunan's (2003) study on the English language policies in the region of Asia-Pacific, the standard of English in Malaysia has declined due to the changing educational language policies. This decline has led Malaysia to lose its economic competitiveness advantage. This steady deterioration has been confirmed when Malaysia was ranked 9th out of 44 participating countries in the EF English Proficiency Index in 2011 and dropped to 26th out of 100 participating countries in 2019. Whilst Malaysia is still within the high proficiency category, it is noticeable that the standard of English in Malaysia is steadily declining every year without fail.

With the launch of the English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015-2025 and Malaysia Education Blueprint 2015-2025 (Higher Education), it is clear that the MOE finds that the teaching and learning of English need to be further strengthened by revising the English language syllabus, retraining of English language

teachers, and providing quality instructional materials. The current focus by the Ministry of Education Malaysia on the need to further strengthen the English language education system in Malaysia calls for research to be designed on how to support and assist Malaysian learners in improving their English language proficiency where excellent writing skills are amongst the crucial skills.

Furthermore, the English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015-2025 also included the need for the design of the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) to be updated with reference to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This is due the need to align learning standard to international standards. CEFR provides an international standard for language ability on a six-point scale, from A2 for beginners, up to C2 for learners who have mastered a language.

Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes & ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.

Figure 1.1: CEFR Global Scale

Basic User	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

Figure 1.1, continued

For beginners, writing has been considered to be an essential skill if not the most important amongst the four language skills (Kaur, Othman, & Abdullah, 2008). It is an extremely complex cognitive activity as writers are required to show the ability of variables control simultaneously (Nunan, 1989; Sabariah & Chan, 2008; Sharifah, Rashidah, & Aidah, 2010). Hence, it becomes more daunting for ESL learners, and this always poses a significant challenge to educators. Furthermore, the ability to function in the target language (TL) in everyday life is very crucial for ESL learners' interest as well as motivation is enhanced to learn the language (Fauziah & Nita, 2002).

In order to assist ESL learners to improve their writing in terms of accuracy, one of the most used methods by ESL educators is written corrective feedback (WCF). A considerable amount of studies has been done on WCF since Truscott (1996) raised a few theoretical issues (Chapter 2). However, there are still no conclusive findings as to the efficacy of WCF for language learning. Due to that, this study tries to study and ascertain the efficacy of direct and indirect WCF in the Malaysian tertiary context.

1.2   Significance of the Study

Whilst a number of studies have shown positive effects of WCF on ESL learning, the findings are not conclusive. Hence, the results of this study may corroborate other prior studies' findings, specifically in the Malaysian context. Although extensive studies have been carried out on WCF, the attention given is still not adequate in Malaysia (Norasyikin, 2016). This study focuses on verb tense, specifically the past tenses. Verb tense is selected because studies (Darus, Maasum, Stapa, Omar, & Ab Aziz, 2007;

Darus & Subramaniam, 2009; Janaki, Chithra, & Karen, 2013) have found that Malaysian ESL learners made a lot of verb tense errors in their writing. The selection of verb tense for this investigation will help in expanding the scope of corrective feedback (CF) as many of the past researches centred on the system of English articles (Sheen, 2007, 2010; Sarvestani & Pishkar, 2015; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashimi, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010).

Furthermore, Ferris (2004) notes the need for studies that have comparable designs to be replicated across a more diverse population of ESL learners and in different contexts so that a more reliable generalisation can be made on the efficacy of WCF types. As this study focused on ESL learners who were at the upper-intermediate level of proficiency (MUET Band 4), the results generated will be able to add to the body of knowledge of prior studies in assisting ESL educators to find an effective method or approach in administrating direct or indirect WCF amongst ESL learners at tertiary level in Malaysia.

In addition, Ferris et al. (2013) also observe the lack of studies on how individual learner responds and interacts with the WCF given. In the Malaysian context, research on ESL learners' perception of WCF methods has been carried out at the tertiary level, and this study, which also looks into the same might reveal other factors that ESL educators should consider when WCF is provided. Exploring the learners' perception will be able to add to the existing body of knowledge of previous similar studies.

Errors related to past tenses are categorised as treatable errors because they stemmed from the rules of grammar. Thus, this study may be able to shed light on methods of addressing the errors made when using past tense amongst ESL learners.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

In light of the problem statement, a study was proposed to address some of the issues related to the efficacy of direct and indirect WCF on ESL learners' accuracy in writing. This study also attempted to find out whether different WCF types have an influence on the learners' past tense use in their written work. Specifically, this study attempted to achieve the following objectives:

- To explore the extent to which ESL learners' accuracy in past tense use improves as a result of direct and indirect WCF; and
- To explore other factors that may contribute to ESL learners' accuracy in past tense use resulting from direct and indirect WCF.

1.4 Research Questions

To achieve this study's objectives, this study was led by two research questions. The research questions are as follows:

1. To what extent does ESL learners' accuracy in the use of past tenses improve as a result of direct and indirect WCF?
2. What are the ESL learners' perceptions of WCF on their writing?

1.5 Scope of the Study

The scope of the study is limited to the following.

First, only direct and indirect WCF is employed. Therefore, the findings of this study may differ from other similar studies that employ different WCF types.

Next, this study focuses on one target grammatical aspect, which is the past tense. Due to this, other grammatical aspects, such as the use of articles, present tenses, etc. are not analysed and discussed in this study.

Finally, this study employs only one genre of writing which is narrative writing. Participants were undergraduates at the University of Malaya (UM) who were taking the course, Mastering English VI when data was collected for this study. The pre-requisite for this course was the ESL learners should have attained the MUET Band 4. Narrative writing tasks will enable the ESL learners to produce sentences in the past tense forms.

1.6   Conclusion

This chapter outlined the central focus of this study by elaborating the background and problem statement, the significance of the study, objectives of the study, research questions and the scope of the study.

This dissertation has five chapters with Chapter 1 being the introductory chapter. Chapter 2 presents reviews on related prior studies which are relevant to this study. Chapter 3 describes the methods used to carry out this research study and how the collected data were analysed. Chapter 4 discusses the findings and Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter where the summary of findings, the implications of the study, and limitations and recommendations are presented.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.0   Introduction

There are many second language acquisition (SLA) studies which examine SLA hypotheses such as Krashen's Input Hypothesis which examines how ELS learners modify or self-repair their initial output after CF is given as input. Another example will be Long's 'negotiation of meaning' based on his Interaction Hypothesis. However, this study focuses on Swain's Output Hypothesis to provide insights into how WCF assists ESL learners in focusing their attention on the differences between the TL and their interlanguage. Sheen's (2007) study focuses on Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis and how "written direct feedback increases noticing… [and] direct meta-linguistic feedback increases not only noticing but also encourages *awareness-as-understanding"*. However, the significance is still more apparent in the output produced by ESL learners. This is due to "only production (that is, output) really forces ESL learners to undertake complete grammatical processing, and most effectively drives forward the development of ESL syntax and morphology" (Mitchell, Myles & Marsden, 2013).

Furthermore, without the output by ESL learners and errors in their output, the opportunity for any form of corrective feedback may not be available and cannot be administered. Hence, in order to provide more substantial evidence on the efficacy of WCF on the process of language learning, this chapter reviews the Output Hypothesis by Swain together with other relevant past studies on WCF. This study focuses on the Output Hypothesis by Swain, which centres on three claims which explain how WCF can have a positive effect on ESL learners' output in language learning.

2.1   Second Language Acquisition

SLA refers to how second languages are learnt and acquired. Many definitions have been provided by SLA researchers. For example, Gass and Selinker (2008) define SLA

as "the study of the acquisition of a non-primary language; that is, the acquisition of a language beyond the native language". They note that when learners are taught an L2, they form and construct a new language system within themselves which has little exposure to the TL. Furthermore, when learners are taught an L2, some of them do not attain the same level of proficiency in the L2 as they do in their mother tongue.

Interestingly, Saville-Troike (2012) defines SLA as "the study of individuals and groups who are learning a language after learning their first one as young children, and to the process of learning that language". She further notes that any addition to one's mother tongue is called a second language, and this term covers the fifth or the sixth language to be learnt and acquired. An L2 is also commonly known as a target language.

As for Ellis (2008), he stresses that careful and much explanation is needed for SLA. His emphasis is on the 'second' context, which can be categorised by any language acquired or learnt other than the mother tongue. Accordingly, as per Saville-Troike's (2012) definition, it can also refer to the fifth or sixth language. Ellis (2008) also emphasises that the term 'second' is not intended to be distinguished from the term 'foreign' for foreign language (FL). Whether or not the language has an institutional or social role to play in the community, it is conventional to refer to it universally as 'second' language acquisition.

Hence, the SLA scope is limited to any process involved in learning an L2. Picking up a TL is a complex and long journey. The definition of SLA comes from various schools of thought that draw from multiple academic areas advocating different theories and methods of study. This type of exploration of SLA has provided both positive and negative findings.

2.2   Theoretical Perspectives

In ESL writing, WCF is considered to be a common strategy used in SLA, where it is considered to have an important role to play. There are two broad theoretical viewpoints that provide explanation on how this strategy may contribute to SLA. Reasonable

support for WCF comes from several theories on psycholinguistic and cognitive, and socio-cultural theories of SLA. Therefore, it has become more apparent that the investigation of WCF can be improved by considering multiple viewpoints (Sheen, 2010).

2.2.1 Behaviourist Theories

One of the major theories that has brought about the need to provide CF in the learning of language is the theory of behaviourism. According to this theory, learning a language is considered to be a habit formation. Habit formulation happens when L2 learners interact with the stimuli around them and slowly remember these stimuli after reinforcement of these interactions. Ellis and Shintani (2013) refer to habit as a stimulus-response connection. In the context of language learning, an L2 learner learns a language when he or she is exposed to various stimuli around him or her where he or she will interact with these stimuli until these interactions are reinforced. This will result in the formation of habit. According to Ellis and Shintani (2013), L2 learners will model after what is believed to be correct forms or structures in a TL (stimuli). They will receive positive and negative feedback accordingly from their L2 educators. It is believed that their interaction will be automatic when they are exposed to different types of stimulus. Thus, it is reasonable to note that in the teaching of language, L2 learners learn via modelling and repeating the correct forms and structures in the TL over time. It is noteworthy that behaviourism also suggests that complex forms and structures should be the focus of L2 educators when planning lessons and instructing lessons (Corpuz, 2011). Hence, it can be seen that L2 learners will be able to interact with the CF actively when CF is given, and whilst interacting with the CF given, they will be modelling and repeating after the correct forms and structures of the TL. This will result in the production of correct forms and structures of the TL over time.

Whilst Behaviourist theory offers some insights into how L2 learners learn and what L2 educators can do to help L2 learners learn, this theory cannot fully explain the acquisition of an L2 by L2 learners. This is because L2 learners will not be able to reproduce all the inputs that they have been given, and they will be actively creating their own rules within their system on the TL. Therefore, language acquisition cannot be reasonably concluded as a stimuli-response connection.

2.2.2   Cognitive Theories

In SLA, the cognitive approach has been employed as this approach focuses on the explanation of how the human brain works when processing new information. In providing more information on the approach, the role of theories of psycholinguistics and cognition will be considered and reviewed in this study. Examples are the output hypothesis by Swain (2005), noticing hypothesis by Schmidt (2010) and interaction hypothesis by Long (1996). In these psycholinguistic and cognitive theories, WCF is considered to have made a reasonable contribution to the development of interlanguage. WCF induces noticing and noticing-the-gap, and due to this, it promotes language learning (Sheen, 2010).

The cognitive approach offers explanation on how mental activities such as remembering and thinking work. This approach also offers explanation on how our brain processes input during the acquisition and learning process. There are two types of knowledge as defined by Anderson (1976); procedural and declarative. Declarative knowledge is defined as knowing what something is, and procedural knowledge means knowing how to do something. He further asserts that whilst L2 learners are learning something new, the L2 learners learn first the declarative knowledge. In short, L2 learners will first go through the recognition stage (first stage) followed by the second stage which is procedural and finally the third stage where these L2 learners are getting closer to learning and acquiring the knowledge during the learning process.

