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Research Paper

Metalinguistic Explanations and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback: Exploring EFL Students' Emotions, Influencing Factors, and Perceptions

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Abstract

Although numerous studies have examined the effects of different types of teachers' written corrective feedback (WCF), research investigating students' emotions, the influencing factors, and their perspectives toward receiving a combined approach of WCF types remains limited within the EFL writing context. This study aimed to explore students' emotional responses to metalinguistic explanations and indirect WCF types, as well as the influencing factors, and to uncover students' perspectives using both WCF types. Guided by a narrative case study approach, data were gathered from students' written drafts and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that metalinguistic explanations enhanced students' motivation, satisfaction, and engagement in the learning process. They received direct guidance from the teacher to improve their micro-writing skills and explicitly develop their language knowledge. However, when the indirect WCF type was given, most students experienced frustration, confusion, and disengagement in self-correcting macro errors. The students' emotional reactions were affected by multiple factors, including their language proficiency, past experiences with teacher feedback, beliefs about its importance, and the clarity and specificity of the teacher's WCF. Those with moderate to high proficiency, prior feedback familiarity, and positive attitudes toward feedback demonstrated higher resilience and viewed it as a supportive and productive approach for improving their writing skills.

Keywords: Metalinguistic Explanations, Essay Writing, Indirect WCF, Students' Emotional Responses

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1. Introduction

Teachers' written corrective feedback (WCF) plays an important role in guiding students to enhance the accuracy and quality of their writing skills. It is provided to guide students, highlight writing errors, and assist them in revising their texts to enhance the quality of their written work, thereby

developing autonomous learners in the future. Previous studies (e.g., Almanea, 2025; Diab, 2015; Mao & Lee, 2020) have reported that students who received teachers' WCF could make significant progress and have a vital role in their writing development. The primary effect of a teacher's WCF is the improvement in students' writing accuracy and fluency. By pointing out micro (grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics) and macro writing (content and logical organization) issues and providing explanations or corrections, teachers can help students recognize and rectify their mistakes. Over time, the feedback reinforces correct language usage and enhances students' writing skills, enabling them to produce accurate and fluent written work in the context of EFL and ESL classes.

Most attention on WCF in L1 and L2 writing research has been given over the past two decades to the effectiveness of WCF on writing accuracy, fluency, and skill development (Yu et al., 2020; Zhang & Mao, 2023). However, little is known about how students feel about receiving combined written feedback from teachers—such as metalinguistic explanations and indirect feedback—when it is used to address both major and minor writing issues, what influences their reactions, and how they view this type of feedback in a university setting. Han and Hyland (2019) found that students' emotional reactions to WCF were diverse and dynamic, varying across different contexts and situations. Additionally, Cheng and Liu (2022) argued that some students felt happy, encouraged, and engaged with WCF because they perceived it as helpful in revising their writing texts and acquiring language knowledge. In contrast, others reacted negatively, such as feeling frustrated, disappointed, or demotivated when receiving WCF types. These negative emotions influenced their motivation to revise, self-perception, and subsequent engagement with the feedback and learning tasks.

Therefore, it is essential for teachers to recognize the emotional effects their feedback may have on students and to foster a feedback environment that is both supportive and constructive. If students experience apprehension, they will be negatively engaged with the teachers' WCF, and consequently, they will not learn to write effectively, potentially producing weaker written products (Mahfoodh, 2017; Supiani et al., 2023). The emotions elicited by feedback are likely to influence its effectiveness in promoting students' learning. By fostering a positive affective atmosphere in the classroom, teachers can enhance learners' motivation, engagement, and well-being, leading to better learning outcomes. The longitudinal dimension of feedback is considered critical and influential for students' long-term learning, particularly in writing development.

This present study attempts to explore the emotional experiences—both positive and negative—of EFL students after receiving combined types of WCF. This study seeks to contribute to the expanding body of research on L2 writing by exploring students' emotional responses to the integrated use of metalinguistic explanation and indirect written corrective feedback (WCF). Additionally, it offers practical implications and insights for writing teachers who employ these feedback strategies.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Student Emotions: Theoretical Perspectives

Theoretical frameworks can help understand the nature and function of student emotions, guiding interventions to enhance their emotional well-being and learning outcomes. The following theoretical framework examines student emotions from three theoretical frameworks, namely social cognition, self-determination, and emotional intelligence. In the social cognitive framework, emotions result from a complex interplay of personal beliefs, goals, social norms, cultural values, and behavioral factors, including actions

and responses. Social cognitive approaches have focused on the psychological mechanisms that enable people to engage effectively with their surroundings, ascribe personal meaning to their activities, and plan and execute actions in accordance with their goals and standards (Caprara et al., 2012). Students' emotional responses to academic situations are shaped by their prior experiences. For example, learners who have experienced success in previous writing tests tend to exhibit greater confidence and a more positive attitude toward future writing assessments. Thus, students' pride in their achievement in particular academic subjects can predict performance (Shao et al., 2020). The next theory is called self-determination. The degree to which people affirm their activities at the highest level of thinking and engage in actions with a complete sense of choice is central to self-determination theory. Learners tend to experience positive emotions such as enjoyment, curiosity, and pride when they perceive autonomy and control over their own learning process. On the other hand, if they are forced or pushed to learn, they may experience unpleasant emotions such as anxiety, irritation, and boredom. As a result, any event that satisfies a person's intrinsic need for competence, autonomy, and relatedness boosts self-determined motivation (Bauer et al., 2019).

The last one is the emotional intelligence perspective. It generally leads to the assumption that the capacity to regulate and manage emotions makes people smarter. Santos et al. (2021) defined emotional intelligence as learning to identify, experience, understand, and express human emotions in healthy and productive ways. As a result, emotionally intelligent students can manage their emotions, negotiate social connections, and adjust to changing situations. From an emotional intelligence perspective, emotions are valuable information sources that can guide behavior and decision-making. Those who possess high emotional intelligence can perceive and interpret emotions in

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themselves and others, applying this understanding to navigate social relationships more effectively. They are skilled at managing their own emotions and responding empathetically and appropriately to the emotions of others (Joseph & Newman, 2010).

2.2 Different Types of WCF

In delivering WCF, teachers can employ various feedback types to enhance students' linguistic accuracy and fluency. These types include direct and indirect feedback, electronic and non-electronic feedback, as well as focused and unfocused feedback. First, direct feedback involves identifying and correcting errors in students' writing, enabling them to easily revise their errors and improve their writing (Supiani et al., 2023), while indirect feedback aims to guide students to discover errors on their own by providing cues or hints without correcting them but empowering their autonomous learning (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). In direct feedback, errors are underlined or highlighted, and corrections are provided in the margins or between the lines of the text. Indirect feedback, on the other hand, uses symbols, codes, questions, or clarification requests to indicate the location and type of error and prompts students to revise their writing (Ferris, 2004).

