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Written Corrective Feedback and Learner Engagement: A Case Study of Adult Learners in a French-as-a-Second-Language Program

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Abstract: Within the context of second language (L2) writing, learner engagement with feedback has elicited significant theoretical and empirical interest (e.g., Zhang & Hyland, 2018; Zheng & Yu, 2018). Research has highlighted the dynamic nature of learner engagement with written corrective feedback (WCF), but the ways in which learner and contextual factors impact such engagement with WCF in authentic classrooms are still underexplored (Han, 2019). Furthermore, little is known about how L2 learners engage with WCF from an ecological perspective, which considers the relationships between learners and their surrounding environments (Bronfenbrenner,1993; van Lier, 2000). Situated in an adult French-as-a-second-language (FSL) setting in Canada, this study adopted an ecological perspective to analyze the influence of learner and contextual factors on learners' affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with WCF on linguistic errors. Participants in this study were five adult students registered in an FSL program in the francophone province of Quebec. Data were collected from multiple sources, including students' drafts with written feedback provided, semistructured interviews, retrospective verbal reports, and other class documents. Findings show that learner and contextual factors influence learners' affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with WCF in a number of complex ways.

Keywords: written corrective feedback, second language writing, French as a second language, student engagement, ecological perspective

Although the role of written corrective feedback (WCF) has received considerable attention in second language (L2) acquisition research, little is known about how L2 learners engage with WCF and, more specifically, how their engagement affects their writing accuracy (Lira-Gonzales et al., 2021). What is known, however, is that multiple learner and contextual factors (Han & Hyland, 2015; Zhang & Hyland, 2018; Zheng & Yu, 2018) mediate learner engagement with WCF. Such mediation can be investigated from an ecological perspective, which focuses on the relationship between each learner and the environment and takes into account the complexity of the context (Han, 2019). The present study drew upon an ecological perspective to examine learner engagement, conceptualized specifically along three dimensions: affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement. Utilizing a qualitative case study method, we investigat-ed how contextual factors influenced the engagement of a group of adult newcomers studying in a very specific context, a French-as-a-second-language (FSL) program in a small francophone community in Canada.

Learner Engagement and WCF

In this study, WCF is defined as linguistic information provided to correct grammatical errors in writing (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). WCF can be provided through different strategies: direct (the wrong word is crossed out and the right word is given), indirect (an explanation, an example, or a hint is given but not the correction itself), focused (only one or a selected number of errors are corrected), or unfocused (all errors are corrected).

While it is widely accepted that WCF is effective, studies that have empirically compared the effects of these strategies have often produced inconsistent results, making it less clear which feedback type is more effective. For example, research investigating direct and indirect feedback has suggested that direct feedback helps learners learn new forms (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014), while indirect feedback is considered effective in facilitating internalization of already known forms (Bitchener, 2012). Studies examining focused and unfocused feedback have found the former to be more effective than the latter because it draws learners' attention more

effectively to specific forms (e.g., Bitchener, 2008). Other studies, however, have produced inconsistent results (see Mao & Lee, 2020).

Along the same lines, Nassaji and Kartchava (2021) point out that although overall research findings reveal that corrective feedback is helpful in general "these effects are not the same across feedback types and contexts" (p. 6). Even before these findings were published, Ellis (2017) suggested that deploying a variety of corrective feedback strategies is more effective than using only one feedback type: "One way of combining strategies might be to first employ an output-prompting strategy and then, if the learner fails to correct, to resort to an input-providing strategy" (p. 14). Moreover, Ellis highlighted the role of factors other than the type of feedback that mediated efficacy, including the context of feedback, the nature of the target structure, and individual learner differences. One factor that has not been widely considered or investigated is that of learner engagement; little is known about how L2 learners engage with WCF and, more specifically, how their engagement affects their writing accuracy.

Engagement has been used as an umbrella term to bring together learners' degree of attention, curiosity, interest, and willingness to employ their language proficiency and a repertoire of learning skills to make progress (Zhang & Hyland, 2018, p. 91). Fredricks et al. (2004) proposed a tripartite conceptualization of learner engagement encompassing three interrelated dimensions: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. Behavioral engagement refers to positive conduct in class and at school, involvement in academic tasks, and participation in school activities; cognitive engagement is concerned with strategic learning and psychological investment in learning; and emotional engagement includes learners' affective reactions in the classroom and at school, such as happiness, sadness, boredom, anxiety, and interest.

Ellis (2010) applied Fredricks et al.'s (2004) definition of engagement to corrective feedback and operationalized these terms slightly differently. He defined behavioral engagement as learner response to feedback in the form of uptake and revision, cognitive engagement as the way in which

learners attend to received corrective feedback, and affective engagement as learners' affective (e.g., anxiety) and attitudinal (e.g., dislike) responses to corrective feedback.

Drawing on a similar conceptualization, Han and Hyland (2015) also defined learner engagement as a construct that includes the same three dimensions of engagement: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. They characterized affective engagement as the learners' immediate emotional reactions upon the receipt of WCF, changes in these emotions, and attitudinal responses toward the WCF; behavioral engagement as what learners do with the WCF received, including revisions; and cognitive engagement as the investment in processing WCF, manifested in the degree to which learners attend to feedback or the cognitive and metacognitive strategies they use in processing the WCF. Zheng and Yu (2018) fine-tuned the definition of affective engagement, categorizing it into three subcategories: affect, judgment, and appreciation. Table 1 describes how the framework that guided the present study was adapted from Zheng & Yu (2018).

Table 1

Conceptual Framework for Learner Engagement With WCF

Dimensions of engagement WCF	Subconstructs on each dimension
Affective engagement	Affect: learners' feelings and emotions expressed upon receiving WCF
	Judgment: personal judgments of admiration/criticism as well as moral judgments of praise/condemnation toward WCF
	Appreciation: valuing WCF
Cognitive engagement	Cognitive processing of WCF (i.e., showing awareness of the presence of feedback)
	The use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies

Dimensions of engagement WCF	Subconstructs on each dimension
Behavioral engagement	Revisions in response to WCF (i.e., responses used to improve the accuracy of the text)

Note. WCF = written corrective feedback. Compiled based on "Learner Engagement with Teacher Written Corrective Feedback in EFL Writing: A Case Study of Chinese Lower-Proficiency Learners," Y. Zheng and S. Yu, 2018, *Assessing Writing*, 37, pp. 13–24.