It is also important to note that the cognitive perspective in SLA draws upon the rules of language. As pointed out by Chamot & O'Malley (1996), learning is a procedural skill, and L2 learners will first learn the steps or rules of what is presented to them. After they have learnt the various steps and rules, they will then be able to go on to the next level of proficiency where they will be autonomous with the rules and steps they have been taught and will be able to practise these rules and steps. Dakin (1973) notes that the role of making errors is an essential part in employing this cognitive approach because L2 learners learn from their errors and will become more attentive to how the steps and rules they have learnt are applied.

L2 theories such as the role of output, noticing, feedback, and input are the essence in the process of language learning when the cognitive approach is employed. These crucial elements are working in tandem in assisting L2 learners in achieving a level of mastery in the TL generally and specifically control over the linguistic forms and structures of the TL.

2.2.2.1 Input

Krashen (1985) asserts that in order to improve L2 learners' language proficiency, they must be provided with what is termed by Krashen (1985) as comprehensible input. Comprehensible input, as defined by Krashen (1985), refers to input which comprises a linguistic form or structure that is a bit higher than the proficiency level of the L2 learners. Comprehensible input is famously referred to as i+1, where the L2 learners' level of proficiency is 'i' and the next level of input which can help L2 learners improve is 'i+1'. Based on this hypothesis, it is believed that L2 learners will continue to improve as long as comprehensible input is continued to be given during the process of learning. Whilst this hypothesis has been generally agreed by L2 educators, opinions on

comprehensible input alone are deemed inadequate. White (1987) and Rost (1990) assert that the understanding of the meaning and function of comprehensible input does not mean that L2 learners have acquired the knowledge or target linguistic structures and forms. This can be explained by the confusion faced by L2 learners when using the taught target structures and forms of the TL.

Furthermore, L2 learners may have comprehended the meaning but still struggle to understand how to apply or use the TL even though the target structures and forms have been taught to them. To this, Swain (2005) asserts that the L2 learners' exposure to comprehensible input and their ability to use the TL after that may have little connection. Thus, their ability may still "remain far from native-like." An experiment conducted by Schmidt (1983) with a Japanese shed some light into this. The said native Japanese speaker started with a very low level of proficiency in English and was not able to communicate with anyone in the TL. During his three-year stint in the United States, he just communicated with people around him. The study by Schmidt (1983) found that whilst he was able to use everyday English daily, his level of proficiency did not improve as much as expected from the study. Thus, it can be clearly seen that much discussion on input as hypothesised by Krashen (1985) remains controversial.

2.2.2.2 Output

By comparing to input which is the stage where L2 learners receive information during the process of learning in the SLA context, output is the stage where L2 learners practise and produce the language that they have received as input. Swain (2005) defines output as "learners' meaningful production of language", in other words, accurate output. As Shinichi (2003) puts it, it is the stage where L2 learners practise and produce or rather express themselves using the TL they have learnt or acquired.

Accordingly, there are four possible functions of output in the process of learning and acquisition, as outlined by Swain (2005). They are fluency, hypothesis-testing, noticing/triggering, and meta-linguistics. The first function, fluency offers opportunities to L2 learners to create meaningful expressions using their knowledge in order to speed up the process of accessing knowledge available in the TL. Hence, L2 learners will become better and more proficient as they keep practising and producing in the TL, especially when it comes to linguistics forms and structures.

As for the second function, which is hypothesis-testing, this function offers L2 learners the opportunities to test their hypotheses when they practise and produce in the TL. In other words, they will be testing the forms and structures of the TL based on the input the TL they have been given. By doing so, they will be able to judge "the comprehensibility and linguistics correctness of their utterances when it is compared with feedback obtained from their interlocutors" (Shinichi, 2003). In this context, L2 learners will have opportunities to practise target-like structures. In the context of L2 writing, they should be able to evaluate how much they have learnt after WCF is given by their L2 educators.

Next is the third function of output, which is noticing/triggering. This is one of the many reasons why output plays a very crucial role in SLA. When L2 learners produce in the TL, they will notice the gap between what they can say and what they want to produce, hence making them realise what they are already informed and what they are partially informed or do not know completely (Swain, 2005). Schmidt & Frota (1986) note that not all L2 learners will be able to notice the correct structures or forms in the TL whilst producing and practising the TL. However, they will be able to notice how others speak or write in the TL, which may be different from their interlanguage. Also, Swain (2005) asserts that L2 learners usually will be able to notice unfamiliar things in

the L2 context, structures or forms that they do not know how to use to express themselves. When they notice the said unfamiliar forms and structures, they will want to be able to produce at the "very moment of attempting to produce it". Drawing from this experience, L2 learners can notice the gap in their interlanguage and will attempt to repair their production because they want to be understood orally and in writing.

Finally, output's role in the meta-linguistic aspect. When L2 learners speak or write in the TL, the process of producing the output will allow L2 learners to be aware of the relationship of the TL grammatical forms, rules, and their functions, and at the same time, this process provides understanding to the L2 learners on how to use the language. It is crucial to note that the critical element to this function lies in the oral context where L2 learners are encouraged to speak freely without having to be worried about the grammatical structures and through this process of production, L2 learners will be able to notice and eventually realise the use of any particular word or phrase they do not know or understand where they attempt to repair it. In contrast to the Input Hypothesis, the Output Hypothesis emphasises more on practising the TL. It encourages L2 learners to use the TL more in speaking and writing, and within this journey of production, it allows and helps L2 learners realise what they already understand from the input given and other things that they need to understand further. It is believed that as L2 learners embark on the journey of producing more in the TL, the accumulation of the experience through this journey will help improve L2 learners' ability in functioning in the TL.

2.2.2.3 Feedback

Feedback is given by L2 educators to L2 learners to assist them in being aware of their weaknesses and errors made in their production when using the TL. Seliger and Long (1983) define feedback as "language-related response to learners' utterances, upon which the learner is focused, and which can be used by the learner to validate or

invalidate concepts he or she has about the target language". Purnawarman (2011) asserts that feedback provides information to learners on what is correct and needs to be improved in their written work. It is possible to provide feedback both directly and indirectly. Regardless of the methods of employment, both methods intend to assist L2 learners in gaining awareness of errors they have made whilst producing in the TL. Also, feedback can be provided orally and in written forms.

2.2.2.4 Noticing

Based on the discussion above on Input Hypothesis, Output Hypothesis and the brief role of feedback, it has been an indication where there exists a significant relationship between them and noticing. In order to assist L2 learners in learning and acquiring an L2, noticing has become a very crucial element that cannot be side-lined. Noticing Hypothesis, as proposed by Schmidt (1990), refers to noticing as an awareness of the target form, which is essential for SLA. He asserts that "noticing requires of the learner a conscious apprehension and awareness of input". Simply put, input occurs when L2 learners are aware of the gap in knowledge between what they produce and a target-like version of spoken or written structures and forms. Via the employment of WCF, L2 learners will be able to notice the gap between what they have produced and what the feedback is provided to them. Schmidt (2001) further notes that "specific attention paid to linguistic form is the first step towards grammar change".

Four dimensions of noticing have been defined by Schmidt (1994). They are attention, intention, awareness, and control. Attention refers to stimulus detection. For example, L2 learners may notice some linguistic forms or structures that they have previously learnt, and they are paying attention to these structures and forms whether the use is correct or incorrect. Intention refers to incidental or intentional learning. Examples for both types of learning are acquiring one's mother tongue (incidental) and formal

classroom lessons (intentional), respectively. Next is awareness. Awareness refers to the acquired knowledge and prior learning experiences that the L2 learners have in stimulus detecting. Finally, control which refers to the control that is realised via output when L2 learners produce in the TL. In brief, the four dimensions proposed by Schmidt (1994) can be summarised as a language acquisition process. For example, feedback is provided by L2 educators. Before any feedback is provided, the intention of the L2 learners will be realised by their intention to learn the TL. Based on the feedback provided by the L2 educators, they may or may not be able to detect the gap between the feedback given on their errors and the type of errors that they have made. Then, it is followed by the accumulation of the prior learning experiences on receiving feedback on their errors. They should be able to detect the type of error made and be aware when they are using a particular type of forms and structures. With that, they will consistently produce a more target-like output, and this will result in the demonstration of a higher level of language acquisition.

2.2.3   Socio-cultural Theories

By comparing cognitive theories with socio-cultural theories in SLA, one will be able to observe that the latter is more interested in understanding and offering insights into how L2 learners learn instead of how the human brain processes information when it comes to learning. Vygotsky (1929) proposes the socio-cultural approach to language learning, where it offers how a child's learning and development is influenced by the world around him or her socially. Other factors that contribute to the journey of learning and acquiring a TL are self-schema, motivation, and scaffolding where these factors will determine the success or failure in the said journey.

2.2.3.1 Self-schema

Ng & Renshaw (2002) defines self-schema as "learner's cognitive generalisations of themselves derived from their past experiences in learning a subject". Meaning, L2 learners form their belief system based on their ideas and later develop these ideas via their prior learning experiences. This belief system is a form of their self-schema about their learning. There are four complementary dimensions of self-schema, as identified by Garcia & Pintrich (1994). Two of these four dimensions have a crucial role to play in WCF, and they are the temporal dimension and affect dimension.

The temporal dimension refers to "distinguishes between the past, present, and future selves" (Ng & Renshaw, 2002). In other words, L2 learners will be able to see, in a way of themselves from the current situation and be futuristic about it. Through this, their motivation will be sustained for an extended period for learning. Being able to observe themselves, this allows L2 learners to value their ability when learning a TL as they will be able to compare how they learnt in the past and how they are learning now in the present time. Also, through this observation, L2 learners will be able to gauge how well or bad they will do in the nearest possible future. This will allow them to look at different ways and approaches that are suitable for them to continue their language learning journey.

As for the affect dimension, it refers to how an individual's "affective state will be influenced by their current self-understanding" (Ng & Renshaw, 2002). Simply, it means that L2 learners know how they feel about learning and, in this context, their feelings towards learning the TL. These feelings will then affect their learning motivation and can contribute both positively and negatively to their language learning journey. As an example, when an L2 learner receives error CF, which they find to be positive, they will be motivated to learn the language and will be looking forward to

more similar feedback. The subsection below will discuss the other factor, which is motivation.

2.2.3.2 Motivation

An L2 learner's performance in the process of language learning is affected by his or her motivation. This factor has become a very crucial part of the language learning process as it is regarded as the central reason why L2 learners are able to maintain their interest in learning a TL. In other words, L2 learners who are highly motivated in doing what they are doing will be more aware of how they are doing the said thing than those who are not motivated, and the former will significantly contribute to the maintenance of the interest in continuing doing the said thing overtime. There are four motivation sources, as defined by Skehan (1989). First, it is the classroom instructions where the classroom activities are deemed interesting by the L2 learners. This is crucial as L2 learners' interest in the particular subject may increase or decrease when the classroom instruction ends. Next, the L2 learners' successful past learning experiences. This is highly subjective as L2 learners' motivation derived from the rewarding experience they have in the past when learning which encourages, he or she to stay motivated for the same when it comes to learning. The third source is the L2 learners' internal motivation. Internal motivation in this context refers to L2 learners' expectations and goals when they embark on their journey of learning a subject, in this context, a new TL. As an example, L2 learners who seek to improve their essays in terms of accuracy will be more interested to receive error CF. The last source of motivation will be rewards. This refers to how rewards are used as a tool to encourage L2 learners to do well and improve their performance.

In short, L2 learners' motivation has the potential to determine how well they learn and at the same time, retain their interest in learning over time. The maintenance of

motivation over time, however, can be affected depending on their sources of motivation. For example, an L2 learner who draws his or her motivation from the successful prior learning experiences is more likely to maintain his or her level of motivation in learning over time as compared to another L2 learner who draws his or her motivation from rewards as rewards may not be sustainable over time.

2.2.3.3 Scaffolding

Wood, Bruner and Ross (1976, in McLeod, 2019) refers to scaffolding as essential task elements that are specific in nature which at the initial stage of learning are above the learning understanding of an L2 learner. Scaffolding offers assistance, and it helps L2 learners focus on elements that are within their level of proficiency where they are able to complete these tasks at this level. In the context of SLA, L2 learners are able to learn with their peers' and teachers' assistance via scaffolding. Stuyf (2002) points out that scaffolding has a vital role to play in the learning of an L2 because scaffolding helps motivate L2 learners to learn. When it involves learning disability L2 learners, it helps ease their level of frustration, thus promotes learning.