Second, electronic feedback can be delivered via computer software programs, e-mail, or online platforms, while non-electronic feedback involves handwritten comments on paper copies of students' writing. Electronic feedback is more efficient, time-saving, and convenient for teachers and students, but it may lack the personal touch and interactive qualities typically found in face-to-face feedback (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). Last, focused feedback targets specific aspects of language, such as grammar, vocabulary, or discourse, whereas unfocused feedback addresses multiple aspects of language simultaneously (Ellis et al., 2008). Focused feedback is more effective than unfocused feedback in improving students' accuracy and

fluency in L2 writing (Lee, 2020; Rodliyah et al., 2017). In addition, Various types of corrective feedback approaches have also been proposed, highlighting how these types are implemented in teachers' feedback practices (Ellis, 2009). These types are presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1

Types of Written Corrective Feedback Adapted from Ellis, 2009, p. 98

WCF Types	Description
Direct WCF	The teacher directly supplies the correct form for the student's error.
Indirect WCF	This approach involves pointing out that an error exists without providing the correct form. a) Indicating and locating the error: The instructor highlights or marks the exact position of the mistake in the text, often using underlining, circles, or symbols to show where something is missing. b) Indication only: The teacher signals that an error occurs in a particular line or section, typically by placing a mark or comment in the margin, but does not specify the precise location or type of mistake.
Metalinguistic WCF	The teacher gives hints or coded explanations about the type of error rather than the correction itself. a) Use of error codes: The instructor writes abbreviated codes in the margin (e.g., 'ww' for wrong word, 'art' for article) to indicate the category of the error. b) Brief grammatical description: The teacher assigns numbers to errors within the text and then provides a short grammatical explanation for each numbered error at the end of the paper.

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Focus of WCF	<p>This dimension concerns the scope of correction—whether the feedback addresses all errors or targets specific ones.</p> <p>a) Unfocused WCF: The teacher gives broad feedback by correcting a wide range of errors across the text.</p> <p>b) Focused WCF: The teacher limits feedback to one or two selected error types, providing more detailed attention to those areas.</p>
Electronic WCF	<p>The instructor marks an error in the text and attaches or links it to an online resource (such as a concordance file) that illustrates the correct usage through authentic examples.</p>
Reformulation	<p>A native or proficient speaker rewrites the student's entire text to make it linguistically natural while preserving the original meaning and content.</p>

According to WCF types, some studies have shown that different types of WCF have varying degrees of effectiveness depending on the type of error being corrected and the context in which the feedback is provided (Sheen, 2007). For example, direct feedback is effective for grammatical errors, while indirect correction may be more effective for content and organizational errors (Lee, 2008). Recasts tended to be effective for certain types of errors, such as tense and verb forms (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Hence, the selection of a particular type of WCF is influenced by the objectives of writing instruction, the nature of the errors being addressed, and the learners' individual needs and preferences. In this study, a combination of metalinguistic explanation and indirect WCF is employed. This integrated approach is intended to actively engage students in the writing process and provide them with meaningful experiences in applying WCF.

2.3 Factors Affecting Students' Emotions and Perceptions of WCF Types

The existing literature on the relationship between students' emotional responses and teachers' WCF is generally very limited and relatively scarce (Mahfoodh, 2017; Shields, 2015), and earlier studies often examined the effectiveness of the teachers' corrective feedback and investigated the theme of students' motivation and engagement with the teachers' WCF types and L2 writing. From the conceptual framework of the student engagement with teachers' WCF types on writing, emotion is a type of engagement that refers to students' feelings, reactions, and attitudinal responses toward WCF (Han & Hyland, 2019; Zhang & Hyland, 2018). It can stimulate students' interest and motivation to learn and directly affect their language learning, performance, and well-being (Shao et al., 2019).

While the students received WCF and responded to the commented drafts, their emotions and motivation fluctuated, and sometimes, some disagreed with accepting some teacher's feedback or refused to revise their work, implying negative responses to the use of the teacher's written feedback (Han & Hyland, 2019). These negative emotions arise from factors such as students' misunderstanding of written feedback, communication gaps with teachers, cultural disparities, and differing language learning backgrounds. The students' negative self-appraisals and attitudes, as well as their previous writing experiences, negatively impacted their behavioral and cognitive engagement. As a result, the disadvantageous factors contributed to unsuccessful writings (Mante-Estacio et al., 2019). Unsuccessful writings, such as those with lower writing quality or inadequate revisions, often reflect poor organization, unclear ideas, limited development, and persistent language errors. These issues may lack coherence, fail to address feedback effectively, or show minimal improvement across drafts, indicating weak writing skills and ineffective revision strategies.

Understanding students' emotions towards WCF types is a complex issue, significantly influenced by various factors and the socially constructed relationships between teachers and students (Han & Gao, 2021). Therefore, teachers have to understand students' characteristics sensitively, treat their students as individuals, and engage students by demonstrating how WCF is applied and processed. In addition to building and enhancing emotional engagement with WCF, teachers might give training, encourage, and approach individuals to respond positively to their WCF. Through these ways, the students might lessen their negative feelings and alter them into positive feedback, resulting in better quality writing texts (MA, 2018).

Furthermore, students' perception of WCF types is closely linked to students' emotions and impacts their engagement with the feedback. Students generally appreciate feedback that is seen as helpful, clear, and relevant to their specific writing needs. When feedback provides clear explanations, specific guidance, and actionable suggestions for improvement, it is viewed as valuable for the learning process (Suci et al., 2021). Conversely, ambiguous or confusing feedback can hinder students' comprehension and make it challenging for them to implement suggested changes effectively. Individual differences, such as prior writing experience, language proficiency, and self-confidence, also shape students' emotional and perceptual responses to corrective feedback. The delivery of feedback and the overall learning environment, including classroom culture and teacher-student relationships, play significant roles as well. Supportive and constructive feedback, delivered in a positive and approachable manner, fosters a more positive emotional response and encourages students' engagement with the feedback process (Mafulah & Cahyono, 2023). To obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the emotional and perceptual aspects of teacher feedback—especially when employing a combination of

metalinguistic explanations and indirect WCF—this study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. How do university students emotionally respond after receiving metalinguistic explanations and indirect WCF from their teacher on their writing drafts?
2. What factors influence individual students' emotional responses toward the combined use of metalinguistic explanation and indirect WCF?
3. What are their perceptions of using the combined WCF types?