Broadly, learner engagement with WCF can be described as a process in which learners perceive and utilize language learning opportunities afforded by WCF (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Learners' engagement with WCF, however, is mediated by a range of individual differences including aptitude, attitude, motivation, and anxiety (Ferris et al., 2012; Goldstein, 2006; Hyland, 2011; Sheen, 2011). For example, learners with a high aptitude, positive attitude, strong motivation, and low anxiety have been found to benefit more from WCF (Tsao et al., 2021). In addition, Han (2017) found that learner beliefs and learner engagement with WCF were mutually related, specifically that person-related beliefs, task-related beliefs, and strategy-related beliefs exerted direct and indirect influences on the learners' cognitive, behavioral, and affective engagement with WCF.

Empirical studies on student engagement with WCF are, however, scarce, and most have been conducted in the tertiary education of English as a foreign language (EFL) in a Chinese context. For example, Han and Hyland (2015) conducted a qualitative multiple-case study to observe four Chinese university EFL learners who were non-English majors and examine their cognitive, behavioral, and affective engagement with WCF. Using data from multiple sources (written texts, interviews, retrospective verbal reports, and teacher-student writing conferences), Han and Hyland's findings showed that learner engagement with WCF was complex in nature and was mediated by individual and contextual factors. The results obtained from their data suggest that the individual differences in learner engagement with WCF may be attributed partly to learners' beliefs

and experiences about WCF and L2 writing, their L2 learning goals, and the interactional context in which they received and processed WCF.

In another work, Zhang (2017) conducted a case study at a university in South China to examine one EFL learner's behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement with computer-generated feedback. Zhang found that learner engagement in the EFL context was a complicated process mediated by both individual and contextual factors. His findings suggest that automated writing evaluation feedback has the potential to make a positive impact on learner writing, but this impact depends on the learner's behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement.

Additionally, Zheng and Yu (2018) conducted a case study to explore the engagement that low proficiency (LP) learners have with WCF in the Chinese EFL context. Zheng and Yu analyzed data from 12 university students and their writing teacher to examine how these students responded affectively, behaviorally, and cognitively to WCF that the teacher provided on their English writing. Zheng and Yu's findings revealed the complexity of LP learners' engagement with teacher WCF. From the affective perspective, most participants were quite considerate of their teacher's workload in providing WCF, and their engagement seemed to be overall positive. From the behavioral perspective, the LP learners' text revisions (an observable outcome of engagement) were not all successful; however, the learners did invest some effort into correcting their errors and modifying the language, suggesting that learners' behavioral engagement did not necessarily result in greater language accuracy. Finally, from the cognitive perspective, even though LP learners were able to notice the WCF, they were not always able to understand it, especially in the case of indirect WCF.

More recently Zhang and Hyland (2022) and Zhang (2022) have examined learners' engagement through case studies carried out in Chinese universities. Zhang and Hyland's (2022) case study explored EFL learners' engagement with a pedagogical approach that systematically integrated three types of feedback on academic writing: automated, peer, and teacher feedback. A total of 33 third-year EFL learners participated in this

study. The findings showed that most learners actively engaged with such an integrated approach and that it not only effectively promoted learners' behavioral, affective, and cognitive engagement with feedback on their writing but also encouraged thoughtful revisions. Similarly, Zhang's (2022) exploratory study examined the impact of the teacher's pedagogical approach and feedback practices on the learners' engagement with feedback, with 33 EFL learners and their teacher as participants. The findings showed that the collaborative approach adopted by the teacher in his class allowed learners to conduct a wide range of revision operations beyond the word level in their writing. Findings also showed that the teacher's collaborative approach effectively increased active behavioral engagement, promoted positive affective engagement, and encouraged deep cognitive engagement in the writing and revision process.

The Role of Context: An Ecological Perspective

Learner engagement with WCF has been found to vary dynamically across individual learners (Zheng & Yu, 2018); it is mediated by both learner and contextual factors simultaneously (Ellis, 2010; Murphy & Roca de Larios, 2010). An ecological perspective, informed by scholars such as Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1993) and van Lier (1997), may allow us to better understand how such factors influence learner engagement with WCF.

The early works of Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1993) were instrumental in conceptualizing an ecological perspective relevant to language learning and teaching. He conceived the ecological environment as "a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" in which the innermost level is the immediate setting containing the developing person (1979, p. 22). Drawing on Bronfenbrenner's work, van Lier (1997) emphasized the interrelatedness between individuals and environments in contributing to effective learning. This interrelationship is constructed as individuals perceive the possible actions they can take in the environment—the "affordances" (van Lier, 1997, 2000, 2004) or

opportunities that learners can seize to advance their learning (Kramsch, 2003). Van Lier (2004) cautioned, however, that the availability of these affordances does not automatically entail successful learning; in order for such affordances to become learning opportunities, there should be a "match" between the environment and agent (p. 96). In other words, for learning to take place, there needs to be a match between the available opportunities, the learners need to intend to learn (Reed, 1993), and the learners must have the capacity to perceive such opportunities as useful (Chong, 2021; Han, 2019).

In addressing contextual factors that influence engagement with WCF, Han (2019) divided contextual factors into four levels: textual, interpersonal, instructional, and sociocultural. At the textual level, for example, Han noted that the explicitness of WCF and the types of errors present in the writing influenced one participant's attention to linguistic errors, while the amount of WCF influenced another participant's understanding of and affective reactions to WCF. At the interpersonal and interactional level of context, Han reported that one of the participants feared interacting with the teacher and chose to consult a peer. At the instructional level, Han noted that internet tools and resources were accessible in the instructional context, so learners were allowed to use them during the revision process. Finally, at the sociocultural level, Han highlighted how the Chinese culture of learning shaped learners' tenacious belief about the teacher's authoritative role. In this study, Han showed that learner engagement with WCF was a contextualized process of perceiving and using available resources with the potential to enhance learning. In this process, learners exercised their agency based on their capacity and willingness to perceive and use learning opportunities afforded by these resources. According to Han, the learners' perceptions, beliefs, and goals were influenced by their abilities, which were not static but malleable, as learners' willingness to strengthen their abilities changed (p. 298). Engagement emerges when learning opportunities embedded in the context align with the individual learner's willingness and capacity—that is,

individual learners successfully construct a relationship between the context and themselves (i.e., successfully perceiving and using learning opportunities). Conversely, learning opportunities misaligned with the individual learner's willingness or capacity are not perceived or are discarded, failing to be converted into affordances and not leading to engagement (Han, 2019).