The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) theory by Vygotsky (1978) points out that there is a gap in between what L2 learners can accomplish without assistance and what they can with assistance and this has been noted by Raymond (2017) as "the zone of proximal development is the distance between what children can do for themselves and the next learning that they can be helped to achieve with competent assistance." Having said that, it is undeniable that scaffolding has a role to play in SLA and is closely related to ZPD (Chang, Chen & Sung, 2002) as scaffolding is the assistance given to L2 learners during their learning process. Olson and Pratt (2000) point out that specific element tasks given (scaffolding) are usually higher than the current proficiency level of the L2 learners based on what the L2 learners can accomplish without the help.

Therefore, L2 educators need to gauge the level of proficiency of their L2 learners before scaffolding them.

Three mechanisms have been proposed by Tharp and Gillimore (1988) through ZPD to help L2 learners learn. They are modelling, contingency management, and feedback where feedback is the focus of the present study. Output Hypothesis by Swain points out that CF is crucial in the process of language learning. Direct and indirect WCF had been employed in this study, and the study is guided by the Output Hypothesis, which is the theoretical framework of this study. The said framework will be further elaborated in the next section.

2.3   Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that underlies this research is the output hypothesis (Swain, 2005). Swain (2005) defines output as "learners' meaningful production of language". This hypothesis is also supported by Shinichi (2003), where the hypothesis is explained as the stage in which L2 learners' production is based on the L2 learners' expression with the acquired TL. There are four possible functions of output in the learning and acquisition of language process (Swain, 2005). First, output provides the opportunities for language use automaticity development which is the fluency function. Next, it helps L2 learners test hypotheses. Third, output has a meta-linguistic function and finally, it assists L2 learners to notice the difference in their production in the TL by functioning as a consciousness-raising tool. Gass and Varonis (1994) relate with emphasis that when L2 learners are aware of the difference between what they can create and need to create including between what native speakers create and what they create, such awareness will serve as a trigger and this will assist L2 learners in modifying the current knowledge of interlanguage. Guided by this hypothesis, this research attempts to investigate if there is any difference between the two types of WCF

where these feedback types are administered. The following section will discuss the different types of methods and approaches to WCF before focusing on the two types of CF which are employed in this study.

2.4   Approaches and Methods of Written Corrective Feedback

In the context of L2 writing, CF employed to assist L2 learners can be administered in various forms. The criteria for these forms usually are based on how explicit the feedback is going to be provided, the focus of the feedback, and how (medium) the feedback is provided which includes who is providing the feedback. For the purpose of teaching and classroom instruction, the use of different types of WCF is encouraged when L2 learners made errors in their writing. A combination or the use of different types of WCF has been seen to be more effective than using a single type of WCF when correcting L2 learners' errors. There are two general different broad perspectives concerning the approaches of WCF which are focused (selective) and unfocused (comprehensive) approaches. Within these two approaches, there are two methods of administration, and they are direct (explicit) and indirect (implicit) WCF. These approaches and methods will be discussed in the subsection below.

2.4.1   Unfocused versus Focused

van Beuningen (2010) refers to the comprehensiveness of WCF given to L2 learners on their errors by their L2 educators as a focused-unfocused dichotomy. Unfocused, in van Beuningen (2010)'s opinion is where the L2 educators correct all the L2 learners' errors. This approach does not consider the error category when it is being administered. Focused, on the other hand, concerns with the L2 educators correcting the specific errors. In other words, only specific grammatical forms and structures will be corrected, and other errors will remain uncorrected.

Differing opinions on the effectiveness of these two approaches emerged overtime in SLA studies. On the one hand, the focused approach is argued to be able to promote higher noticing rate in L2 learners. It means that as per discussed in the subsection on noticing, focused approach in WCF may be able to provide higher assistance in terms of L2 learners' development of accuracy.

On the same note, Bitchener (2008) and Sheen (2007) assert that unfocused approach may not be as practical as focused approach. This is due to the limitation of the processing capacity of L2 learners. If the unfocused approach is employed, they may not be able to handle the errors corrected, which covers a lot of grammatical forms and structures. Furthermore, L2 learners' readiness in learning new features of an L2 has been cited as a reason to why only a specific form and structure should be brought to the attention of the L2 learners based on their level of proficiency.

As mentioned in the section above, besides these two approaches, there are also opinions on the methods of administration. Direct or indirect methods will be discussed in the subsection below.

2.4.2 Indirect and Direct Written Corrective Feedback

Lightbown and Spada (2006) refer to CF as any indication that points to the errors and mistakes made by L2 learners when using a TL. CF can be provided both orally and in writing. In the context of L2 writing, some prior research has shown that more than one feedback type has been incorporated as WCF. This is to ascertain the relative effectiveness of different types of WCF on L2 learners' accuracy in writing when they are compared. Therefore, direct and indirect WCF remain as the main WCF types that are often studied in SLA studies.

2.4.2.1   Direct or Explicit Written Corrective Feedback

Direct WCF is the correct grammatical form and structure provided by the L2 educators to the L2 learners where the L2 learners' level of proficiency is at a higher or at the level of proficiency where they can understand the grammatical form and structure provided (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008a). Direct WCF may include striking through the incorrect or unnecessary phrase or word, providing the right structure and form, and inserting missing word or phrase. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) point out that written meta-linguistic explanation has been included as direct WCF recently. Written meta-linguistic explanation means rules of grammar will be given by the L2 educators with the correct form and structures provided as examples. In a particular situation where a need arises, the written meta-linguistic explanation will be further explained orally by the L2 educators.

Chandler (2003), in her study, found that direct WCF is more effective than indirect WCF. This is because the highest improvement rate in terms of accuracy in both text revisions and subsequent writing is attributed to direct WCF. Bitchener and Knoch (2008b) support Chandler's (2003) findings by putting forward three main points of view. The first point of view is L2 learners will benefit more with the employment of direct WCF because L2 learners will not be confused with the error CF when they do not remember or understand the error CF over time. Next is that direct WCF provides more information needed for L2 learners to solve more difficult errors. The last point of view is that it is believed that direct WCF provides an instant mental note to L2 learners on their hypothesis (hypothesis-testing).

2.4.2.2   Indirect or Implicit Written Corrective Feedback

Bitchener (2008) refers to indirect WCF as correcting an error through indications. These indications can be provided in the form of writing correction symbols which L2

learners will have to resolve on their own through the correction symbols given. This contrasts with direct WCF where thorough explanation will be provided by the L2 educators.

Indirect WCF is believed to be helpful as it offers L2 learners engagement with problem-solving and guided learning skills (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Ferris (as cited in van Beuningen, Jong & Kuiken, 2008) further asserts that indirect WCF allows L2 learners to discover more meaningful forms and structures of the TL when they are working on their errors. This will force L2 learners to engage in testing their hypothesis that they have about the TL. The following subsection will discuss writing correction symbols in indirect WCF.

2.4.3   Writing Correction Symbols

As discussed in the above subsection, indirect WCF is provided through the use of writing correction symbols which is one of the methods employed for this study. Using writing correction symbols like 'Sp' to indicate spelling errors and 'MW' to indicate missing words, Hyland (1990) asserts that these writing correction symbols are crucial as they offer L2 educators the opportunity to give indirect feedback and at the same time help minimise discouragement which may be caused by the feedback given. L2 educators who are very detailed and concerned with accuracy will find writing correction symbols to be relevant in language teaching and learning (Hammer, 1991, as cited in Corpuz, 2011).

Apart from the efficacy of methods of WCF, researchers are also concerned with the kinds of error that should be focused on when a specific type of WCF is employed. Suggestions and opinions have been provided to address this concern. WCF on the different error types will be discussed in the following subsection.

2.4.4   Written Corrective Feedback on Different Types of Errors

Errors are considered to be systematic accuracies where these accuracies reveal the knowledge gap of the interlanguage system of the L2 learners (Corder, 1967, as cited in van Beuningen, 2010). Mistakes, on the other hand, are not systematic inaccuracies and these include slips of the tongue, etc. More often than not, mistakes are made due to the inability of the L2 learners to perform, and this can be caused by the limited memory of what has been taught about the TL. With the clear distinction between errors and mistakes, Corder (1967) asserts that correcting errors should be the primary focus when feedback is to be given by the L2 educators especially when errors are made by L2 learners. The reason is that L2 educators will be able to gauge their L2 learners' level of proficiency through the errors made by them. This will offer information to the L2 educators so that they will be able to assist their L2 learners further towards the language learning goals.

Furthermore, information can be collected by researchers from the errors made by the L2 learners where this information can help inform the researchers in working on better methods and approaches to help L2 learners improve their proficiency in the TL. Lastly, L2 learners will be able to learn from their errors when these errors are pointed out by their L2 educators through CF. Learning from errors is considered as one of the ways of learning an L2.

Errors can generally be categorised into two types: global errors and local errors (Burt, 1975, as cited in van Beuningen, 2010). Errors related to word order or at the lexical level where communication can be hampered due to the interference in the written text or the message of utterance as a whole, are defined as global errors. This type of errors may not be serious, but the rate is usually high. Examples would be missing article where this can be seen throughout the whole essay commonly. Local errors, on the other

hand, are small linguistic errors. This type of errors is usually seen when the message and meaning of a sentence are not affected by these errors. In other words, local errors do not hamper the meaning of the entire paragraph or sentence or its flow. However, local errors may turn into global errors if the frequency is high within a paragraph or an entire piece of an essay.

Not only that, experts are also concerned with what they term as treatable and untreatable errors. Recent studies on WCF have shown that many of these studies have been designed to focus on treatable errors. Ferris and Roberts (2001) assert that treatable errors are often found to be effectively corrected by the L2 learners themselves. As for untreatable errors, Ferris (2010) suggests that this type of errors requires a combined of both direct correcting and strategy training. Bitchener, Young and Cameron (2005) note that Ferris (1999) is the one who introduces the difference between these types of errors. Some of the examples of treatable errors are subject-verb agreement, the use of article, verb tense form, etc. These errors are considered to be treatable because these errors can be resolved as per the rules of grammar, and L2 learners can be easily referred to the rules of grammar. Untreatable errors, on the other hand, refer to errors such as word choice, use of preposition, etc. They are considered to be untreatable because they tend to be idiosyncratic.

Whilst there are many suggestions on what methods and approaches to be used when it comes to providing CF to L2 learners, problems continue to persist, and no theory has been found to account for this. The next section will review some of the prior studies on WCF.

2.5   Previous Studies on Written Corrective Feedback

Studies on WCF has been conducted (Ashwell, 2000; Sheen, 2007; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008a, 2008b, 2010; Bitchener, 2008;

Chandler, 2003) to investigate the efficacy of WCF. The investigations have found WCF to have a positive impact in some contexts. Amongst those investigations carried out, some (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008a, 2008b; Bitchener, 2008) have discovered that the employment of WCF appeared to have a positive effect over time and not immediately. Whilst there have been many studies done on the field, there is still a lack of information to determine the effectiveness of WCF conclusively. Hence, further study is required in order to gather more data to confirm the assertion on the effectiveness of WCF over time.

Not only that, there was evidence of abandonment of the employment of WCF approach as shown in the studies by Sheppard (1992), Robb, Ross, & Shortreed (1986), Semke (1984), & Kepner, (1991). However, due to the research methods and analytical weaknesses of these investigations, the validity of the conclusion was at stake. On the other hand, there were also studies that concluded that the employment of WCF approach was effective in assisting L2 learners with their level of accuracy in their writing. However, due to the same reasons, the validity of the conclusion too was at stake.

In addition, there were other empirical studies on CF, and to these, Bitchener and Knoch (2010) postulate an assumption that; to consider the relative efficacy of different WCF types, they are assumed to have a positive effect in assisting L2 learners with their level of accuracy in their writing. In investigating whether specific WCF type or a mixture of them have more positive effects than the other WCF types, studies usually categorised CF into direct (explicit) and indirect (implicit). Furthermore, comparative researches have been conducted; (i) between indirect and direct WCF types (Semke, 1984; Lalande, 1982) (ii) between different direct WCF types (Bitchener et al., 2005); and (iii) between different indirect WCF types (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Drawing from

some comparative studies, results were; there was an advantage for one over the other while other studies also suggested otherwise. Although which corrective feedback that is more effective cannot be ascertained yet, the studies suggested that as compared to no feedback given to L2 learners, focused WCF had more positive effects in improving the accuracy of their writing. Previous studies on the effectiveness of direct and indirect WCF will be reviewed in the following subsection.