3. Methods

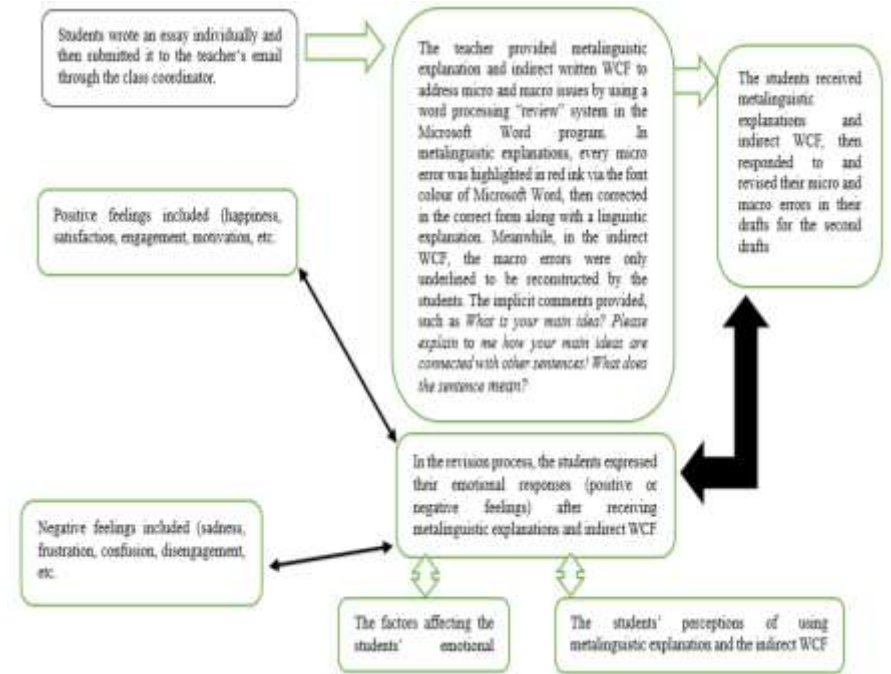
3.1 Research Design

Using the narrative case study design, this research sought to generate rich, detailed descriptions of students' emotional experiences while interacting with feedback from their teacher on essay drafts. The emphasis was placed on how students construed and interpreted feedback about their writing errors, and how this perception shaped their emotional reactions to the revision process. This design enabled the researchers to investigate the affective aspect of the types of feedback given in writing essays.

Figure 1.

Conceptual Framework for this Study

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This figure reveals the process of implementing metalinguistic explanations and indirect WCF, and then evoked EFL students' emotional changes. In the first step, students submitted essays that were reviewed by the teacher with Microsoft Word review functions. Metalinguistic explanations were used for micro errors, and indirect written WCF was used for macro writing errors. Students revised their drafts accordingly. The emotions students experienced during the revision process ranged from positive feelings, such as satisfaction and engagement, to negative ones, including frustration and confusion. These emotional variations were influenced by factors such as language proficiency level and the clarity of the feedback provided, and previous experiences influenced those emotional reactions. The figure also shows that both types of written feedback shaped students' perceptions throughout the process.

3.2 Participants and Context of the Study

This study was carried out in a second-semester essay writing course at a private university in Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan Province, Indonesia. The participants consisted of 20 first-year students (15 females and 5 males), aged between 18 and 19, enrolled in the English Language Education program under the Faculty of Education. Participants were selected using a convenience sampling technique, as they were easily accessible, available, and directly relevant to the research focus on students' emotional responses to WCF. This approach enabled the inclusion of students who were already taking the essay writing class and voluntarily agreed to participate. The participants represented various levels of writing proficiency, providing a range of perspectives on how learners with different abilities emotionally responded to metalinguistic explanations and indirect WCF. The characteristics of the participants are presented in the following table.

Table 2.

Demographic Information of the Participants

Participants' initial names	Gender	Writing performance score	Writing proficiency level
FAZ	Female	57	Low
MSR	Male	54	Low
CHN	Female	62	Low
AAR	Male	60	Low
TSK	Female	72	Moderate
RFA	Female	73	Moderate

According to a standardized institutional English proficiency test created and validated by the university's language center, the students were classified as intermediate-level English learners. The assessment was based on four main skills (reading, writing, listening, and grammar use) and in accordance with CEFR descriptors. Most of their writing proficiency was either weak or

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low. Only a few had a moderate level of proficiency. However, their thesis statements were unclear, and their organization was poor, with ideas presented in a disconnected or illogical order, along with grammatical, lexical, and mechanical errors. This intermediate level of fluency implies that students would have struggled to produce essays at the expected pass level in relation to structure, clarity, and accuracy.

The course of the essay writing was designed for students with weak competency levels to help them improve their skills. Structured instructions were delivered on topics including thesis statement, paragraph development, coherence and cohesion, lexical resources, grammar structures, and mechanics. It promoted scaffolded tasks and repeated practice in progressive learning. The integration of teacher-provided written corrective feedback, including metalinguistic and indirect WCF, allowed students to learn from their errors and improve their revisions. The course fostered a supportive learning environment that encouraged learner autonomy and emotional engagement, promoting reflection and motivation.

Thus, the students were introduced to essay writing structures and taught how to develop and organize ideas well. The writing aspects of the students' learning included macro and micro skills (e.g., writing a topic sentence/content, providing supporting sentences/details/evidence, organizing ideas, using grammatical forms, making vocabulary/lexical choices, and applying mechanics). They had to demonstrate these writing issues with a particular text genre throughout the semester. Throughout the semester, each student was required to produce opinion essays on various topics, with each essay ranging in length from 300 to 500 words. To uphold ethical research standards, all participants were treated with respect, and informed consent was obtained before data collection. Participants were guaranteed

confidentiality, and their participation was entirely voluntary, with the option to withdraw from the study at any point.

3.3 Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

Data for this present study were gathered from students' writing drafts and semi-structured interviews to examine their emotional responses to the combined use of metalinguistic explanations and indirect WCF on their essay drafts, as well as the factors influencing their emotions and perceptions of this feedback approach. Data collection began by assigning students to write individually a four- or five-paragraph essay of 300 to 500 words on the given topic and submitting their work to the teacher's email through the class coordinator for receiving metalinguistic explanation and indirect written feedback. After that, the teacher reviewed the students' essays in detail and pointed out every single error they made. In this stage, the teacher provided metalinguistic explanations and indirect WCF strategies to address micro and macro writing issues by using a word processing "review" system in the Microsoft Word program. With the metalinguistic explanation, every micro error was highlighted in red ink via the font color of Microsoft Word, then corrected in the correct form, along with linguistic explanations.