To (2022) proposed an ecological framework of feedback engagement, describing "the ecosystem as a network" in which contextual and individual factors are interconnected (p. 1311). Contextual factors comprise sociocultural beliefs, interpersonal relationships with feedback partners, instructional arrangements, and textual features of feedback. Sociocultural beliefs involve the influence brought by the wider feedback culture, disciplinary practices, and societal values. Interpersonal relationships are related to the power distance between feedback givers and receivers (e.g., when the teacher is viewed as the authority, students tend to perceive them as a more credible source of feedback than their peers are). Instructional arrangements refer to the ways task and feedback designs shape student uptake of feedback. Finally, textual features relate to the modes of feedback (e.g., face-to-face feedback, audio feedback). As for individual factors, To (2022) included the following: (a) prior feedback experience which impacts learners' expectations and perceived usefulness of feedback; (b) motivation, which drives learners' feedback seeking and utilization; (c) affect, which is connected to students' emotional maturity to deal with critical feedback; and (d) learner feedback literacy, which scaffolds feedback engagement since it involves the understanding, capacities, and dispositions a learner needs to make sense of information and use it to enhance work or learning strategies.

This study was concerned with how learners engaged with WCF and how features of their context mediated this engagement. As such, this study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How do individual learners engage with WCF affectively, cognitively, and behaviorally?

2. How do learner and contextual factors influence learners' individual affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with WCF?

Study Design

Setting

An important contextual factor in this study was the sociolinguistic setting in which the study took place: the francophone province of Quebec situated in Canada. Of Canada's 10 provinces, Quebec is the largest in area and is second largest in population after Ontario. Quebec's capital, Quebec City, is the oldest city in Canada. It is also the only province where Francophones make up the majority population, and it is distinguished for being bilingual on constitutional and federal levels but not on a provincial level, where French is the only official language (Busque, 2022).

In Quebec, the preservation and promotion of the French language has been a driving force within politics for decades. In line with these goals, various legislation has been enacted over the years to support the dominant position of French in Quebec. One of the most significant was the Official Language Act (Bill 22) passed by the provincial government in 1974; it mandated French as the official language of Quebec and, among other impacts, restricted access to schooling in English for children. Three years later, the Charter of the French Language (Bill 101) became provincial law; it introduced new restrictions on the use of the English language, notably as a language used in the workplace. More recently, on May 13, 2021, the minister of justice and the minister responsible for the French language tabled Bill 96; it aimed to affirm that the only official language of Quebec is French. Despite these policies, the demographic weight of Francophones is declining. Therefore, in 2019, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) announced a comprehensive Francophone Immigration Strategy aimed at reaching a 4.4% target for French-speaking immigration to Canada outside Quebec by 2023 (Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, 2019).

In short, in the province of Quebec, French is considered to be key in order to become familiar with Quebec's values, culture, and lifestyle as well as to access the labor market. Although the IRCC criteria for selecting immigration candidates favor individuals with a level of proficiency in French, some do not arrive with any French language proficiency. As such, many immigrants to Quebec must make considerable effort to learn or improve their French language proficiency and can do so through a range of French courses (Direction des affaires, 2008).

One such initiative is the *Programme-cadre de français pour les personnes immigrantes adultes au Québec*. This program includes language instruction to enhance the French language competencies of immigrants to Quebec. It establishes benchmarks to guide French language teaching to adult immigrants, and it is designed to standardize the content of French courses offered to immigrants in educational institutions and community organizations. These courses are mandated by the government ministries responsible for immigration and education. In addition to language competencies, a key component of this program is the content which has been designed to familiarize learners with what are considered to be the common values and cultural practices in Quebec. This course content is intended to facilitate the cultural integration of immigrants and the development of their intercultural skills. Immigrants enrolled in French courses receive financial assistance, thus enabling them to follow the program, which is free of charge.

Participants

The present study was carried out with five adults living and working in a town in Quebec with a population of just over 7,000 at the time. It is a predominantly francophone community where French is reported as the first language for 98% of the population; 85% of the population speak only French only, and 15% speak English and French. The visible minority population in this town is 0.4% of the population, and it is

composed of two main immigration communities: Filipino (60%) and Arab (40%; Statistics Canada, 2016).

The study participants were all adults enrolled at an Adult General Education center, which offers a range of services to adults, including the possibility to finish secondary school, undertake marketplace integration, and participate in French language instruction programs for newcomers. At the time of this study, there was one part-time class in the language instruction program. This class was scheduled for three hours two times a week for four months, and the curriculum included instruction in both oral and written proficiency. Learners were asked to complete one written assignment of between 50 and 60 words in every class.

The participants, identified by pseudonyms, in this project were all males and had been recruited in the Philippines for employment contracts with a company that specializes in manufacturing parts and equipment for industrial and commercial sectors. All five participants entered the country through the Quebec Experience Class, a program that allows individuals with a working permit to possibly become a permanent resident of Canada in the future. All five participants shared an apartment provided by their employer and worked full-time (40 hours per week) in day and night shifts.

The participants identified as Filipino and reported Tagalog as their first language (L1), and English as their L2. As Table 2 shows, all but one of them also spoke additional languages, having worked and studied in other countries prior to coming to Quebec.

Table 2

Background Information of Learner Participants

Name	Age	Nationality	L1 (home)	L2 (school)	Other languages
Earl	40	Filipino	Tagalog; Ihiligynon	English	Russian (intermediate; worked in Turkmenistan for 5 years)
Larry	35	Filipino	Iloceno; Tagalog	English	Japanese (low intermediate; worked in Japan for 3 years)
Martin	29	Filipino	Tagalog	English	Japanese (low intermediate; worked in Japan for 3 years)
Randy	36	Filipino	Tagalog	English	None
Victor	27	Filipino	Tagalog	English	Korean (intermediate); Arabic (basic); Becol (advanced)

In terms of French language proficiency, all participants had attended a basic 1-week (40-hour) French training course in the Philippines before coming to Quebec. Upon arrival in Quebec, they were registered in the beginner level of the *Programme-cadre de français pour les personnes immigrantes adultes au Québec*.