2.5.1   Direct vs Indirect Written Corrective Feedback

Studies on indirect and direct WCF from 2014 will be reviewed and considered in this subsection for discussion. Firstly, Hosseiny's (2014) five-week research exploring the role of indirect and direct WCF in assisting EFL learners in improving their writing skills will be discussed. A group of sixty Iranian EFL learners who were at the pre-intermediate level of proficiency were grouped into three small groups equally. The first and second from the said groups were provided with direct and indirect WCF, respectively, whilst the third group was not given any WCF as the third group was the control group. During the research study, essays written by members of the control group were not given back to them, but the researcher corrected their errors. The English article system was the target form in the study. The study found that EFL learners who received WCF had generally shown significant improvement as compared to members of the control group. The study concluded that WCF had an effect on the EFL learners' writing accuracy, and in terms of WCF type, direct WCF seemed to be less effective as compared to indirect WCF. A subsequent similar study was also designed by Seiffedin and El-Sakka (2017), where the study also reveals and corroborates the findings of Hosseiny (2014). In Seiffedin and El-Sakka's (2017) study, forty EFL learners at the pre-school level were given direct and indirect WCF. The WCF was given via electronic mail. The study found a significant difference between those EFL learners who were in the control group and those who were in the treatment

group. These results corroborate claims by Hyland and Hyland (2006), where feedback can help EFL learners acquire control over their writing skills. This is because when feedback was provided, elements of practice were there for the treatment groups as they were able to practise the TL structures and forms whilst EFL learners in the control group did not have the chance to practise the TL forms and structures as they were not provided with any feedback.

Further study on the effect of direct and indirect WCF on the English article system use amongst EFL learners was conducted by Salimi and Ahmadpour (2015). Thirty Iranian undergraduates who were at intermediate level of proficiency participated in this study. They were divided into three groups where the first and second groups were direct and indirect WCF groups, respectively, and the third group being the control group of the study. The results revealed no significant difference in terms of performance between the two treatments groups. A more in-depth look at the data found that the accuracy means of the first group was higher than the accuracy means of the second group. In terms of short-term effect, the study found that both indirect and direct WCF were equal in terms of effectiveness on EFL learners' development of their accuracy in writing. On the other hand, direct WCF was found to be more significant in terms of long-term effect as compared to indirect WCF.

Besides these studies, Sarvestani and Pishkar (2016) also conducted a similar study. This study involved sixty Iranian learners who were at the intermediate level of proficiency. These EFL learners were also grouped into three small groups equally. The first and second from the said groups were provided with direct and indirect WCF, respectively while the third group was not given any WCF as the third group was the control group. In this study, the researchers found that CF had an effect on EFL learners' writing accuracy. The study further found that the direct WCF treatment group

performed significantly better than the indirect WCF treatment group based on the post-test results. The study also reported that during the classroom instruction where the teaching of writing skills was conducted, direct WCF use played a crucial role in terms of the effect on these EFL learners' writing performance who participated in the study. The study further reported that direct WCF was more effective than indirect WCF when it comes to EFL learners who are at intermediate level of proficiency. This, the report argued, direct WCF was seemed to be more straightforward and is easily understood by the EFL learners as compared to indirect WCF.

A more recent study by Ishak (2017) found positive evidence supporting the administration of WCF. The study investigated the efficacy of direct and indirect WCF on ESL learners' past tense usage. The context was a secondary school setting in Malaysia. The study had been carried out for twelve weeks involving sixty ESL learners where the ESL learners were divided into direct WCF and indirect WCF groups. The study too found that direct WCF group performed better than the indirect WCF group. The researcher asserts that the findings can be due to the fact that direct WCF provided immediate relief or solution to the ESL learners, and this has helped ESL learners avoid confusion they had when correcting their errors based on the feedback given.

In the same year, Farjadnasab and Khodashenas (2017) conducted a similar study on the effectiveness of direct and indirect WCF. This study was designed to measure the differential effect of direct WCF and indirect WCF on FL learners' writing accuracy over a period of time. Seventy-nine EFL learners who were Iranian participated in this study. This study was different from those studies as beforementioned (Hosseiny, 2014; Salimi & Ahmadpour, 2015; Sarvestani & Pishkar, 2016) where these studies primarily focused on the English article system use. The study by Farjadnasab and Khodashenas (2017) focused on three target errors which were the simple present tense verb,

indefinite articles, and capitalisation errors. Findings from this study also revealed that direct WCF was more effective than indirect WCF.

Finally, a study conducted by Ng and Siti Nor Aisyah (2018) on the impact of instructor's direct and indirect feedback on ESL learners' use of past tenses in their written work reveals that there were three factors which would affect their writing performance. The study was designed as a qualitative study, and twelve Malaysian high school learners were involved in this study. They were divided into two small groups equally. The first and second groups were provided with direct WCF and indirect WCF, respectively. The three main factors found by this study were ESL learners' attitude towards the two types of WCF, learners' belief about what correction will do, and three types of scaffolding. In other words, ESL learners' attitudes and beliefs towards what WCF can do to their writing accuracy influenced how they received and interacted with the feedback provided. As for scaffolding, the three scaffolding types were instructors, peers, and self-initiation. These three types of scaffolding were found to have influenced the ESL learners who were provided with indirect WCF on how they responded to the feedback. The researchers recommended that a more extended period should be included and given to the ESL learners so that they can understand the writing correction symbols as many were struggling in understanding the meaning of these symbols. To fully utilise the WCF, ample time is encouraged to be given to the ESL learners.

Based on the differing findings from various studies on the efficacy of direct and indirect WCF, the conclusion remains open. On the one hand, indirect WCF is seen to be more effective whilst other studies suggest that direct WCF may have more benefits to ESL learners in different specific contexts. Not only that, there are also studies (Frantzen, 1995; van Beuningen, 2010) that have found no difference in terms of

efficacy across different types of direct WCF and indirect WCF. Given the conflicting results, more similar future studies are needed to provide more specific information and data to the existing body of knowledge in the area of WCF.

2.6 Issues on Written Corrective Feedback in Language Learning

There are a few issues raised by Truscott (1996) which have led the studies on WCF to be carried out. Based on a theoretical point of view, there are several reasons that can render WCF to have no effect (Truscott, 1996). The first issue raised was that in the form of WCF, a simple transfer of information could not be considered to be advantageous due to the validated second language acquisition insights with regards to the complex and gradual nature of the process of acquisition. However, this assertion does not take into consideration that ESL learners will be able to modify their non-native-like output as native-like input when they notice the gap between their non-native-like output and native-like input. Sufficient research findings on both oral and revision of text supporting this assertion could be found in SLA past research (Schmidt and Frota 1986; Swain, 2005).

The second issue concerned with the feasibility of providing WCF with respect to the learner's readiness to acquire a specific structure or form according to the Natural Order Hypothesis (Pienemann, 1998). Therefore, should the WCF approach be employed at a time which is not compatible with the order of nature, it could not be effective. However, if educators consider an ESL learner's ongoing developmental stage when deciding their focal structures, there exists the potentiality for it to effect positively (Bitchener and Knoch, 2010).

The third issue presented was that should an ESL learner learn anything from the employment of WCF approach, the learning is expected to be confined to "pseudo-learning", defined by Truscott (1996), as "a superficial and possibly transient form of

knowledge". This is due to the difference in knowing the language and about the language. Krashen (1985) has distinguished between learning and acquisition whilst Ellis (2008), and some have differentiated between explicit declarative knowledge and implicit, unconscious procedural knowledge. At most, he argued, WCF is limited value in developing explicit declarative knowledge or meta-linguistics knowledge which could be helpful in work editing.

From the perspectives of practicality, Truscott (1996) concedes that L2 educators may have difficulty in recognising all the errors made by the L2 learners in their essay. This is due to the fact that grammar rules continue to develop when that particular language develops, or it may be due to the lack of knowledge of grammar. Furthermore, L2 educators may not be able to provide feedback consistently because correcting all the errors of the L2 learners is a very time-consuming endeavour. Also, given the discussion of error types as aforementioned, it is clear that not all errors have fixed forms and structures, and this poses more difficulties to the L2 educators when providing correction feedback. Not only that, L2 learners may have difficulty in understanding all the CF given (Truscott, 1996). Whilst issue of understanding of the CF can be resolved, L2 learners may still find it challenging to remember the information that has been given, let alone using the information given and utilising this information in a variety of contexts.

The continuous debate on how WCF should be employed in the L2 writing classroom has raised a number of concerns amongst the researchers, and one of them is whether WCF is necessary for the L2 writing classroom. The need for WCF to be provided by the L2 educators in the L2 writing classroom is under discussion. This has been raised in a number of studies (Ferris, 2006; Sachs & Polio, 2007; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Sheen, 2010; Shirazi & Shekarabi, 2014; Pham, 2015). There are studies (Semke, 1984;

Fazrio, 2001; Truscott & Hsu, 2008) that have found CF to be ineffective. Not only that these found CF to be ineffective, their findings have also shown that CF is harmful to the L2 learners' development of writing accuracy. Whilst there are studies that have found CF to be ineffective, Bitchener & Knoch's (2009) and Sheen's (2010) studies have shown a positive effect of CF. The central idea of error correction is that it can facilitate L2 learners in their writing accuracy development. The following subsections will discuss some arguments against and for WCF.

2.6.1 Argument against Written Corrective Feedback

In the context of SLA, CF has been regarded as a very crucial method by L2 educators to assist L2 learners in improving their accuracy in writing. However, Truscott (1996) argued against the effectiveness of WCF in the process of language learning. Forms and structures correction, according to Truscott (1996) has no effect and should be avoided as correcting L2 learners' errors can potentially bring harm to the process of language learning of these L2 learners. He further asserts that CF cannot be a promising approach in assisting L2 learners in improving their accuracy in writing because CF centralises in the transfer of knowledge at the expense of language system development. Hence, the complex nature of the TL system will render CF given to be ineffective and L2 learners will not expect themselves to be able to produce the correct structures and forms by referring to the corrected errors via CF. Acquiring the grammar structures and rules seems to happen in within a natural order, and Truscott (1996) argues that if an L2 learner is not ready to acquire a particular form or structure of grammar, CF will be rendered ineffective. To put it simply, if an L2 educator provides CF not within the natural order of acquisition to a particular L2 learner, the CF will not be effective.

Truscott (1996) further states that whilst L2 learners may pick up some correct forms and structures based on the CF given by their L2 educators, the knowledge gained is superficial and will not be sustainable. This is due to the fact that L2 learners' interlanguage developmental processes are very complex in nature. Hence, the acquired knowledge from CF will not be sustainable. Selinker (1972) refers to interlanguage as an L2 learner's production of the TL during the process of L2 learning. In other words, L2 learners' readiness in acquiring certain forms and structures is the determining factor, and this poses a threat to the efficacy of CF provided by L2 educators.

Truscott and Hsu (2008) support the aforementioned arguments. Forty-seven EFL learners participated in their research study on the effectiveness of WCF. Their study found that there was error reduction after EFL learners revised their written work based on the CF given. However, this was not extended to the new writing tasks given. Arguments against WCF are continuously made by researchers due to the fact the L2 learners keep making the same errors despite being provided with CF by their L2 educators. Hence, concerns are raised whether CF is truly effective in helping L2 learners improve their writing in terms of accuracy. The following subsection will discuss the argument for WCF.

2.6.2 Argument for Written Corrective Feedback

Despite the numerous arguments against WCF, there are a number of studies that support the employment of WCF. Ferris (1999) responds to Truscott by noting several ways which are effective when L2 learners are responding to the CF given by their L2 educators. The response made by Ferris (1999) has spurred more studies on the positive effect of WCF. Some of these studies were conducted by Farrokhi and Sattarpour (2012), Bitchener and Knoch (2009), van Beuningen et al. (2008), and Chandler (2003).