Meanwhile, in the indirect WCF, the macro errors were only underlined for the students to fix. The implicit comments provided include: *"What is your main idea? Please explain to me how your ideas are organized or connected with other sentences or paragraphs! What does the word or sentence mean?"* and so on. After supplying WCF, the teacher returned the students' drafts with metalinguistic explanations and indirect WCF via e-mail through the class coordinator for revision. In response to the combined types of WCF, the teacher instructed the students to focus comprehensively on the revisions, including both micro and macro errors. Then, they submitted the revised drafts to the teacher's e-mail through the class coordinator for being

reviewed and evaluated by the teacher to determine whether their new writing drafts still needed further revision. The students were provided three to five days to finish their revisions. Throughout the revision process, the teacher did not provide direct help but instructed them to find relevant ideas independently from external sources, such as Google searches. Moreover, the teacher allocated time for the students to consult or ask about their writing errors if needed. The students were also allowed to search for additional explanations or ideas from other online sources in order to enhance the accuracy and quality of their revisions. This method was used to observe how participants engaged with feedback alone and the impact of such feedback on emotional reactions and revision.

Table 3.

Timeline and Details of Metalinguistic Explanations and Indirect WCF Intervention

Phase	Activities	Feedback Type	Frequency of Feedback	Revision Time	Duration
Week 1	Students wrote and submitted their first essay draft on an opinion essay	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 week
Week 2	The teacher provided feedback using Microsoft Word's "Review" feature	Metalinguistic Explanation + Indirect WCF (questions, imperative sentences, and suggestions)	Once (per student draft)	N/A	1 week
Week 3	Students reviewed feedback and revised their drafts	Students engaged in self-revision	N/A	3-5 days	1 week
Week 4	Students consulted their writing errors with the teacher in or out of the class and navigated online learning resources to improve the accuracy and quality of their revisions	Students received valuable input or suggestions from the teacher on their revisions before submitting the final revision.	Once (per student draft)	N/A	1 week
Week 5	Students resubmitted revised drafts	N/A	N/A	N/A	1 week
Week 6	Reflections and semi-structured interviews with students	Reflection on the feedback experience	N/A	N/A	1 week

According to Table 3, the students did not rely solely on metalinguistic explanations combined with indirect WCF for their writing enhancement.

They also had chances to participate in additional feedback sessions during the revision process. These additional feedback opportunities were provided during consults or in face-to-face meetings when the work was returned in class, where students could seek clarification from teacher's advice and check whether the revisions met expectations. So, this iterative feedback ensured that the students received feedback two or three times on the same writing topic.

To this end, we solicited the participation of six students who shared their language proficiency, emotional response, and comprehension level regarding WCF types through interviews. English language proficiency was measured by students' institutional (i.e., admissions) English language proficiency test and writing performance in the course. In the meantime, their emotional responses to summative feedback were documented in written reflections, which learners submitted after each revision task. We chose interviewees who expressed a range of emotional responses—not only positive (e.g., motivated, encouraged) but also negative (e.g., sadness, frustration)—to ensure a fair mix of experiences. The comprehension of WCF was then observed based on how this feedback was understood and used by the students during revision. This was evident in their revised drafts and accompanying written responses detailing how they processed the feedback. In addition, it tried to understand their differences in emotional reactions as well as factors driving them, and impressions about learning experiences with combined types of the teacher's WCF practice who have revised in making revisions.

The duration of the interviews averaged 30 to 45 minutes, carried out via Zoom application or personal meetings at a venue according to participants' preference and convenience. Research ethics were considered in both the design and the informed consent form. Participants' identities were

anonymized, and data were stored securely to ensure confidentiality. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any point without any negative consequences. Each student produced one essay, which was used as the primary source of data for analysis. Each student wrote one essay for this study to analyze the data. Data analysis was carried out on two drafts per student: the first draft (prior to feedback) and the revised draft (after they received the integrated WCF). These drafts were used to see how students responded to feedback and improved their writing.

This study employed thematic analysis to investigate the data that could answer the research questions. All revisions from each student were analyzed, specifically focusing on the first and revised drafts after receiving combined types of written corrective feedback. No subset was selected; the complete set of revisions from all participants was included to ensure a comprehensive analysis of students' responses and writing improvements. The coding process was conducted by us as the researchers, who carefully analyzed the interview transcripts and students' writing drafts. The trustworthiness and credibility of the study's findings were ensured through peer checking and verification by a second coder experienced in qualitative research and L2 writing. The second coder independently reviewed a sample of the data and compared the coding results with those of the primary researcher.

This study adopted Braun and Clarke's (2006) framework for thematic analysis as a guide to inductively generate themes that capture significant aspects of the data in relation to the research questions and reflect patterned meanings within the dataset. This approach seeks to identify overarching themes across the entire dataset, rather than within individual data items such as single interviews or specific learning experiences, as commonly done in narrative or case-study analyses (Murray, 2003).

Related to this study, this thematic analysis sought to uncover students' narratives regarding their emotional reactions, the factors influencing those emotions, and their perceptions of the combined use of WCF in their drafts. To ensure inter-coder reliability, a second experienced coder coded the same sample of interview transcripts and writing data, using the very same coding scheme developed by the primary researcher. Their coded segments were then compared with one another for agreement. Inconsistencies between coders were discussed collaboratively until consensus was obtained, resulting in refinements to the coding framework where necessary. Following this, the transcripts were read and reread in an iterative process to develop a comprehensive understanding of the dataset. They followed this up with an 'initial coding' to identify the interesting aspects of students' interviews within all of their data. Subsequently, the initial themes were searched through by subcategorizing and thematizing codes. Every theme was screened regarding coherence and continuity, as well as representative narratives. The analysis of data transcription was conducted through data reduction and coding with a focus on how to address the main research questions. Furthermore, interview data were repeatedly listened to and read in order to find thematic subheadings and key points related to the study.

Figure 2.