Data Collection

Data were collected over 8 weeks from multiple sources, including (a) learners' written compositions with WCF provided by the classroom instructor, (b) retrospective verbal reports, (c) semistructured interviews, and (d) analysis of other class documents. Both the retrospective verbal reports and semistructured interviews were adapted from Han (2019). A section was added to the first interview to obtain information about the personal background of the participants, including their immigration process and status (see Appendix A).

Two written compositions were collected throughout the study. In both compositions, learners were asked to write about past events. In

the first one, they had to describe their first week in the town, and in the second one, they had to narrate what they had done the previous week. Learners were asked to use between 50 and 60 words for each composition. Both texts were completed in class, and learners were able to use bilingual dictionaries, their class notes, and their cell phones or laptops to access online resources such as additional dictionaries or thesauruses. Learners' compositions were submitted to the teacher and returned to them the following class with WCF.

Two retrospective verbal reports (see Appendix B) took place immediately after each learner revised their texts based on WCF received from their teacher. During the retrospective verbal reports, the participants were asked to examine the feedback they had received on the grammar errors in their drafts and the revisions they made in the revised draft. During this session, the researcher asked them to think back to when they had first read the feedback in the first draft and to recall their thoughts at the time they were reading the feedback on the grammatical errors and using the feedback to revise the draft. Each verbal report took between 10 and 18 minutes, and learners had the choice to use English, French, or a mixture of both.

Two semistructured interviews were carried out with each of the participants—one at the beginning of the study period and the second one at the end. The placement of these interviews was intended to investigate whether there were any changes in learners' engagement with WCF during the semester. Both interviews were conducted in English and were between 30 and 50 minutes long.

Data Analysis

Data analysis of this mixed-method study consisted of two phases:

1. A quantitative analysis of learner errors, types of WCF, and learners' responses to WCF in the form of revisions, as an indication of behavioral engagement.

2. A qualitative analysis of transcriptions of the retrospective reports and semistructured interviews to determine learners' cognitive and affective engagement.

Analysis of Written Texts

Learners' written texts were analyzed and coded for type of error made by learners, WCF provided to them by the teacher, and learners' revisions based on the WCF they received. Learners' error types were coded using an adapted version of Guénette and Lyster's (2013) typology outlining 13 error types: determiners, mechanics (punctuation, capitalization), style, L1 use, noun endings (singular/plural), prepositions, spelling, sentence structure, agreement (subject/verb, noun/adjective, determiner/noun), verbs (verbs forms and auxiliaries), word choice, word order, and missing word. These errors have been grouped into four categories: lexical, grammatical, mechanics, and spelling (see Table 3).

Table 3
Types of Errors

Category	Description
Lexical	
Determiners "the," "a," "an"	Missing determiner
	Wrong determiner
Word choice	Wrong word choice (e.g., raining cats and rats [dogs])
Word form	Wrong word choice (e.g., exciting vs. excited)
Word missing	Absence of a word from the place where it was expected to be found
Prepositions	Wrong preposition
	Missing preposition
	Extra preposition
Grammatical	
Sentence structure	Grammatical arrangement of words—includes agreement (subject-verb, noun-pronoun, noun-adjective, determiner-noun, and article-noun) and question formation

Verbs	Problems with verb form	
	Problems with verb tense	
Mechanics		
Punctuation	Incorrect use of punctuation marks	
Capitalization	Incorrect use of capital letters	
Spelling	Incorrect spelling	

Note. Compiled based on "The Written Corrective Feedback Practices of Pre-Service ESL Teachers," by D. Guénette and R. Lyster, 2013, *La revue canadienne des langues vivantes*, 69, pp. 1–25.

The WFC provided to the learner was coded using the error correction categories adapted from Guénette (2009). Direct feedback was divided into two subcategories (with and without comments), whereas indirect feedback was divided into four subcategories (clarification requests, indirect error identification, indirect error identification with error code, and indirect error identification with comments; see Table 4).

Table 4

Types of Corrective Feedback

Type of corrective feedback category	Description
Direct	
Direct error with no comments	The correct form is provided with no comments.
Direct error correction with comments	The correct form is provided with comments.
Clarification requests	The teacher asks a question to understand what the learner means.
Indirect	
Indirect error identification	The error is underlined, highlighted, or colored differently, without providing the correct form.
Indirect error identification with error codes	Codes are used, without providing the correct form.
Indirect error identification with comments	Comments are placed next to the error, in a commentary bubble, or outside the text, without providing the correct form.

Note. Adapted from *The Cyberscript Project: A Mixed-Method Study of Pre-Service ESL Teachers' Corrective Feedback Beliefs and Practices*, by D. Guénette, 2009, doctoral dissertation, McGill University.

Finally, learners' responses to WCF were analyzed using the categories adapted from Ferris (2006). As can be seen in Table 5, Ferris proposed three types of successful revisions (error corrected, correct substitution, and averted erroneous teacher indication) and four types of unsuccessful revisions (incorrect change, deleted text, incorrect substitution, and teacher-induced error). The data analysis was performed using NVivo 12, a software program used for qualitative and mixed-methods research. Taking a deductive approach, the learners' responses to WCF were coded

using a list of predefined codes (i.e., learner's types of revisions; see Table 5), creating nodes for these and then coding the learners' writings to the relevant node.

Table 5

Learner's Types of Revisions

Type of revision category	Description
Successful	
Error corrected	Error was corrected as per teacher's indication.
Substitution, correct	Learner correctly made a change that was not suggested by the teacher.
Averted erroneous teacher indication	Learner corrected the error despite incomplete or erroneous teacher indication.
Unsuccessful	
Incorrect change	Change was made, but incorrectly.
Deleted text	Learner removed the marked text.
Substitution, incorrect	Learner incorrectly made a change that was not suggested by the teacher.
Teacher-induced error	Incomplete or misleading teacher marking caused the learner error.