A study on the effectiveness of CF was conducted by Chandler (2003). Thirty-one L2 learners participated in this study where they were divided into two groups; a control group and a treatment group. All members from both groups were provided with the same type of CF but different types of treatment. The treatment group members were asked to correct the errors which were underlined for them before handing in their second piece of writing. As for the control group members, they had to correct the errors after they had submitted their second piece of writing. The study found that the treatment group outperformed the control group. The study concluded that there are positive effects to the use of CF and that it can help L2 learners improve their accuracy in writing.

As for van Beuningen, De Jong, and Kuiken (2008), they carried out a research study which further studied the effectiveness of direct and indirect WCF on ESL learners' accuracy in writing. Two secondary schools in the Netherlands participated in their study. All the ESL learners were grouped into two treatment groups and two control groups. The treatment groups were given direct and indirect WCF, respectively. As for the control groups, members of these groups were given writing tasks for them to practise their writing skills and revising their written work. No feedback was given to the control groups. The study was designed as an experiment using pre-test-post-test design. By the end of the study, it found that both WCF types were effective in assisting ESL learners in their writing performance. Whilst both types of WCF were reported to be effective, only direct WCF had long-term retention in terms of effectiveness.

In 2009, Bitchener and Knoch (2009) conducted a WCF research study where they focused on the differential effect of direct WCF. Fifty-two ESL learners participated in the study. They were all ESL learners who were at low-intermediate level of proficiency. All the ESL learners were grouped into three treatment groups and one

control group. The first group was given direct CF and, written, and oral meta-linguistic explanation was provided. As for the second group, the members were provided with direct CF and metal-linguistic explanation. The last treatment group was only given only direct CF. All groups were required to produce five pieces of writing, and the written tasks were for a pre-test, an immediate post-test, and three delayed post-tests. The study found that all the treatment group performed better than the control group. The study further noted that difference in terms of performance amongst the three treatment groups was not significant.

In addition to the discussion above, Bitcherner and Knoch (2010) designed an experiment using the pre-test-post-test design in order to collect empirical data for the measurement of the accuracy in using two functions of the English determiner system (article system) for a duration of ten months. Fifty-two low-intermediate level of proficiency ESL learners were divided into four groups (with thirteen learners in each group): group one was given direct error correction with written and oral meta-linguistic explanation; group 2 was given error correction with written meta-linguistic explanation; group 3 was given error correction, and group 4 was used as the control group with no feedback given at all. At the beginning of the ten-month period, a pre-test was administered while the post-tests were administered after two weeks, two months, six months, with the final post-test after ten months. The study reveals that three groups that were given WCF performed better than group 4 in all the four post-tests administered and that the results have shown to corroborate other current studies on the English article use by Bitchener (2008), Sheen, (2007), Bitchener and Knoch, (2008a, 2008b, 2009). Furthermore, the enduring effect on the accuracy of ESL learners' writing beyond two months (and this study, ten months) provides evidence and merits to the role of WCF in assisting ESL learners with their level of accuracy in writing. Not only that, given that studies on WCF have been focusing on text revision, the findings of this

study have revealed that WCF has shown some positive effect on the acquisition of simple structures or forms of linguistics similar to those used in this study. This simply refutes the claim by Truscott (1996) that WCF is ineffective.

In another study by Farrokhi and Sattarpour (2012), they studied the efficacy of direct CF on the use of the English article system. Sixty L2 learners who were at high level of proficiency took part in the study. They were divided into two treatment groups and a control group. Treatment groups were provided with direct focused and direct unfocused WCF, respectively. As for the control group, no WCF was provided. All groups were required to write essays based on the pictures given for both the pre-test and post-test. The study found that focused WCF had more significant effects as compared to unfocused WCF on the L2 learners' performance.

In short, it is clear that the contrasting findings are not conclusive. Therefore, further studies on the effectiveness of WCF and its contribution to the process of language teaching and learning are very much needed.

2.7   Conclusion

This chapter has outlined some reviews on the past studies which are pertinent to this study where it centralises on the efficacy of WCF. Comprehensive discussions on the types of WCF and its significance in the learning of an L2 were discussed in this chapter. The next chapter will present the methods used in the present study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHOD

3.0 Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methods used in this study. The methods include data processing and analysis of this study. This chapter is divided into seven sections. The sections are participants, design, instrumentation, target structures, data collection procedures, analysis of data, and ethical considerations. These sections will show how data was analysed to answer the research questions of this study.

This study aimed to address some of the issues related to the efficacy of direct and indirect WCF on ESL learners' accuracy in writing. This study also attempted to find out whether different WCF types have an influence on the ESL learners' past tense use in their writing. The target grammatical structure was past tenses. To study if the ESL learners' accuracy in writing improves, they were required to write three descriptive essays. The first essay was written at the beginning of the study, which was the pre-test stage. The second essay was written as an immediate post-test, and the third essay was written as a delayed post-test. Errors made by the ESL learners in their essays were calculated to study the efficacy of direct and indirect WCF provided. Interview sessions were also conducted to study if there were other factors that influenced their writing performance on the use of past tenses with regards to direct and indirect WCF.

3.1 Participants

Participants for this study were sampled from the University of Malaya (UM). UM, undergraduates were chosen based on convenience sampling due to ease of access and availability of the sample. The participants chosen were ESL learners of the course, Mastering English VI (MEVI). All the participants have attained Band 4 in the MUET (see Figure 3.1) where Band 4 has been used as an English language requirement for Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) programmes by a majority of the

universities in Malaysia offering teacher education programmes (English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015-2025). Band 4 is equivalent to upper-intermediate level as it serves as a requirement of the said programme in those universities. This is a crucial selection criterion for sampling in this study as most past research (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008a; Bitchener et al. 2005; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010) focused on low and pre-intermediate level L2 learners of English. Therefore, it is crucial to investigate how direct and indirect WCF impact ESL learners with high intermediate level of proficiency.

Furthermore, the participants of this study were ESL learners majoring in undergraduate programmes at the university. A total of eighty (80) learners were selected from the total number of one hundred (100) ESL learners taking the MEVI course for this study. They were all from different groups taking the same course. They were all first-year undergraduates coming from different faculties of UM. Since all the ESL learners of the MEVI course have achieved MUET Band 4, it was reasonable to assume that the ESL learners' English language achievement would be quite similar. The next section of this chapter outlines the research design of this study.

AGGREGATED SCORE	BAND	USER	COMMUNICATIVE ABILITY	COMPREHENSION	TASK PERFORMANCE
260 – 300	6	Highly proficient user	Very fluent; highly appropriate use of language; hardly any grammatical error	Very good understanding of language and context	Very high ability to function in the language
220 – 259	5	Proficient user	Fluent; appropriate use of language; few grammatical errors	Good understanding of language and context	High ability to function in the language
180 – 219	4	Satisfactory user	Generally fluent; generally appropriate use of language; some grammatical errors	Satisfactory understanding of language and context	Satisfactory ability to function in the language

Figure 3.1: Description of Aggregated Scores

140 – 179	3	Modest user	Fairly fluent; fairly appropriate use of language; many grammatical errors	Fair understanding of language and context	Fair ability to function in the language
100 – 139	2	Limited user	Not fluent; inappropriate use of language; very frequent grammatical errors	Limited understanding of language and context	Limited ability to function in the language
Below 100	1	Very limited user	Hardly able to use the language	Very limited understanding of language and context	Very limited ability to function in the language

Figure 3.1, continued

3.2   Design

Creswell (2014) asserts that the purpose of the embedded design is to collect qualitative or quantitative data sequentially or concurrently and also to have one form of data play a supportive role to the other form of data. Qualitative data are needed to support the quantitative data collected as they are insufficient to provide insights to the research questions. The quantitative approach of this investigation was experimental using a pre-test, immediate post-test, and a delayed post-test method where it follows the Bitchener and Knoch (2008a, 2008b) studies to explore the efficacy of WCF in ESL learners' accuracy in their writing. The qualitative approach, on the other hand, was in the form of interviews.

In this study, data collected quantitatively came from the pre-test, immediate post-test and delayed post-test where the scores for each writing task provided statistical information; and data collected from interview sessions which were qualitative in nature offered insights from the ESL learners' own words. Both methods were used to explore the differential effects of direct WCF and indirect WCF on improving learners' accuracy in writing. The next section outlines the instrumentation used in this study.

3.3 Instrumentation

This study was conducted by collecting quantitative and qualitative data using a pre-test, immediate post-test, delayed post-test, writing correction symbols, and interviews.

3.3.1 Writing Tasks

The tests were administered through writing tasks. Two different types of writing prompts were used to elicit descriptive writing from the participants. They were adapted from Purnawarman (2011). The writing prompts were chosen because they are considered to be reliable as the writing prompts had been piloted. Instructions given to the ESL learners were designed to ensure the production of verb tense. The ESL learners were required to produce three essays; two essays using Writing Task 1 (pre-test and immediate post-test) **(Appendix A)** and an essay using Writing Task 2 (delayed post-test) **(Appendix B)**. The ESL learners were provided with a list of writing correction symbols **(Appendix C)** to help them understand the indirect WCF given. The writing samples collected from the tests were used to answer Research Question 1.

3.3.2 Interview

Interview sessions were conducted with ESL learners from direct and indirect WCF groups. Twelve participants; six from direct WCF group and six from indirect WCF group were selected to be interviewed. Each group consisted of three ESL learners who performed the best, and three who improved the least (see Figure 3.5 for formula). Interview sessions were conducted to garner more insights on the problems faced by the ESL learners and how they resolved these problems when indirect WCF was given to them. In order to be able to collect the necessary information from the interview sessions, they were conducted in the Malay language as the ESL learners chosen were more comfortable expressing themselves in the Malay language. The responses

collected from the interviews were used to answer Research Question 2. The interview questions were:

- What are the problems you face when doing corrections based on the symbols or direct corrective feedback given, without help from teacher and friends?

- Do you find your teacher or friends' assistance useful when doing corrections? Why?

- Overall, does corrective feedback help you in your writing? If yes, how does it help you? If not, why do you think it is not helpful?

3.4   Target Structures

Bitchener (2008a) notes that to measure the efficacy of WCF, it is crucial that the aspect of error is not too broad. This is because if the aspects of error are vast, to determine precisely where the errors lie will be impossible. Due to that, this present study focused only on the structural error of the past tense, which was a treatable error. Elaboration on treatable error can be found in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. The choice of the target structure of this study was based on two sources. The first source was based on a number of findings from a number of studies carried out in the Malaysian context on ESL learners' writing. The studies (Darus et al., 2007; Darus & Subramaniam, 2009; Janaki, Chithra, & Karen, 2013) have found that Malaysian ESL learners made a lot of past tense errors in their writing.

The second source was taken from other studies on WCF. Bitchener et al. (2005) found that L2 learners who participated in their study made the most errors in the categories of simple past tense, definite article, prepositions. In this study, the WCF provided was shown to have a significant effect on the L2 learners' accuracy in writing when they produced a new essay. The findings of this study are significant, given that past tense use is determined by the rules of grammar; thus, it is categorised as treatable. To quote

Btichener et al. (2005), "the past tense was amenable to written and oral feedback". Hence, based on these two sources as discussed, the present study chose to focus on the usage of past tense as the target structure. The next section of this chapter will elaborate on the data collection procedures of the present study.

3.5   Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected over a period of 15 weeks. The study has two parts of data collection; writing tasks and interview. The overview of a two-part data collection procedure is as follows:

Pre-Task Phase

During-Task Phase

Post-Task Phase

```
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │ 80 undergraduates from UM's│
                    │ Mastering English VI course│
                    └──────────────────────────┘
                                │
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │    Pre-Test (Week 2)       │
                    │  • Narrative writing task  │
                    │    (Writing Task 1)        │
                    └──────────────────────────┘
                                │
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │    Treatment (Week 3)      │
                    │  • Direct WCF for Group 1  │
                    │  • Indirect WCF for Group 2│
                    └──────────────────────────┘
                                │
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │ Immediate Post-Test (Week 3)│
                    │  • Narrative writing task  │
                    │    (Writing Task 1)        │
                    └──────────────────────────┘
                                │
                    ┌ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┐
                          12 Weeks
                    └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘
                                │
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │  Delayed Post-Test (Week 15)│
                    │  • Narrative writing task  │
                    │    (Writing Task 2)        │
                    └──────────────────────────┘
                                │
                    ┌──────────────────────────┐
                    │ Interview Sessions (Week 15)│
                    │  • 6 students from Group 1 ─┐(3 improved the most & 3
                    │  • 6 students from Group 2 ─┘ improved the least)
                    └──────────────────────────┘
```

Figure 3.2: Overview of Data Collection Procedure

The two-part data collection procedure was designed as three phases: the pre-task phase, during-task phase and post-task phase. All the ESL learners were placed into two groups

equally. In Week 1, the ESL learners were briefed on the study and the first writing task (pre-test) was given out to the ESL learners in Week 2. Forty minutes were allocated for the ESL learners to complete their writing task. The time limit imposed followed the format of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Writing Task 2 where the time limit was considered to be sufficient for the ESL learners to complete the writing task given.