Data Collection and Analysis Process

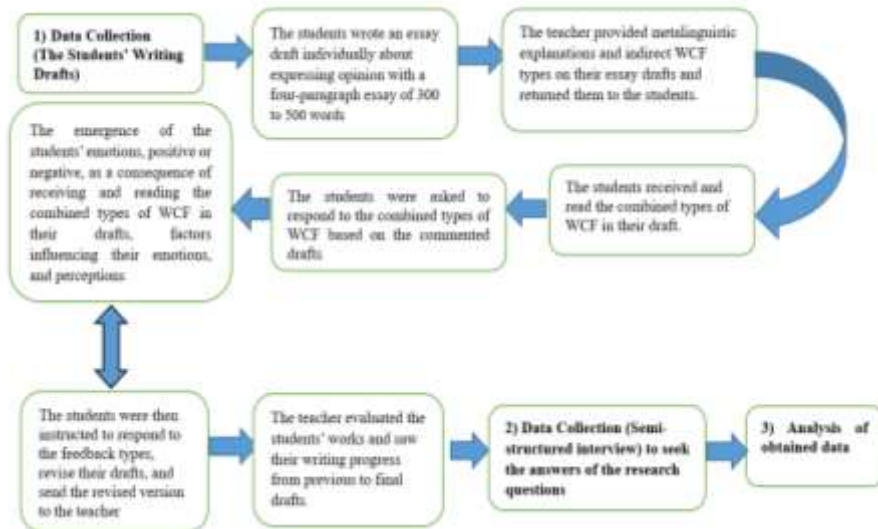


Figure 2 depicts the procedures used for data collection and analysis in the study exploring students' emotional reactions to WCF. Students first wrote individual opinion essays. The teacher subsequently gave a combination of metalinguistic explanations and indirect WCF. The students were instructed to review the feedback and revise their drafts accordingly. Once revisions were completed, the drafts were resubmitted for further evaluation. Following this process, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore students' emotional reactions, the factors influencing these responses, and their perceptions of the feedback. The last stage was analyzing data. The figure visually connects each step and highlights the flow between essay drafts, feedback, revision, interviews, and analysis.

4. Findings

Table 3.

Summary of Thematic Patterns from Qualitative Data Analysis Study

Research Focus	Themes	Descriptions	Illustrative Quotes
1. Students' Emotions after Receiving Combined WCF	Mixed Emotional Reactions	Students experienced both positive (motivated, relieved) and negative (confused, anxious) feelings.	"I was nervous at first, but after understanding the explanation, I felt more confident."
	Increased Motivation and Confidence	Clarity in feedback boosted self-assurance and willingness to revise.	"The explanation made me feel like I could really improve my writing."
	Frustration and Uncertainty	Some students felt unsure, especially when feedback was vague or indirect.	"I didn't know what to change when the teacher only corrected implicitly without any help or guidance in my sentence or paragraph."
2. Factors Affecting Students' Emotional Responses	Language/Writing Proficiency Level	Students with lower proficiency found feedback harder to interpret and apply.	"I consulted my errors many times with the teachers and needed a grammar book and a dictionary for every sentence. It was overwhelming."
	Prior Feedback Experience	Students' past experiences shaped their expectations and emotional reactions to feedback.	"I was used to direct corrections, so this kind felt more difficult."
	Beliefs about Feedback	Students who believed feedback helped learning tended to respond	"I believe the teacher's feedback helps me grow, even if it was tough."

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Research Focus	Themes	Descriptions	Illustrative Quotes
		more positively.	
	Lack of Clarity and Specificity	Indirect written corrective feedback without clear guidance caused confusion and reduced confidence.	"I did not know what the underline meant. I wish the teacher had explained more."
3. Students' Perceptions of the Combined WCF Types	Perceived Usefulness of Combined Feedback	Many students found the combination of indirect and metalinguistic feedback helpful for learning.	"I understood my mistake better when I got both the mark and the explanation."
	Preference for Detailed Explanation	Students preferred metalinguistic explanation over indirect-only feedback.	"I prefer knowing exactly why it's wrong, not just seeing an underline."
	Development of Autonomy and Reflection	Combined feedback encouraged more independent thinking and self-editing.	"It made me think more before just rewriting everything."

4.1 The Students' Emotions after Receiving Metalinguistic Explanations and Indirect WCF Types

The study's findings reported that learners' emotional reactions varied among individuals as they received, processed, and used metalinguistic explanations and indirect WCF types in their writing drafts. Our findings reported that a combination of both approaches was beneficial, as it helped the students to

produce accurate writing and fostered learner autonomy, self-correction skills, and critical thinking. However, the students preferred to receive metalinguistic explanations over indirect WCF, as their teacher gave direct correction, guidance, and linguistic explanations about their micro errors. They appreciated the guidance and clarity that feedback provided, enabling them to understand their weaknesses and work towards improvement. Consequently, they were engaged, motivated, and eager to address their micro errors; this preference evoked their positive emotions and led to improvements in writing accuracy. Therefore, using metalinguistic explanations could elicit positive emotional responses among the students. When delivered constructively and with help and empathy, the feedback was perceived as an indication of the teacher's concern for students' writing development. It served as an effective method for improvement by helping students identify specific areas needing further attention. As presented in the example of Figure 3 below.

Figure 3

The Use of Metalinguistic Explanations for the Student's Essay Draft

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a lot of useful information and knowledge for their lives. For example, "Do It Yourself" programs give us easy access for all kinds of information and tips. To illustrate, Cooking Channels for offer new recipes and method, Home Improvement programs introduce us to saving money through Do It Yourself tips. Secondly, Religious Talk programs is essential for deepen our religious knowledge about Islam. For example, Faith and behavior clean in daily life, Religious talk on human concept in Al - Qur'an, and etc,

Acer
"Programs" is only singular, so, please delete "s"

Acer
Please add the verb "is" for singular

Acer
Please do not use capital, it is just "cooking channel. And "channels" is only one program in the context, not more, so please delete "s"

Acer
You have to add "ing" after the verb "offer" because there is a preposition. The formula is preposition + gerund "ing"

Acer
Home improvement program is only one, so you must delete "s". And the verb "introduce" have to add "is" for singular

Acer
It is to in an infinitive, plus the base form of the verb. So, delete "is", only "have"

Acer
Please do not use capital, it is just "religious talk program. And "programs" is only one program in the context, so please delete "s"

Acer
It is not sentence because of no subject or verb. So, it should be better you may add subject+verb. The correction: Religious talk on human concept is Al-Qur'an.

Figure 3 illustrates a student writing sample annotated with metalinguistic explanations. Errors related to subject-verb agreement, verb tense, article usage, and word form were underlined, and space was left for comments in the margin to explain grammatical problems. The teacher offered short, focused explanations that, e.g., reminded the student to use singular verb forms or eliminate unnecessary capitalization. This approach not only identifies errors but also encourages students to reflect and self-correct, thereby enhancing their understanding of language rules. The feedback acted as a scaffold to help the students increase accuracy and clarity in their text by guiding explicit rule-based language. Through the teacher's direct corrections and giving brief grammatical explanations in the comments, they internalized correct forms and enhanced their metacognitive awareness of the writing process. As revealed by one of the male students in the interview narrative:

We felt so happy and satisfied because the teacher gave us guidance, support, and metalinguistic explanations in our writing draft. Although we encountered numerous language errors related to the use of verb tenses, gerunds, and sentence structure, we were able to understand and correct them accurately. This type helped reflect our weaknesses and strengths in writing further drafts (Face-to-face interview, FAZ)

Similarly, male and female students also expressed their positive emotions in metalinguistic explanations:

While the teacher gave corrections and explicit knowledge into my draft, I was aware of micro problems, especially in grammatical forms. I was satisfied and engaged with the corrected draft because the teacher pointed out the existing errors and guided me in crafting accurate sentences in my essay. As a result, my micro-writing skills improved, and I got a better understanding of essay writing (Face-to-face interview, MSR)

I found the metalinguistic explanations extremely helpful because it allowed me to engage with my writing actively and gave me an understanding of the language and grammar rules. By highlighting the micro errors on my own, I felt more involved in the learning process and developed a deeper understanding of the language nuances (Zoom meeting interview, CHN)

In contrast, while the teacher used indirect WCF to address the writing macro skills, the students encountered difficulties and uncertainty when making revisions. In this case, the students were unable to fully grasp the intended meaning conveyed by the implicit hints or suggestions, so they made incorrect revisions or misinterpreted the feedback. In the indirect WCF, the teacher employed exact types (questions, imperative sentences, and suggestions) to comment on the students' writing drafts, such as *“What does the sentence mean? Please organize the sentences into coherence and logic, and you have to elaborate this sentence with supporting sentences.”* Without assistance, correction, and specific guidance on the feedback, students

struggled to grasp the underlying issues in their work, which led to frustration, confusion, unhappiness, and demotivation to revise their macro writing errors. Some even ignored specific implicit comments or were not willing to revise. For more details, Figure 4 below provides an example illustrating the teacher's indirect WCF.

Figure 4

The Teacher's Use of Indirect WCF on the Student's Essay Draft

I agree with that opinion watching television programs is essential to provide information and knowledge for watchers in their daily life, firstly watching television programs provide us updated news that would make whether will not miss the information and provide a broad enough insight on the community quickly. For example Topics are news programs from television stations Antv this news show aired four times each day which contains news material from domestic and abroad are actual current. Secondly watching television programs in addition to providing information and knowledge as well as educational media for children to develop a mindset and knowledge that has never been seen before. For example laptop si Unyil is a program that educate and entertain for all circles, laptop si unyil own premiered in

Acer
What does the sentence mean? I think you have to explain your main idea to make your supporting ideas clear solid.

Acer
Your example make me confused to understand. Please organize your sentence to be clear and logic. What is your actually example? It should be in line with your supporting sentence. Thus it is no organization and incoherent.

Acer
What is your reason or main idea? Your reason should be connected with your stance position.

Acer
Lackly organized because you did not give supporting sentence for your reason. So, you have to elaborate well how and why your supporting sentences were connected to example or other sentences.

Figure 4 shows the implementation of indirect WCF in a student's writing draft using three specific types: questions, imperative sentences, and suggestions. The teacher provided implicit comments in the margin to prompt the student's self-correction. For instance, the comment "What does the sentence mean?" is a question encouraging clarity. An imperative like "Please organize your sentence to be clear and logical" instructed the

student to organize the sentence to be logical and coherent. Suggestions such as “*You have to elaborate well how and why your supporting sentences were connected...*” guided improvement without directly correcting the errors. Those implicit comments evoked negative reactions in students due to a lack of clarity and specificity, requiring students to think critically to meet the teacher's expected standard. Although they welcomed indirect WCF, most of them considered it the most complicated and demanding feedback. One of the male students told in the interview that:

We think the indirect WCF type was more complicated and challenging to respond to every single macro error in our draft. The main issue with this type was its lack of clarity and specificity, which confused and frustrated us as we struggled to understand and analyze the intended corrections or instructions provided. As a result, we used to do wrong or misinterpret when making revisions, and sometimes, we decided not to accept specific implicit comments in revising our essay (Face-to-face meeting interview, AAR).

Similar cases also occurred in female and male students; their negative emotions were expressed in the following narratives:

Without explicit correction, I misinterpreted the intended meaning or purpose of the feedback. I failed to understand and analyze the underlying errors and misconstrued the hints, leading to confusion, disappointment, and potential reinforcement of incorrect macro writing issues. This type was more complicated and demanding, so it could hinder my progress and negatively impact my motivation to engage with future feedback (Zoom meeting interview, CHN)

Since receiving indirect WCF, I have struggled to make significant progress in the areas of content and logical organization. This could be frustrating and disengaging for me, who was seeking personalized guidance to overcome my macro writing challenges (Face-to-face meeting interview, MSR)

A limited number of students reacted positively to the indirect WCF provided in the learning process. Emotionally, they did not have a problem with this type, as they supposed that the indirect WCF type could foster their critical thinking, learner autonomy, and analytical abilities, as the students analyzed their macro errors and sought appropriate solutions. Perhaps this approach was particularly beneficial for more advanced students who could benefit from a greater focus on self-regulation and metacognition. Thus, this contributed to a more positive learning experience and a greater willingness to continue learning and improving. A female student told her narrative in the following excerpt:

Even though our classmates did not mostly like the teacher's indirect WCF, we appreciated and felt empowered by this type. It encouraged us to think critically about our macro writing errors and find the correct solutions on our own, promoting a sense of independence and active learning. Over time, we could develop self-editing skills and become more independent writers (Face-to-face interview, TSK)

4.2 The Factors Affecting Individual Students' Emotions with the Combined WCF Types

Students' language proficiency level, prior experience with feedback, and beliefs were factors influencing their emotional responses to the combined WCF types. In this case, students who typically preferred clear guidance and immediate correction often appreciated metalinguistic explanations, as these provided them with correction, specific information, or linguistic knowledge. Those with lower proficiency tended to feel frustrated, especially when the feedback required them to self-correct without explicit guidance. They often lacked ideas or limited knowledge to interpret indirect WCF, leading to confusion and frustration. In contrast, students with higher proficiency were

more confident and viewed the feedback as a learning opportunity. Therefore, the students preferred metalinguistic explanations. Typically, this type was highly valuable for those at the low or intermediate language proficiency level or early stages of language learning, as they required the teacher's help and support to enhance their grammatical competence and other micro skills. In this case, the grammatical forms or sentence structures became a problematic issue for them. By giving brief explanations, guidance, and immediate correction in their writing drafts, the students felt engaged, confident, and eager to accept and correct every single micro-writing error they made. A male student's comment during the interview appeared to encapsulate the learning experiences shared by most of the students.