Note. Adapted from "Does Error Feedback Help Learner Writers? New Evidence on the Short- and Long-Term Effects of Written Error Correction," by D. Ferris, 2006, in K. Hyland and F. Hyland (Eds.), *Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts and Issues*, pp. 88 (Cambridge University Press).

Analysis of Verbal Reports and Interviews

The interviews and verbal reports were analyzed through thematic analysis. The first round of analysis was informed by the analytic framework of learners' cognitive, behavioral, and affective engagement with WCF (adapted from Zheng & Yu, 2018) and by the descriptive labeling of

the learner and contextual factors that influenced engagement with WCF. In the verbal reports, for example, if learners succeeded in identifying the error and explaining accurately the teacher's WCF, this explanation was labeled as "correct"; otherwise, it was coded as "incorrect."

Subsequently, a second round of analysis was conducted in order to compare the cases and identify common patterns.

Findings

In the following section, we present the findings for each participant, summarizing data gathered through document analysis, the verbal reports, and the interviews.

The participants shared a number of common experiences and aspirations. All participants reported having come to Quebec with two clear goals in mind: to obtain Canadian citizenship for their families and to allow for a better future for their families. The main reasons for learning French, as reported in the interviews, were to fulfill the requirement to obtain permanent residence and to communicate with their coworkers and within their community.

In the initial interview, all participants reported speaking Tagalog (their L1) in the apartment they shared and English at work whenever possible. They also mentioned, however, that some colleagues spoke only French at work, so for this reason they had to attempt to communicate in French. In reflecting on their previous French language training provided to them in the Philippines before coming to Quebec, the participants noted that the four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) had been taught. According to the participants, their training course teacher consistently used direct correction on their written assignments.

Earl

Earl was the oldest of the group (40 years old). Before coming to Canada, he had lived in Turkmenistan for 5 years working for a natural gas company. When that contract ended, Earl returned to the Philippines.

He reported being unemployed for many months before he was offered the job in Quebec. He described how the possibility of having a long-term job and taking his family with him to a "developed country such as Canada" was his main motivation to accept the offer. He noted that, unlike his country, Canada offered the economic stability he and his family were looking for.

In terms of his French language learning experience, Earl stated in the interview that writing in French was important to him because he had to write reports for work in French. He found spelling very difficult since "in Tagalog there are no silent words or sounds, you write what you hear." Verb conjugation in French was challenging for him as well because "there are too many rules, and they change every time [whereas] in Tagalog you just have to add the *on* ending." He described the same difficulties in both the first and final interview. Analysis of Earl's first drafts of both essays showed that spelling was the most common error type (48% and 58%, respectively), followed by grammatical errors (33% and 25%, respectively). In both revised versions, however, Earl made grammatical errors only.

Earl expressed a preference for direct correction and, in certain cases, indirect feedback provided by underlining the errors. For him, the "best teacher is the one who gives you the right answer and explain [*sic*] why." He considered feedback very useful: "For me [feedback] is a good thing, because I am not a good French speaker or French writer," and therefore, "I don't feel frustrated or nothing like that when my teachers corrects [*sic*] me." Earl reported that when he made the same mistake repeatedly, he felt "a bit upset" with himself and acknowledged that he needed "to pay more attention and study more." However, he mentioned that he did not want to "feel any stress" because he worked "sometimes more than 10 hours and do night shifts, so I don't have much time to study."

Direct feedback with oral explanation was the only type of feedback that Earl's teacher provided in both drafts. Earl appreciated the way his teacher provided corrective feedback verbally to complement the written feedback: "She explains very well to us, and then when we make a mistake,

she can tell us the exact answer." Earl also appreciated that his teacher used English to explain grammar and provide corrective feedback "because her way in teaching is different from other teachers. Sometimes if we don't understand, she can translate it in English." Earl mentioned that when he had difficulty understanding a structure or word, he translated it to English or Tagalog. When he found his teacher's WCF confusing, he rarely asked about it because he felt shy, so either he asked his classmates or "let it go."

In the final interview, Earl mentioned that he felt "very happy because, thanks to the teacher's corrections, I can write better and communicate better with my colleagues." He also mentioned that he was very grateful to the program, stating, "Quebec is the place where I want to stay so with my French, I can pass the immigration exam and bring my family."

During the verbal report, Earl was able to explain the teacher's feedback 61% of the time. There were occasions (39% of the time) in which he either provided a wrong explanation or acknowledged that he did not understand the WCF, as in the following examples:

Researcher: Here the teacher marked that "nettoyage" ("cleaning" = noun) was wrong and replaced it by "nettoyer" ("to clean" = verb). What is the difference between "nettoyage" and "nettoyer"?

Earl: "Nettoyer" is past tense, "nettoyage" is in present tense.
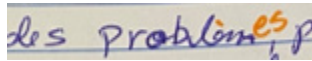
Researcher: Why did the teacher add the accent in "è" and "es" in "problèmes"?

Earl: The "es" because it is plural, but the accent on the "è" . . .

Researcher: Yes?

Earl: Because . . . I don't have an exact idea.

In response to the WCF provided, Earl was able to revise 90% of his errors in the first essay and 92% in the second, leaving only 10% and 8% of errors without revision, respectively. He reported using a grammar book to revise his grammatical errors and both Google Translate and online dictionaries as resources to revise spelling errors. Occasionally he would ask his classmates, but "if they are busy I don't bother them."

Larry

Larry had lived in Japan for 3 years working as a machine operator in a metal company before coming to Canada. When his contract in Japan ended, he was concerned, because as his family grew, "the need of my family is getting bigger, I have to send my children to school." He reported that having short-term contracts prevented him from reaching economic stability; furthermore, he expressed concern about the political situation in his country and was "grateful" to have the opportunity to work and possibly immigrate with his family to Canada.

As for his French language learning process, Larry stated that "writing in French isn't as important as speaking in French" and that "grammar is not that important." When he was asked in the interview if he knew whether the exam for permanent residency was written, he admitted that he did not know, but were that the case, he would take the study of grammar and writing more seriously.