There was a one-week break between the pre-test and the immediate post-test. The ESL learners were not required to do any take-home tasks during the break. The writing samples collected in Week 2 were graded with WCF given during the one-week break. Group 1 was given direct WCF and Group was given indirect WCF. For Group 1 (direct WCF), each error was marked, and the correct form was provided at the top of the error. An example is as provided in Figure 3.3 below:

---

were   **screamed**
Before we ~~are~~ asked to read the paragraph by Miss Tan yesterday, she ~~scream~~ at us. We
did   understand   words
~~do~~ not ~~undertand~~ all the ~~word~~.

Figure 3.3: Example of Direct WCF

As for Group 2, correction in terms of writing correction symbol was used and provided. All the members of Group 2 were provided with the writing correction symbols with oral explanations. Example of indirect WCF is provided as below:

VT   **VT**
Before we ~~are~~ asked to read the paragraph by Miss Tan yesterday, she ~~scream~~ at us. We
VT   Sp   PS
~~do~~ not ~~undertand~~ all the ~~word~~.

Figure 3.4: Example of Indirect WCF

In Week 3, before the ESL learners were given the second task (immediate post-test) their graded with WCF writing task was returned to them. They were given about thirty minutes to read through their graded writing task and correct their errors. For Group 1, the members were asked to correct their errors based on the direct WCF provided. As for Group 2, the members were asked to correct their errors based on the writing correction symbols indicated in their essays. The ESL learners were allowed to seek assistance from the ESL educator or their peers if they could not rectify their errors. After that, the graded task was collected, and they were instructed to start on their second task (immediate post-test). The second writing task was collected when the ESL learners completed the task. The first and second writing tasks were on the same topic. This is because, as part of the writing process, which is to help ESL learner improve their writing skills, ESL learners are to rewrite their essay based on the WCF provided by their ESL educator.

The ESL learners were given a twelve-week break before the last task (delayed post-test) was given to them in Week 15. At this juncture, the ESL learners started on their last task (delayed post-test) without being given their essay, the first writing task. In order to ensure the originality of the essay produced, all ESL learners were not allowed to complete the delayed post-test at home.

After all the delayed post-test writing tasks were collected, short interview sessions were conducted. Six ESL learners from each group were chosen, of which three were those who performed the best and three improved the least. With the written consent of the ESL learners, the interview sessions were recorded. Via the interview sessions, the ESL learners expressed and gave their opinions on some of the obstacles they encountered when dealing with the correction based on the WCF provided.
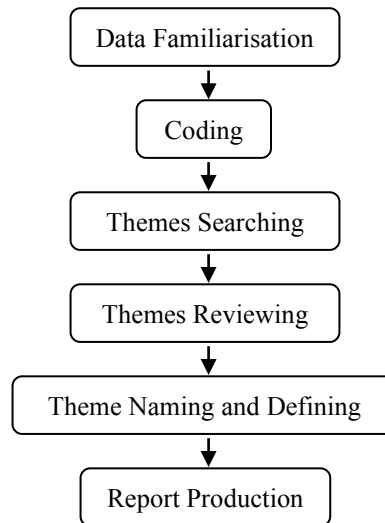
3.6   Analysis of Data

Descriptive analysis was employed to analyse and report the percentage on the wrong usage of the targeted function. Each target error category was marked according to whether they are correct or incorrect in order to measure the accuracy rate. For example, in a script, six inaccurate usages of the target structures from ten obligatory occasions will mean a 60% error rate. Example of how the error rate is calculated:

$$\text{Error Rate} = \frac{\text{Total number of incorrect past tense used}}{\text{Total number of correct and incorrect of past tense used}} \times 100$$

Figure 3.5: Formula for Calculating Error Rate

As for the information gathered from the interviews, it was translated into English and verified by a peer who had attended the General Translation Course by the Malaysian Institute of Translation & Books (ITBM) before the information was classified into different categories based on a thematic approach. This analytical approach was chosen to identify the detailed account of different patterns and themes emerging from the responses. The model which has been chosen was the model suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Figure 3.6 below shows the six phases of thematic analysis, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006):

```
┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Data Familiarisation  │
└─────────────────────────┘
             │
             ▼
       ┌──────────┐
       │  Coding  │
       └──────────┘
             │
             ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│    Themes Searching     │
└─────────────────────────┘
             │
             ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│    Themes Reviewing     │
└─────────────────────────┘
             │
             ▼
┌───────────────────────────────┐
│   Theme Naming and Defining    │
└───────────────────────────────┘
             │
             ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐
│    Report Production    │
└─────────────────────────┘
```

Figure 3.6: Phases of Thematic Analysis

3.7   Ethical Considerations

Consents from the relevant authorities and ESL learners (participants) were obtained before the study was conducted. This is to ensure that no rule of the institution is violated as well as the code of practice as a researcher. Furthermore, pseudonyms were used to maintain the privacy confidentiality of the ESL learners.

3.8   Conclusion

Chapter 3 of this dissertation has presented the crucial process of how this research study was conducted. The following chapter will elaborate on the findings and the discussion of findings.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0   Introduction

The present study has been conducted with its central focus on the efficacy of direct and indirect WCF on the use of past tense by ESL learners at the upper-intermediate level. As described in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, direct and indirect WCF were given to their writing. In addition to the two types of WCF given, interview sessions were also conducted to gather information on other possible factors that might affect the effectiveness of WCF given. With the data collected for this study, the following research questions were answered.

1. To what extent does learners' accuracy in the use of past tenses improve as a result of direct and indirect WCF?

2. What are the ESL learners' perceptions of WCF on their writing?

4.1   Research Question 1

To answer Research Question 1, descriptive statistics of the study is presented as Table 4.1. The percentage of the wrong usage of the targeted function forms the reference of comparison in this present study. As described in Chapter 3, each category of targeted error was marked according to whether they are correct or incorrect in order to measure the accuracy rate. For example, in a script, six inaccurate usages of the target structures from ten obligatory occasions will mean a 60% error rate.

Table 4.1: The Mean Percentage of Error of the Direct and Indirect WCF Groups

	Direct WCF Group (G1)			
	Test	Mean (%)	N	Standard Deviation
Pair 1	Pre-Test	25.47	40	5.86
	Immediate Post-Test	20.56	40	7.89
Pair 2	Immediate Post-Test	20.56	40	7.89
	Delayed Post-Test	15.65	40	3.65
	Indirect WCF Group (G2)			
	Test	Mean (%)	N	Standard Deviation
Pair 1	Pre-Test	26.14	40	6.55
	Immediate Post-Test	21.29	40	4.08
Pair 2	Immediate Post-Test	21.29	40	4.08
	Delayed Post-Test	16.76	40	3.43

Based on Table 4.1, the ESL learners who received direct and indirect WCF had made fewer errors in the immediate post-test where they made 20.56% and 21.29% of errors respectively as compared to pre-test where they made 25.47% and 26.14% respectively as indicated as Pair 1 in G1 and G2 respectively. The reduction partially supports the findings of Bitchener & Knoch (2010), Bitchener et al. (2005), and Bitchener & Knoch (2008), and where the findings noted some positive effect of WCF. The result shown in G1 (Pair 1) can be attributed to the fact that the ESL learners who showed improvement had read through the WCF provided to them, noticed the corrected forms of the target structure and understood the forms through the treatment session before producing the correct forms in their immediate post-test. As for G2 (Pair 1), it can be seen that the ESL learners generally made fewer errors in their immediate post-test. This indicates that upper-intermediate ESL learners of English can self-edit their errors based on the symbols given.

Both G1 (Pair 1) and G2 (Pair 2) have shown that the ESL learners concerned were able to access prior knowledge they gained from the WCF given to them and use this knowledge when writing for their immediate post-test. Generally, both direct and

indirect WCF have shown to be effective in assisting ESL learners to improve their writing performance.

Furthermore, in delayed post-test, both direct and indirect WCF groups continued to make fewer errors as compared to their immediate post-test, which were 15.65% and 16.76% respectively. The positive effect based on the delayed post-test results for both types of WCF seemed to suggest that WCF has a positive effect over time, and it can assist ESL learners in their accuracy of writing over time. This finding corroborates the findings by studies (Bitchener et al. 2005; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008a, 2008b; Bitchener, 2008) which have discovered that the employment of WCF appeared to have a positive effect over time.

As shown in Table 4.1, the mean percentage of errors made for the direct group is slightly lower than the indirect group in the pre-test. The ESL learners from the indirect WCF made a mean percentage of error of 26.14% in pre-test while the direct group made only 25.47%. This indicates that there was not much difference in terms of their performance on the task. This supports Chieng's (2014) observation that WCF may be more advantageous to more proficient writers as compared to less proficient writers in assisting ESL learners with their grammatical errors. Therefore, it is reasonable to assert that the efficacy of WCF should be almost the same between the groups where the level of proficiency of both groups is almost the same.

Based on the same table, the ESL learners who received direct and indirect WCF made a mean percentage of error of 20.56% and 21.29% in immediate post-test, respectively. The difference in the mean percentage of error was 0.73%. The trend was the same where the ESL learners who were provided with direct WCF made a lower mean percentage error as compared to those who received indirect WCF in the pre-test.

In delayed post-test, the trend remained the same where the ESL learners who received indirect WCF made a higher mean percentage of error as compared to those who were given direct WCF. The direct WCF group made a mean percentage of error of 15.65%, which was 1.11% lower than those who received indirect WCF. The difference indicates that direct WCF had more positive effects when compared to indirect WCF as after the treatment in Week 3, those ESL learners who received direct WCF made fewer errors when compared to those who received indirect WCF. The result does not corroborate the claim by Katayama (2007) that direct WCF was ineffective where ESL learners were not given the opportunity to recognise and self-correct their errors but merely allowed the ESL learners to copy the correction given. It is noteworthy that in this study, the ESL learners were not merely copying the correction provided because during the treatment session, the ESL learners were asked to look at the errors corrected, and the ESL educator explained the reasons behind the errors corrected. Not only that, questions from the ESL learners regarding the corrected errors during the treatment session showed that the ESL learners did not just copy the correction but understood the errors. The willingness of the ESL learners asking questions regarding their errors could be attributed to the fact that they had high motivation to learn from their errors as the ESL learners belong to the upper-intermediate level of proficiency.

4.2   Research Question 2

Interview sessions were conducted with twelve ESL learners, where six were from direct and indirect WCF group, respectively. As the ESL learners came from different first language background, the Malay language and English language were allowed during the interview sessions. Also, in this study, informal English was allowed as the ESL learners use informal English in their daily communication. This allowed them to express themselves more comfortably when answering the interview questions.

Furthermore, they were also allowed to express any negative feelings and opinions during the interviews.

Topics posed during the interview sessions include: a) the problems they faced when WCF was employed; b) strategies of WCF they employed when facing with the problems, and c) suggestions on both WCF. All the interview sessions were audio-recorded. Based on the responses from the ESL learners, the thematic analysis based on a six-phase model by Braun & Clarke (2006) was used. Based on the thematic analysis, the main themes that emerged were learners' attitude towards the WCF given, learners' thinking effort, and scaffolding.

4.2.1 Learners' Attitude towards the WCF Given

From the interview sessions, learner attitude towards the WCF given was the first theme (factor) identified which influenced the ESL learners' accuracy in writing in the use of past tenses with regards to direct and indirect WCF. Drawing from the sessions with the ESL learners, both direct and indirect groups agreed that the WCF provided had helped them in writing better essays. An excerpt of learners' responses towards the direct WCF given is shown below.