Common micro-writing error we encountered was grammatical issues. In this case, we did not understand correctly how to use verb tenses, gerunds, plural and singular forms, and sentence structures in essay writing practice. A lack of language competence contributed to our writing performance, but receiving metalinguistic explanations from the teacher evoked positive responses such as happiness and satisfaction. So, we liked it very much because we found it valuable and encouraging in language acquisition and other micro skills (Face-to-face interview, MSR)

Previous experiences and beliefs were also significant factors that strongly influenced the students' emotional responses to a combination of both WCF types in this study. These factors significantly influenced students' perceptions of WCF types, thereby affecting their motivation and learning outcomes. Addressing both WCF practices, students with prior experience in writing and those who directly employed metalinguistic explanations tended to be more enthusiastic and confident in making targeted improvements in their writing. They believed that metalinguistic explanations could reinforce language learning and promote metacognitive awareness of their writing process. Conversely, students with no prior experience and negative beliefs tended to experience adverse emotions such as frustration, confusion,

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demotivation, and difficulty understanding how to make further revisions. These negative emotions were particularly experienced by the students who used the indirect WCF type to address or revise their macro writing errors. In this case, male and female students shared their prior experience with L2 writing and their beliefs in responding to the teacher's indirect WCF.

I preferred metalinguistic explanations over indirect WCF due to prior familiarity with direct correction and grammar instruction. Indirect WCF was a new and challenging approach, causing confusion and frustration, particularly when revising macro-level errors. I viewed it as ineffective, especially given their lack of writing experience and negative beliefs (Face-to-face meeting interview, AAR).

I felt frustrated and uncertain when receiving indirect corrective feedback due to my inexperience. I found it confusing and preferred explicit feedback with clear explanations, believing it would better support my writing development. Prior experience and negative beliefs influenced my emotional response and engagement (Face-to-face interview, FAZ)

Lastly, a lack of clarity and specificity in the teacher's WCF triggered uncertainty and negative emotions. When students were unable to understand the purpose or focus of the indirect WCF, they struggled to revise effectively, which negatively affected their confidence and emotional well-being throughout the writing process. As reported by two students in the interview session, they said that.

I think the indirect WCF is too general, like asking 'what do you mean?' without pointing to which part exactly. I kept guessing what the problem was. It made me feel confused and stressed, especially when I already struggled with writing (Zoom meeting interview, CHN)

When the teacher just circled or underlined parts of my sentence and wrote vague comments like 'unclear' or 'revise,' I did not really know what to fix or how to fix it. I initially felt confused and a bit anxious, but I thought hard to refine the errors based on the teacher's expectation (Face-to-face interview, TSK)

4.3 Students' Perceptions of Metalinguistic Explanation and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) Types

Students' views on metalinguistic explanations and various forms of indirect WCF can greatly shape their learning experience and determine how effective the feedback process is. Combining different types of teacher-provided WCF with feedback that is supportive, informative, and meaningful can enhance students' overall writing development and skill improvement. Students' perceptions of metalinguistic explanations versus indirect WCF effectiveness varied. Metalinguistic explanations were considered a valuable approach for enhancing their micro-writing abilities for the WCF practice. The constructive feedback helped them recognize their weaknesses, understand grammar and syntax rules more effectively, and ultimately refine their writing mechanics. These students valued the individualized support and attention provided by their teacher, as it showed that their micro-writing progress was being closely guided and directed.

Additionally, metalinguistic explanations could boost their confidence as they saw improvements over time during learning essay writing. Therefore, the students generally preferred metalinguistic explanations for their clarity and actionable insights. Their preference for this type was influenced by the language proficiency levels, which were still intermediate or low; therefore, they perceived it positively, as they received error correction directly and acquired the linguistic target. The interview narrative data, a male student conveyed his positive perception of using this type.

We viewed metalinguistic explanations as valuable for improving our writing. The constructive comments and corrections, covered in red font, provided directly by the teacher offered insights into our writing strengths and weaknesses, guiding us towards better explanations and the accurate use of language targets. Our positive perceptions were particularly prevalent when our teacher

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personalized feedback, acknowledged individual progress, and fostered a sense of support (Face-to-face interview, AAR)

Another female student also expressed her positive perception of it:

I perceived language explanation as an opportunity for me to grow and develop my micro-writing skills. I embraced it enthusiastically and recognized that feedback was a meaningful approach for enhancing language skills and understanding other micro skills. Thus, this positive perception fostered an open mindset, where my classmates and I viewed our micro errors as opportunities for learning and growth rather than signs of failure (Face-to-face interview, FAZ)

Conversely, given that many of the students had no prior writing experience and negative beliefs about the use of indirect WCF, they perceived it negatively. It occurred while the teacher provided implicit or general comments or asked questions about unclear content and disconnected organizations of their sentences or paragraphs in their essay drafts, and then instructed them to engage in critical thinking and self-correction. However, every comment given on the indirect WCF was considered challenging for them to revise. The students were unsure about how to fulfill the teacher's expectations for their revisions. A male student narrated this, describing his negative perspective on indirect WCF.

Given our lack of prior writing experience since school and our difficulties with the indirect WCF type usage in the last semester, we found the indirect WCF to be ambiguous or challenging to interpret. Without explicit corrections, we struggled to engage in self-correction, often misinterpreting the teacher's intended instruction. Thus, we believed this type was not effective in improving our macro writing skills and perceived it negatively as less intimidating or judgmental compared to direct error correction (Zoom meeting interview, MSR)

Only a few students believed that the indirect WCF type was a valuable and positive approach, encouraging them to think critically, analyze their own micro errors, and take responsibility for their errors in reconstructing

macro writing issues in the commented drafts. They were already familiar with the kind of feedback, having learned basic writing in school and taken an English course. Thus, even though the kind of feedback was more challenging, they believed in and perceived it as beneficial in building critical thinking and understanding of writing content, logical organization, and coherence, further increasing the indirect WCF's impact on better writing.

I believe the indirect WCF type helped promote our critical thinking and analytical skills, as we had to analyze our commented draft and make the necessary adjustments. I had an experience with it when I learned to write a short text in school and an English course, and my previous teachers provided similar types of feedback. Yes, I knew it was more challenging, but I liked it so much because it impacted the long-term effectiveness of the lessons learned and helped us apply this knowledge in future writing tasks (Face-to-face interview, RFA)

5. Discussion

5.1 Findings for Research Question 1 (Students' Emotions after Receiving Both WCF Types)

The findings revealed that students experienced a wide range of emotional responses upon receiving metalinguistic explanations and indirect WCF on their writing drafts. These emotional responses ranged from positive feelings, including happiness, satisfaction, and engagement, to negative ones, such as confusion, anxiety, and frustration. This is consistent with Han and Hyland (2019), who reported that students' reactions to different types of WCF were varied and dynamic, reflecting a broad spectrum of emotional experiences across individuals, contexts, and situations. Many students expressed appreciation for metalinguistic explanations because their detailed nature helped them better understand their grammatical mistakes and overall writing structure. The explicit comments served as cognitive triggers that increased

their awareness of language rules. Students with stronger analytical skills or prior exposure to grammar instruction often responded with happiness, confidence, and motivation.

