THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WRITTEN FEEDBACK ON ESL STUDENTS' WRITING PERFORMANCE IN THE MALAYSIAN CONTEXT

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The teacher's role in providing good WCF is crucial and especially so in the current education system of Malaysia. Numerous studies were conducted on its effectiveness and student perceptions, but most were for tertiary education. This mixed mode study investigated the types of WCF provided to students in writing classes in secondary schools, and ESL students' and teachers' perceptions towards the provision of WCF on 482 students and 15 teachers from eight schools. Data from students were collected through a questionnaire survey whereas focus group discussions were conducted with the teachers. Students reported teachers giving unfocused, metalinguistic WCF, and holding discussions afterwards. They prefer teachers to mark all errors, and perceive WCF to be important. Teachers reported providing unfocused, indirect, and metalinguistic WCF, and also held discussions with students after marking. They see WCF as beneficial in enhancing students, teachers, and both. In short, the perceptions of teachers and students are mostly aligned. Teachers need to be aware of the existing types of WCF, and incorporate the appropriate ones in their teaching practice. This study is useful to ESL teachers in enlightening themselves on giving the best WCF in the students' interest, and ultimately create better impact in the English classroom.

Keywords - Written corrective feedback (WCF), secondary school, perceptions, effectiveness, usefulness, enhancement.