Learner 1	:	Kalau saya corrective feedback sangat membantu saya sebab yang pertama bila saya buat satu ayat bila saya salah, dia menunjukkan apa yang saya salah. Then bila saya pembetulan tu membetulkan saya daripada kesalahan saya buat tadi la dan saya tak mengulangi apa yang saya buat tadi. Itu yang berjaya membantu dan sangat membantu saya.
Translation -		*For me, corrective feedback helps me a lot because first, when I write a sentence, and if it's wrong, the feedback will show me what I did wrong. Then, when I read the feedback, I will be able to make those corrections, and I will not repeat the same mistake. Feedback has helped me a great deal.*
Learner 2	:	aaa… corrective feedback ini dia bantu saya untuk menulis karangan dengan betul dengan bantuan apa nama tu, grammar yang grammatical mistake aaa… writing mistake and so on…

> *Translation -* *Corrective feedback helps me write my essays accurately and avoid those grammatical mistakes and writing mistakes.*

Based on the excerpt above, it could be seen that Learner 1 and Learner 2 preferred the use of WCF provided by the ESL educator over no WCF. This is because both the ESL learners thought that the direct WCF given was very useful in helping them improve their writing accuracy. Learner 1 preferred direct WCF because the feedback provided was able to serve as a source of reference of correct forms and structure. As for Learner 2, this ESL learner expressed similar preference as the feedback provided helped her write her essays more accurately. The preference expressed by both ESL learners can be attributed the fact that direct WCF is clear and easy to be understood by ESL learners. These findings seem to corroborate the study by Farjadnasab and Khodashenas (2017) where they assert that the advantage of direct WCF is that specific guide is provided by the L2 educators to the L2 learners on how they should correct their errors. Furthermore, direct WCF will be a more preferred method over no WCF, especially to ESL learners who are not able to self-correct the errors.

Whilst the learners from the direct WCF group's attitude towards WCF seemed to be positive, the ESL learners from the indirect WCF group seemed to face some difficulties at the initial stage when the indirect WCF was given. An excerpt of the learners' responses towards the indirect WCF given is shown below.

Learner 3	:	Ada sesetengahnya bila correction yang diberikan, ia perlukan bimbingan juga sebab saya tidak faham simbol yang cikgu bagi walaupun senarai simbol diberikan. Saya faham lepas cikgu jelaskan makna simbol-simbol itu.
Translation -		*For some feedback given, guidance is needed because I didn't understand the correction symbols even though the list of symbols has been given. I understood the symbols after explanation was given.*

Learner 4	:	Saya tidak faham simbol yang diberikan pada mulanya saya baca dan agak susah untuk saya betulkan kesalahan saya walapun saya rujuk kepada senarai yang sir bagi. Selepas sir explain saya faham. Saya rasa. Selepas itu saya dapat betulkan kesalahan saya. Saya tengok simbol untuk betulkan kesalahan.
Translation -		*Initially, I had no idea what the symbols mean and struggled to correct my errors using the list of symbols. After explanation was provided, I understood the symbols. I was able to correct my errors after that.*

Based on the excerpt above, Learner 3 and 4 seemed to be in confusion and did not understand the symbols used to indicate their errors in their essays. Although they did not understand at first, that did not demotivate them from seeking explanation from their ESL educator. Both the ESL learners said that they understood the symbols after the explanation was given. For clarity, the explanation was provided orally when asked. Based on the excerpt above, it is clear that explanation has a crucial role to play in facilitating the impact of indirect WCF. Indirect WCF on its own may not be able to achieve its intended purpose and effect without the assistance of the ESL educator who provides the said indirect WCF.

The determination of both Learner 3 and Learner 4 in understanding the writing correction symbols had helped them improve their essays. This indicates that learners who were provided indirect WCF might have face difficulties in understanding the writing correction at first when the symbols were introduced to them and with their continuous effort, they were able to understand the symbols with the assistance from their ESL educator. This seemed to suggest that with the assistance of ESL educators in providing explanation on indirect WCF given, ESL learners are able to perform better in their written work when indirect WCF is provided. As noted by Bitchener and Knoch (2008a), indirect WCF may cause confusion initially when L2 learners try to understand the writing correction symbols. However, this confusion can be quickly overcome by

the L2 learners if they are determined to understand these writing correction symbols with the help from their L2 educators. As for Learner 3 and Learner 4, they may be driven by their motivation to correct their errors after they were unsuccessful in the first few attempts which had motivated them to explore further. This can be supported by the explanation offered by Skehan (1989). He states that L2 learners may be motivated to do something when they understand what they are doing and their surrounding (classroom). Therefore, when L2 learners receive WCF from their L2 educators, they will expect to find out more about the errors that they have made. This expectation will help them notice their errors and seek out the correct form or structures of the TL based on the errors made.

Based on the interview sessions, both the direct and indirect groups of ESL learners seemed to prefer the types of WCF given to them over no WCF. This can be due to the fact that they were able to comprehend the explanation given whenever there was confusion, and this has helped them correct their errors based on the WCF given. It is noteworthy that when the ESL learners were able to cope with the WCF provided by their ESL educators, they would be more accepting towards the WCF provided and with that positive attitude towards the WCF provided, they would be able to benefit from the effect of WCF in their language learning journey.

Generally, all the learners who were chosen for the interview sessions believed that WCF could help them improve their accuracy in writing. This seems to corroborate the findings by Kang and Han (2015), and Abadikhah and Ashoori (2012). Kang and Han (2015) notes that WCF can help improve the accuracy of writing. However, the efficacy is dependent on other variables such as the context, the nature of the written task and the L2 learners' level of proficiency. As for Abadikhah and Ashoori (2012), they assert that the positive effect of WCF can be attributed to the fact that the WCF provided allows

the L2 learners to engage in hypothesis-testing. The following subsection will discuss the second factor.

4.2.2 Learners' Thinking Effort

The second factor that emerged from the data collected was the learners' thinking effort. An excerpt of learners' response towards direct WCF given is shown below.

Learner 5	:	Ok, aaaa… ya, sangat membantu because hrmmm… direct corrective feedback tu semua dah ada semua dah state dia punya semua dah state answer. Senang difahami.
Translation -		*Ok, it was very helpful because, for direct corrective feedback, all the feedback was stated clearly with answers stated. Easily understood.*
Learner 6	:	aaa… corrective feedback ini dia bagi saya jawapan terus. Saya baca dan salin sahaja. Tapi bila baca balik… hmmm, saya tak perlu salin sebab senang untuk faham. Nak tahu apa kesilapan pun senang.
Translation -		*This corrective feedback gave me the answer to my errors straight. I needed to just read and copy the answer. But when I read again, I don't think I need to copy because it is easily understood. It is also easy to know the mistakes.*

Based on excerpt above, both Learner 5 and Learner 6 noted that the direct WCF was easily understood because the correction was very clear. Learner 6 noted that he just needed to read and copy the answer as the effort needed was minimal. This was due to the fact that when he first received the feedback, it was clear and straightforward, he just copied without understanding the errors. In other words, it was effortless, and there was little thinking involved in understanding the errors made which had been corrected by the ESL educator. This observation supports Bitchener and Knoch's (2008a) assertion that direct WCF is clear and straightforward because there is no delay for the L2 learners to realise whether their own believed correct forms and structures are correct or otherwise. It can be observed that automatic processes were involved when L2 learners corrected their errors via the direct WCF because it took little to no effort by

the L2 learners to understand the errors made. The same has been asserted by Ryan et al. (2017), where they assert that automation in processing requires little thinking. The speed of such a process is presumed to require no consciousness. Although it requires almost no effort in thinking, the L2 learners seemed to prefer direct WCF on the ground that the feedback was clear and straightforward. Hence, the chances of them facing any problems when doing their correction are very minimal.

When direct WCF is compared with indirect WCF, the latter requires more thinking effort as ESL learners would need to correct their errors on their own. At the initial stages of L2 learning, controlled processes will regulate the ESL learners' information processing mechanism. In addition, a lot of thinking effort is needed in controlled processes where these are mostly done consciously and under the voluntary effort of the ESL learners (Ryan et al., 2017). Controlled processes are used with the input given to and received by ESL learners, where this input consists of unfamiliar or new pieces of information. This situation can be explained by the following excerpt as shown below.

Learner 7	:	Aaaaa… mula-mula saya tak faham sir. Bila sir minta tanya soalan, saya pun tanyalah. Lepas sir bagi tau maksud, saya ada fikir. Saya juga ada tengok contoh yang sir bagi. Lepas itu saya faham. Tapi esei yang last jauh sangat dengan yang kedua, saya tak ingat balik simbol-simbol yang sir bagi tau. So saya akan tanya sir balik. Sekarang saya faham lebih sikit daripada dulu. Hari itu masa saya tulis dalam English saya ingat.
Translation -		*In the beginning, I didn't understand. I asked for explanation when you opened for questions. From the explanation, I did some thinking and looked at the examples given you. I understood after that. However, the last essay was too far away from the second essay, and I couldn't remember the symbols given. So, I asked you again. I think I understand them better now. The other day when I wrote in English, I remembered (the rules/errors).*

Based on the excerpt above, Learner 7 noted that she found the indirect WCF to be helpful when she had to put in effort in understanding the errors she had made. This

process that she had undertaken required controlled processes where a lot of thinking effort was involved. As stated above, Ryan et al. (2017) note that thinking effort which goes beyond noticing could be the factor which impacts the learning outcome of ESL learners. Based on Figure 4.4, this can be observed. Learner 7 could already notice her own mistakes when writing in English.

Leow (2015a) notes that attention has a crucial role to play during the initial stages of language acquisition which involves the process of acquisition from input to output. Some of the SLA previous studies, such as McLaughlin's (1987) theory of cognitive notes the role of attention in the processing of input by L2 learners. The indirect WCF given to Learner 7 had allowed her to carry out adequate thinking into her own output which was incorrect and compared this output with the WCF she received. Hence, feedback on error and the process of error correction should work together in order for the ESL learners to benefit from the WCF fully.

When Learner 7 carried out hypothesis-testing on her own after she had received the indirect WCF from her ESL educator, the mental processing continued, and this process became effective as a result of her focusing on one grammatical aspect (error). Her attention was on the correct form and structure of past tenses. This process can be related a study done by Cumming (1995, cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2006) where the study found that ESL learners focused more on form-focused feedback when they were learning for academic purposes. Not only that, but Ellis (2009) also notes that when a specific linguistic rule is focused, WCF will be able to promote the process of learning and acquisition effectively. This can be attributed to the fact that ESL learners have limited L2 processing capacity. Besides, they may not be able to handle the errors corrected, which cover a lot of grammatical forms and structures (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009), which will render WCF to be ineffective. Fortunately, in this study, Learner 7

was able to benefit from the WCF provided, although there was a delay caused by hypothesis-testing. The next subsection will discuss the final factor identified in the interview sessions conducted.

4.2.3 Scaffolding

Wood, Bruner, and Ross (1976, in McLeod, 2019) refer to scaffolding as essential task elements that are specific in nature which at the initial stage of learning are above the learning understanding of an L2 learner. L2 Learners may understand specific grammatical rules that they were taught but may not be able to do the correction on their own. Therefore, scaffolding should be carried out by L2 educators based on the L2 learners' needs (Van De Pol et al., 2015). The interview session conducted found that all the ESL learners agreed that scaffolding helps them in their error correction. An excerpt on the learners' response towards teacher and peers' scaffolding is as shown below.