The students who received metalinguistic explanations reported experiencing higher levels of satisfaction, engagement, and successful task implementation due to explicit instruction, direct error correction, and specific guidance (Javan Amani et al., 2024). Knowing exactly where and how to correct their micro errors can empower and allow them to address their micro weaknesses effectively. This type can enhance motivation and promote a positive attitude towards learning. Some studies reported that metalinguistic explanations demonstrated the potential for giving written feedback and had a positive effect on the students' language acquisition and accuracy in their writing development (Bozorgian & Yazdani, 2021; Karim & Nassaji, 2020). Thus, this type helped the students understand their weaknesses and increase their micro issues of writing.

On the contrary, the use of indirect WCF evoked negative emotions such as frustration, dissatisfaction, and sadness. The majority of students struggle to address the teacher's indirect comments, suggestions, or questions. Consequently, they feel unhappy and dissatisfied with the process of reworking their essay. Some refuse to revise specific macro comments given by the teacher because they do not understand the points the teacher made. Negative emotions could occur when the students did not get sufficient information and explicit guidance on self-correcting their macro errors (Ryan & Henderson, 2018; Sheen, 2007). In contrast, only a few liked indirect WCF and felt positive emotions. The indication was that they enjoyed and took the actions after receiving this type. It means that these students were able to respond effectively to indirect WCF due to their moderate writing proficiency levels. Fitriyah et al. (2025) argue that students with high and intermediate

performance levels tend to be actively engaged in self-correction, particularly when using feedback, interpreting their writing errors, and critically involving themselves in the construction of their texts. However, lower-achieving students can interpret feedback to a certain extent, but often struggle to apply it or interact with it in more critical ways. Moreover, van Compernelle (2017) also reported that indirect feedback could promote learner autonomy by allowing students to take ownership of their learning and engage in reflective practice. By providing students with indirect WCF, the teacher can encourage them to actively reconstruct their text and develop strategies for correcting errors.

5.2 Findings for Research Question 2 (Factors Affecting Students' Emotions)

Students' emotional reactions to the teacher's WCF types may be shaped by multiple factors, such as their language proficiency, prior experiences with receiving WCF, personal beliefs, and the clarity and specificity of the teacher's feedback. As reported by Mukminatien et al. (2022), language proficiency level, prior experience, and students' beliefs have a significant effect on students' writing performance. Additionally, students' negative self-perceptions or attitudes, as well as their earlier writing experiences, negatively impact their behavioral and cognitive involvement (Mahfoodh, 2017; Ryan & Henderson, 2018). Successful language learning depends on the learners' emotional responses and cognitive abilities; emotional responses should be addressed when discussing second and foreign language learning (Zheng & Yu, 2018). Students with lower language proficiency frequently have difficulty understanding indirect WCF, which signals that an error exists but does not offer explicit corrections. Shin (2024) points out that students' writing accuracy is influenced by their existing language proficiency. As a

result, these students may feel frustrated, confused, or anxious, especially when they revise the macro errors independently.

In contrast, they tend to respond more positively to metalinguistic explanations because such feedback offers brief descriptions or explanations related to the error, helping them understand grammar points or writing conventions. The teacher's concise input provides necessary language support, which students with limited proficiency find both reassuring and helpful. Soodmand Afshar et al. (2025) reported that metalinguistic explanations were particularly helpful and effective for students with lower proficiency levels, with explicit feedback being more advantageous than implicit feedback. Additionally, students who have previously encountered negative or ambiguous feedback often experience anxiety or frustration when confronted with similar types of WCF. Their beliefs about effective learning also shape how they receive feedback—those expecting direct corrections struggle with indirect WCF. In addition, Students frequently feel confused and disappointed due to the teacher's feedback being unclear and lacking specific guidance. This factor can hinder their emotional engagement and reduce the effectiveness of the revision process.

5.3 Findings for Research Question 3 (Students' Perceptions of Using the Combined WCF Types)

The significance of metalinguistic explanations as a means to enhance students' micro-writing was perceived by them. Such feedback enabled them to learn their mistakes, better comprehend grammar and syntax rules, and hone their writing mechanics. Students' language performance significantly improved in both immediate and delayed conditions when they were provided with metalinguistic explanations (Bozorgian & Yazdani, 2021). They noticed the time and individualized teacher feedback, which made them feel supported in progressing with their writing. The positive feedback of this

type gradually increased their engagement and confidence, particularly as they started to see real improvements. In contrast, many students viewed indirect WCF negatively, particularly those with no prior writing experience or who held unfavorable beliefs about it. They found general comments or questions confusing, especially when asked to revise unclear content or organization without direct guidance. For a few of the students, this type of feedback encouraged critical thinking, self-reflection, and greater autonomy in revision. This finding is in line with Masrul et al. (2024), who pointed out that indirect WCF supports students' independent learning by fostering self-correction and greater engagement with their writing.

The significance of metalinguistic explanation and indirect WCF has valuable implications for writing instructions. Metalinguistic feedback encourages language awareness among students by helping them comprehend grammar rules and writing conventions, which enables deeper learning and self-editing ability. Indirect WCF supports thinking critically and taking ownership in the revision process. However, these WCF types require sufficient student proficiency, guidance, and assistance to interpret feedback accurately. Teachers should consider the learners' language proficiency levels and implement scaffolding to ensure clarity. Together, the two approaches foster student engagement and enhance writing accuracy over time, while promoting independence in recognizing revision strategies. This is supported by clear and explicit instruction through consistent guidance.

6. Conclusion

Ultimately, the effectiveness of WCF lies in the teacher's ability to provide targeted and constructive feedback that facilitates learners' language development and promotes their writing proficiency. This study contributes to research exploring the students' emotional responses, which require further

attention. This study highlights university students' emotional experiences in reaction to teacher-provided WCF. The results showed that students' emotional responses to feedback play a crucial role in shaping their motivation to learn and overall writing performance. The research also identified important factors influencing these emotional reactions, such as students' language proficiency, prior experiences with feedback, and challenges in interpreting teachers' written comments.

Furthermore, the study highlights the need for teachers to consider how students' prior experiences with feedback shape their emotional reactions to current feedback. Teachers should offer clear, constructive feedback tailored to each student's needs, including specific guidance for improving their writing, thereby fostering positive emotional experiences during learning. By taking students' emotional reactions to feedback into account, teachers can create a supportive and engaging environment that promotes success in writing. This study is delimited to a small group of EFL university students, focusing solely on metalinguistic explanations and indirect WCF within a short revision period. Limitations include the subjective nature of emotional responses, lack of long-term impact assessment, and potential bias due to self-reported data and single-instructor feedback.

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