Larry reported that having his errors corrected and receiving teacher feedback was stressful for him. He mentioned that a way to deal with that stress was "controlling" his engagement in his studies: "I don't study very hard because when I get a mistake it gets very stressful for me." In addition, he mentioned in the final interview that although he felt "grateful and happy" when his teacher corrected his mistakes, having his errors

signaled and corrected "hurts" his "ego." He acknowledged that admitting he was wrong was difficult for him: "Sometimes even if I know that the teacher's correction is right, I pretend that I am right."

Like Earl, Larry found spelling to be one of the most challenging aspects of writing in French because "in Tagalog there are no silent words, what you hear is what you write." In the draft of the first essay, grammatical errors were his most prevalent error type (81%), followed by spelling (14%) and lexical errors (1%). In the draft of the second essay, however, spelling errors were the most frequent (50%), followed by grammatical (35%) and lexical (15%) errors.

Larry had a clear preference for direct correction with teacher explanation. He stated that "indirect correction is a waste of time." Larry's teacher provided direct feedback with oral explanation on the draft of the first essay, whereas for the draft of the second essay, she provided direct feedback with explanation (85%) and indirect feedback (underline; 15%). He remarked on how the teacher "makes me smile; she is very humble and she puts her heart in teaching, even when she corrects us."
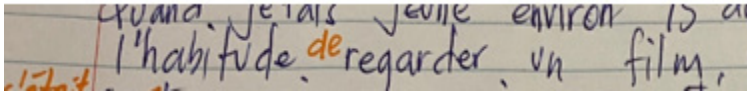
Larry was able to provide explanations of the teacher's feedback only 40% of the time; for the rest of the time (60%), he either provided an incorrect explanation or admitted that he did not know, as illustrated in the following examples:
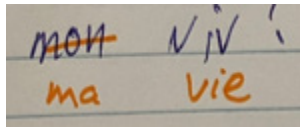
Researcher: And then here, why did the teacher replace "viv" by "vie"?

Larry: I think because I need a verb there.

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Researcher: And, in the next one, you wrote "l'habitude de regarder" and she added "de." Why did your teacher add "de"? Why do you need a "d" there?

Larry: Umm, "d" . . . I don't know [giggle] I don't know.

Even though Larry was not able to provide a good explanation for his teacher's WCF during the verbal report, he corrected 100% of his errors in both revised essays. As for revision resources, he reported that he asked the teacher for help because "I avoid using the Google translator because I will not learn by looking at the Google. I'm lazy enough [too lazy] to go to look for the dictionary or to go to my notes. So, if I have a question, I just ask my teacher."
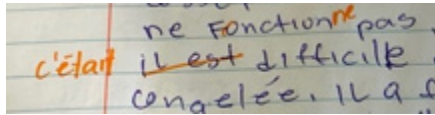
Martin

Like Larry, Martin had also lived in Japan for 3 years as a machine operator with the same metal company. He reported that "my dream was to come here at Canada, yeah, that was my, my dream." Therefore he was "very happy" to have the opportunity to work in Canada and have the possibility of bringing his family in the future.

Concerning his French language learning experience, Martin reported that writing in French was important for him because "it is necessary to fill the government forms" and "only if you know grammar you can write texts that others can understand." As with his classmates, conjugation and spelling were considered the most challenging aspects of writing in French because of the previously noted differences between French and Tagalog. Martin expressed a preference for direct correction since "indirect correction is time consuming, and I don't have time for that." Therefore, for him, "a good teacher is the one who gives you the right answers when you make mistakes."

Martin was absent from more than one class, often identifying work as the reason, so he only wrote one essay. The most common types of errors he made were grammatical (54%), followed by spelling (38%) and lexical (8%).

Martin received predominantly direct feedback (96%) and, in only a few instances, indirect feedback (underline; 4%). He was able to provide accurate explanations of the teacher's WCF 60% of the time and offered incorrect explanations 40% of the time.
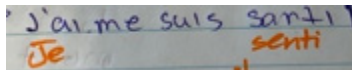

Researcher: Why did the teacher cross out "il est "and write "c'était" here?

Martin: "C'était difficille" . . . yeah

Researcher: Yes, can you tell me why "il est" is not correct?

Martin: Because . . . I was saying that . . . it's hard for me, in present tense and not using the imparfait.

Researcher: Why did the teacher replace "J'ai" (I have) by "Je" (I) in the last sentence?

Martin: Hmmm, I forgot what she told me, sorry.

Researcher: No problem. So, just to be sure, have you asked your teacher why "J'ai" is not correct and you've forgotten what she's told you? Or, you haven't asked her yet?

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Martin: Yeah, she told me but I don't remember.

Martin corrected 100% of the errors in his revised essay. He reported using an on-line dictionary and Google as resources for spelling and verb conjugation revisions.

Randy

Randy was the only participant in the group without any previous international working experience. He admitted in the interview that Canada was not his first choice but that he took the job offer because he had no answer from other jobs for which he had applied. However, he mentioned that now he would like to become a permanent resident because he "likes here."

As for his French language learning experience, Randy reported "writing in French is very important because there are always forms to fill at work but also for the immigration process, but oral French is more important because at work I need to speak more than to write."

Spelling was the most difficult aspect of writing in French for him because of the silent letters, but he added that syntax in French is also challenging because "the word order in French is so confusing." Randy made an equal number of grammatical and spelling in both drafts (50% and 50%, respectively).

Randy reported in the last interview that corrective feedback is necessary for learning: "We don't learn if they don't correct us. So for me, it's OK when the teacher corrects us and then explain, so we can learn, we can learn our mistakes." Randy described only positive feelings when the teacher corrected his texts: "For me it's good, I have no bad feelings for that [WCF] on the contrary I feel grateful because without correction we don't learn." He considered direct correction complemented by explanation to be the most effective means of corrective feedback and that his teacher was "the best because she not only corrects the mistakes in our texts but explains orally why it's wrong what we wrote." In addition, Randy highlighted the fact that his teacher provided explanations in English

when the learners had trouble understanding them in French. "I like that because if she only uses French to explain, I am not sure I will understand." Randy's teacher provided only direct feedback complemented with oral explanation in both drafts.