Learner 8	:	Saya lebih kepada berjumpa dengan kawan la sebab kawan lebih rapat dan saya dapat berjumpa dengan kawan yang lebih hebat dalam bahasa dan dalam satu satu subjek itu la. Tapi kalau saya nak berjumpa dengan cikgu, cikgu lebih, pada sekarang cikgu lebih agak sibuk juga la dengan subjek yang dia ajar.
Translation -		*I prefer to consult friends because friends are close, and I will be able to meet friends who are good in language and some subjects that we study. I can consult a teacher, but he or she is busy with the subject that he or she is currently teaching.*
Learner 9	:	Aaaaa… saya kalau for me I selalu cari kawan membantu sebab aaa… my vocab my English vocabulary very worse. I don't know why and then my aaa… grammar pun kurang and then dengan bantuan friend, kawan, saya boleh buat correction dengan betul.
Translation -		*For me, I always consult my friends because my English vocabulary is not that wide, and I have no idea why. And my grammar is poor. With my friends' assistance, I can make those corrections accurately.*

Based on excerpt above, scaffolding has been identified as one of the themes (factors). Both Learner 8 and Learner 9 noted that they preferred to seek assistance from their friends when they faced problems in doing the correction. Hence, it is reasonable to assert that WCF provided by ESL educators can be used as error detection whilst friends' assistance could help in discovering the correct forms for the errors made during the learning process. This is a clear impression that scaffolding in language classrooms seemed to have a role to play in the form of assistance. Based on the observation above; scaffolding can act as assistance to ESL learners in their language learning process.

Based on the excerpt above, the ESL learners preferred assistance from their peers, where the ESL educator's WCF served as error detection. This is something positive as scaffolding from peers usually comes with further discussion, and this promotes further exploration of the errors discussed. However, when the scaffolding comes only from the L2 educators, L2 learners tend to become inactive as it requires motivation for L2 learners to engage with the L2 educators. Otherwise, they will not be engaged during classroom instruction. Besides, Bijami, Kashef, and Nehad (2013) note that feedback given by peers would provide both social and cognitive advantages in the L2 writing classrooms. This can be attributed to the fact that when feedback is given by peers, it requires participation from the L2 learners themselves in the discussion. This will result in peer support in the language learning process.

In summary, language instruction scaffolding can come from peers, and it is not limited to only from the L2 educators. Regardless of how the scaffolding is being provided, this form of assistance can always help L2 learners correct their errors. When the situation permits, this assistance can promote a deeper understanding of the errors corrected. In the context of SLA, L2 learners require more assistance in their process of language

learning, and scaffolding serves as a support to this endeavour (Yamashita & Iizuka, 2017). When scaffolding has achieved its maximum impact, L2 learners will be able to move on to the next level of learning independently.

4.3   Conclusion

The findings of this study have been presented and discussed in this chapter. This chapter presented the key findings of this study, and the discussion was presented with reference to the two research questions of this study. Not only that, discussion of findings took into consideration the prior studies as well as other factors that may contribute to the results of this study. The next chapter, the concluding chapter will provide a summary of the key findings of this study, where implications and recommendations will be included in the same chapter.
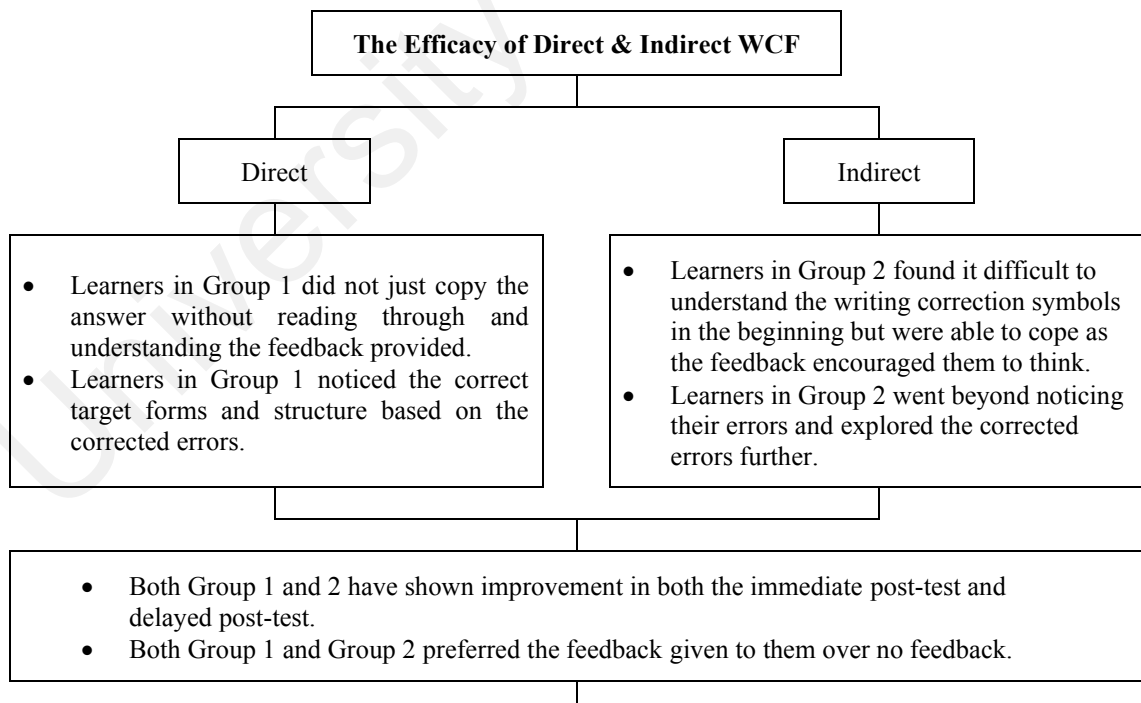
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION
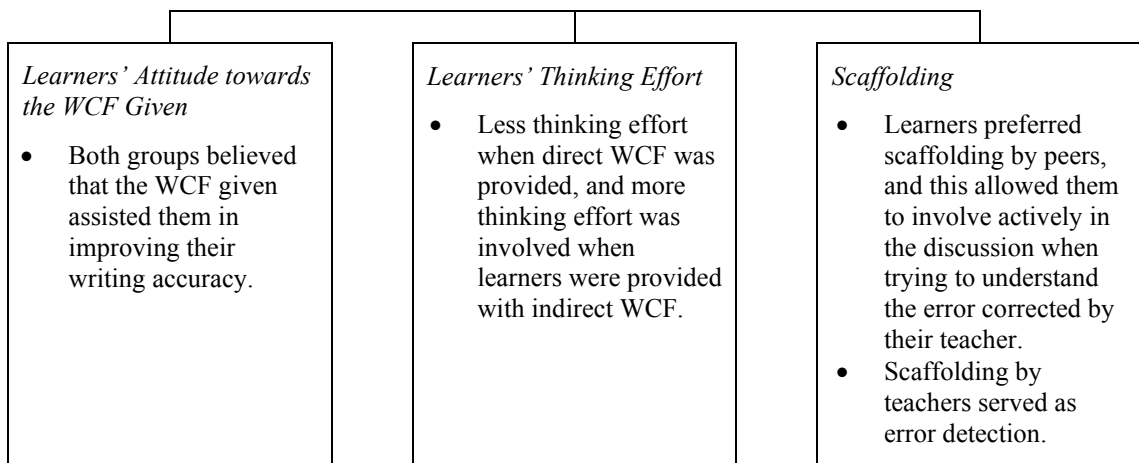
5.0   Introduction

The present study aims to study the efficacy of direct and indirect WCF on the use of past tenses amongst ESL undergraduate learners. The findings of this study have revealed that both the WCF types employed in this study had positive effects on the ESL learners' writing accuracy with ESL learners from the direct WCF group performed slightly better than the indirect WCF group ESL learners in both the immediate post-test and delayed post-test. This concluding chapter will present the conclusions of this study. Summary of key findings will be presented first followed by implications and, limitations and recommendations of the study.

5.1   Summary of Key Findings

The summary of key findings of the present study is as shown below in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1: Summary of Key Findings

Learners' Attitude towards the WCF Given	*Learners' Thinking Effort*	*Scaffolding*
• Both groups believed that the WCF given assisted them in improving their writing accuracy.	• Less thinking effort when direct WCF was provided, and more thinking effort was involved when learners were provided with indirect WCF.	• Learners preferred scaffolding by peers, and this allowed them to involve actively in the discussion when trying to understand the error corrected by their teacher. • Scaffolding by teachers served as error detection.

Figure 5.1, continued

Based on Figure 5.1, the first research question was answered when this study found that both Group 1 and Group 2 improved as a result of the employment of direct and indirect WCF. To note further, it can be seen that between these two types of WCF, both immediate post-test and delayed post-test revealed that the direct WCF seemed to have a better positive effect as compared to indirect WCF. This can be attributed to the fact that direct WCF is more apparent and more straightforward, and this allows the ESL learners to notice and subsequently correct their errors more efficiently.

As for the second research question, the thematic analysis revealed three main factors. They were learners' attitude towards the WCF given, learners' thinking effort, and scaffolding. For the first factor, both groups preferred the WCF types given to them as opposed to no WCF given. The direct WCF group found the CF given to be straightforward and clear whilst the indirect WCF group thought that the indirect WCF would be able to help them understand the corrected errors further through self-discovery.

The second factor was the learners' thinking effort. This factor seemed to have influence over the ESL learners' reduction in errors (past tense). The interview sessions conducted seemed to suggest that the indirect WCF encouraged the ESL learners to

explore the errors further as they were required to correct the errors themselves with only indications (symbols) provided by their ESL educator. Although direct WCF did not seem to require much thinking effort, the interview sessions also revealed that the ESL learners did not just copy the answers.

The final factor that emerged from the thematic analysis was scaffolding. The interview sessions revealed that ESL learners preferred scaffolding from peers as it allowed them to engage actively in the discussion when they were trying to correct their errors. As for the scaffolding from the ESL educator, the feedback provided served as error detection. The implications of the present study will be discussed in the following section.

5.2 Implications

In this section, the implications of the study will be discussed in two parts. They are methodological implications and pedagogical implication. The methodological implications will be first discussed in the next subsection below.

5.2.1 Methodological Implication

This study employed a mixed-method design where both qualitative and quantitative analyses were presented. This is to provide a more thorough explanation of the effects of direct and indirect WCF. Based on the method used, the pre-test-post-test design (experimental design) collected quantitative data for this study, whereas the interviews collected qualitative data for this study. The analysed quantitative data found that direct and indirect WCF have positive effects on the ESL learners' writing accuracy with direct WCF having a better positive effect as compared to indirect WCF. As for the interviews, the analysis revealed that the ESL learners faced difficulties, especially when they were given indirect WCF. When indirect WCF was given to the ESL learners, these ESL learners were given the writing correction symbols and given that not all ESL learners could understand the correction symbols at the same time given to

them; a further explanation was needed. This implies that ESL learners who are chosen to be given the indirect WCF needed to be taught and familiarised themselves with the writing correction symbols before the WCF can be given. The next subsection will discuss the pedagogical implications of the study.

5.2.2   Pedagogical Implication

Both the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study indicated that direct and indirect WCF could help ESL learners improve their writing accuracy. Based on the data collected, it has been revealed that ESL educators who are employing WCF will need to consider the proficiency level of the ESL learners. Indirect WCF would probably work better for ESL learners with a higher level of proficiency as the feedback requires ESL learners to work on the correction themselves independently. Both groups indicated that ESL educator's explanation helped them in understanding the corrected errors. Hence, ESL educators should include meta-linguistics explanation when WCF is employed. This will maximise the positive effect of WCF. The next section will discuss recommendations for future study.

5.3   Limitations and Recommendations

The present study collected data from only eighty ESL learners from the University of Malaya. Therefore, the results generated cannot be generalised and do not represent all the ESL Malaysian undergraduates. Therefore, for future study, it is recommended that more ESL learners from different universities are included in the study. Other criteria that can be considered will be the age, proficiency level of the ESL learners, and the ESL learners' background. This is to ensure that more thorough finding can be generated.

Not only that, the current study is limited to only a twelve-week gap between the immediate post-test and delayed post-test. For future study, a longer gap is recommended to further explore how long the effect of WCF can last.

Furthermore, in terms of analysis, the current study only employed simple descriptive statistics when analysing the quantitative data. This posed a threat to the reliability and validity of the findings. For future study, it is recommended that reliability and validity test is carried out to generate more reliable and valid findings.

5.4   Conclusion

The present study showed that to some extent, direct and indirect WCF are both effective in helping ESL learners improve their writing accuracy when these feedback types are provided for the use of past tenses. The study found that indirect WCF had left a deeper impression amongst the ESL learners as it encouraged ESL learners to think and engage actively in a discussion when their peers are involved in scaffolding. The study further found that other factors that affect the efficacy of the said feedback types were learners' attitude towards the WCF given, learners' thinking effort, and scaffolding.

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