Randy reported that he wrote words that were difficult to remember in a notebook, in addition to making lists of verbs which he had tried to learn by heart. During the verbal report, he was able to provide correct explanations on his received WCF for 60% of the time, and 40% of the time, he provided incorrect explanations.
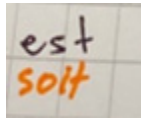
Researcher: Why did the teacher replace "est" (simple present tense "to be") by "soit" (imperfect tense "to be") in the last sentence?

Randy: Because I need a past tense.

Randy corrected 100% of his errors in both texts. He mentioned that he used Google as a revision tool when he was unsure of spelling and an online dictionary when he wanted to find the meaning of the words because "the dictionary that the teacher gives us in class is French-French so I don't understand."

Victor

Victor was the youngest participant (27 years old) and the one who spoke the most languages. He stated that he wanted to work and live in Canada because it "is a good place, peaceful, and the people here are so kind."

Victor stated that writing in French "is very important because there are always forms to fill, when we are at work, when we go to the hospital, when we need to contact immigration office, and so on." He acknowledged, however, that writing in French was difficult for him because

"there are too many accents" and because "I get confused with the other languages I've learned, with Korean and Arabic."

Victor was absent from one class because of his work, so he only wrote one essay. Spelling errors were his most common type of error (48%), followed by grammatical (33%), lexical (14%), and mechanics (5%) errors.

The teacher used direct correction complemented by oral explanations 100% of the time to correct Victor's draft. Victor considered direct correction complemented by oral explanations to be the most effective means of WCF. In addition, he mentioned that he appreciated that his teacher used English to explain complex French structures: "When she explains in English, then I understand." He also showed appreciation for his teacher's work, stating: "The teacher puts a lot of effort to correct us."

Victor mentioned in the final interview that when he undertook revisions, he read the whole paragraph and translated it to English to understand. He was able to provide correct explanations of the teacher's WCF 53%, while the other 47% of the time, his explanations were incorrect.
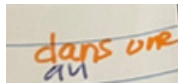
Researcher: Why did the teacher replace "au" by "dans une" in this sentence?

Victor: It's ah different um . . . conjugation? Like that? My word, ah, my grammar is wrong.

Victor corrected 100% of his errors in his revised essay. He reported using Google to translate the words he did not understand.

Discussion

This study set out to examine how the five participants (all adult men from the same linguistic background, working for the same employer in a rural francophone community, and studying FSL in the same program) engaged as individuals with a specific feature of their language learning experience—the

WCF provided by the teacher. The study was concerned with how the features of the contexts, shared and individual, in which the participants lived and worked mediated their individual engagement with WCF.

Some features of the shared working and living context appeared to exert a similar influence on various dimensions of their engagement. The participants were all similarly motivated by the desire to succeed in the workplace, settle in Canada, and, for the majority of them, have their families join them. All five participants understood that mastering French was a requirement to achieve their professional (i.e., succeed in their jobs) and personal goals (i.e., become eligible for permanent residence). All participants had experienced periods of economic instability, through unemployment and temporary employment in a range of international contexts, with some variation among them. A common theme derived from the participants centered around the high-stakes nature of their current socioeconomic context, and this focus appeared to be both reflected in and have an impact on their engagement with the WCF they received in their language classroom. The relationship was, however, more complex than it appeared. While all the participants expressed an appreciation for the importance of language proficiency, each responded differently in terms of their cognitive engagement. Of the five participants, all but one seemed to mediate their engagement through an awareness of their work commitments and the need to reduce overall stress. Only one participant (Randy) did not express an awareness of the stress associated with language learning and the WCF he received. He was also the only one that had no prior international experience, did not express a primary concern with economic instability, and did not appear to "disengage" in order to lower his stress level.

The same contextual features appeared to mediate the participants' preferences for WCF. All the participants reported a strong preference for direct WCF and a strong appreciation for the use of English in explanations. These strategies appeared to be valued because they supported a more efficient way of learning; indirect WCF was described as "a waste of

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time" and "time-consuming." The participants' work schedules with long hours, the demands of French proficiency in the workplace, and their tenuous immigration status appeared to promote their appreciation of direct WCF, a strategy in which the teacher "gives you the right answer and explains why."

When participants were asked to reflect on the WCF they received, they differed in the degree to which they were aware of their language use: three learners (Earl, Martin, and Randy) were able to provide accurate explanations of the received feedback 60% of the time, whereas two (Victor and Larry) succeeded in providing an accurate explanation 53% and 40% of the time, respectively. Participants were able to make corrections in 40%–60% of instances without understanding why they were making changes, which suggests that the teacher's "oral explanations" might have directed learners about what to do in terms of revision without necessarily engaging learners in thinking about why they should make revisions or what revisions to make. The dominant use of direct WCF may also have discouraged more significant cognitive engagement.

The most common use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies involved translating words, using online dictionaries, and asking the teacher and peers for help. The participants' choice of the cognitive and metacognitive strategies responds to learner and contextual factors as well. For example, one learner (Earl) reported using resources such as his grammar books or Google Translate to revise his grammatical errors and only asked his classmates if they were not busy so that he did not "bother them." He also acknowledged that he preferred to consult a peer than the teacher because even if his teacher had a "nice heart," he felt shy about asking her. Conversely, another learner (Larry) reported that he preferred to ask for the teacher's help instead, describing himself as too lazy to use other resources.

On a behavioral dimension, participants' engagement appeared to be mediated through a common struggle with grammatical and spelling errors, and they attributed this challenge to the difference between their L1 (Tagalog) and French. More specifically, because Tagalog is a

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gender-neutral language, the participant learners reported being confused with the use of gender pronouns in French. In that vein, the fact that the teacher provided mostly direct correction with oral explanation may have contributed to the fact that all learners succeeded in revising their final drafts. This success suggests that the teacher WCF affordances became learning opportunities because of the "match" between the available opportunities, the learners' intention to learn, and the learners' capacity to perceive such opportunities as useful (Chong, 2021; Han, 2019; Reed, 1993; van Lier, 2004).

The participants' ability to make revisions is, to some extent, in contradiction to their inabilities to explain the WCF they were provided; it seems they were able to make corrections without understanding why they had to do so, which suggests a surface-level engagement. This surface-level engagement emerged in their focus on orthographic and grammatical errors with evident contrast with Tagalog and their preference for (a) direct corrective feedback, (b) the use of readily available resources such as online tools, and (c) the use of English as a resource.

In terms of affective engagement, for example, most of the participants expressed positive feelings and emotions upon receiving WCF as well as admiration and gratitude for the way their teacher provided WCF and valued WCF. In some ways, these feelings were related to individual personalities, as in the case of Larry, who described how humor was very important for him and that he appreciated that his teacher made him smile even when she corrected him.

Conclusion

The goal of this study was to examine the ways in which contextual factors played a role in French L2 learners' affective, cognitive, and behavioral engagement with WCF in Quebec, a highly complex sociolinguistic context. It appeared that the more immediate context of the lives of the participants also played a role. As previously mentioned, all participants came from the Philippines and described challenges with economic

and political instability; therefore, they shared the search of sustainable employment and a future for family growth. In the classroom, drawing on multiple resources and strategies to support language development, the relationship between teacher and learner was mediated by their individual personalities, ambitions, and struggles. For example, the fact that the teacher used English instead of French to explain complex grammar structures was appreciated by Randy, Earl, and Victor, who reported being able to understand their teacher's explanations when she used English. In addition, the teacher's "humble" attitude and smile while providing corrective feedback was highlighted by Larry as one the most important qualities that a teacher could have.

In examining the ways in which these contexts played a role in the engagement of the participants, the study drew on an ecological perspective that highlighted the interconnectedness and complexity of contextual factors. It was evident that the degree to which, and the manner in which, an individual attended, appreciated, and engaged with WCF provided in the classroom was not a simple relationship but a result of multiple dimensions. The findings of this study have shown for example how the participants' economic and sociopolitical context encouraged them to immigrate to a country that offered them and their families the opportunities that they could not find in their home country. As reported, Canada, more specifically Quebec, offered them such opportunities. To benefit from those opportunities and potentially be able to obtain permanent residence in Quebec, participants acknowledged the need to master French. Therefore, the participants' engagement with the WCF provided by their teacher was directly mediated by their motivation to learn French as a means to achieve their personal and professional goals.

Much like the analogy of a nested doll described by Bronfenbrenner (1995), the various social, economic, and personal dimensions of the lives of these participants did not exert distinct and easily defined forces; rather, they came together to create conditions that mediated their engagement as learners. For researchers and teachers, this finding brings to

the foreground the need to consider the contexts of learners and learning more broadly. Research will benefit from more in-depth and nuanced investigations of teaching and learning generally and WCF more specifically. In the classroom, teachers' awareness of this complexity encourages them to find ways to support learners in perceiving and acting upon learning opportunities afforded by WCF (Chong, 2021; Han, 2019), including the use of linguistic resources, online tools, and avenues that allow more independence and individual choice that is suited to the individual. As it has been previously mentioned, engagement emerges when learning opportunities embedded in the context align with individual learners' willingness and capacity.

Moving forward, it may be valuable to examine learner engagement across contexts. While this study provides insight into how features of a specific context, in this case, a program of FSL, mediate individual learner engagement, a cross comparison of how learners in different sociopolitical and linguistic contexts engage with WCF would enrich our understanding. In addition, while this study was able to capture a snapshot of the learners' experiences and perspectives through interviews, further research with more extensive interviews over a greater length of time might illuminate how engagement changes over time as learners become further embedded within the contexts in which the live and work.

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Appendix A

Learner Interview Guide (Adapted from Han, 2019)

First Learner Interview

Personal Background
1. Where do you come from?
2. What is your first language? Do you speak other languages? Where/how did you learn them?
3. Why did you decide to immigrate?
4. Why did you decide to immigrate to Canada/Quebec?
5. When did you arrive in Canada/Quebec?
6. Did you travel with your family?
7. Do you have friends or know people that come from your country that reside in Rouyn-Noranda? If so, how often do you see them?

Personal Experience and Goals of French Learning and Writing
1. Tell me about your previous learning experiences with French writing.
2. How did your former French teachers help with grammatical problems in your writing?
3. Share your experiences with the Level 4 course so far.
4. What is your goal of French learning in francization [the program]?
5. What role do you think French will play in your future personal and professional life after graduation from the course?

Learner Beliefs About and Attitudes Toward French Writing and Teacher Feedback
1. In your opinion, how important are writing skills as a part of French learning?
2. In your opinion, what qualities should a good French essay have?
3. What are the strengths and weaknesses of your own French writing?
4. How important do you think grammar is in French writing?

5. Teachers may give feedback on grammar errors. Sometimes, they may correct errors for you, underline errors, give comments, or offer other clues. In general, what do you think of teacher feedback on grammar errors?

6. In your opinion, what does ideal teacher feedback on grammar errors look like?

7. What do you think is the main reason why your teacher gives you feedback on your grammar errors?

8. To what extent do you usually understand teacher feedback on grammar errors?

9. Have you ever found teacher feedback on grammar errors confusing or unclear? Can you give me an example?

10. What are the reasons why teacher feedback on grammar errors is sometimes difficult to understand?

11. What do you do with teacher feedback on grammar errors that you do not understand?

12. What resources and strategies do you usually use to revise your draft?

13. How do you feel when you receive feedback from your teacher on grammar errors in your writing?

14. Do you think teacher feedback on grammar errors is helpful for you? Why or why not? Can you give me an example of useful feedback?

15. Your teacher wants to improve the way he/she gives feedback to you. What advice or suggestions would you give him/her?

16. Do you have further comments or reflections on French learning and writing?

Final Learner Interview

1. Tell me about your experience learning French over the semester.

2. Tell me about your experience learning French writing over the semester.

3. How do you like your French teacher? What do you think about her?

4. Tell me about your experiences using teacher feedback on grammatical errors over the semester.

5. In general, how well did you understand your teacher's feedback on grammatical errors?

6. What kinds of teacher feedback on grammar do you think were easy to understand?

7. What did you usually do if teacher feedback on grammar was confusing to you?

8. How did you use teacher feedback on grammar to revise your drafts?

9. What did you do if you disagreed with your teacher's grammatical error feedback?

10. What did you do if you could not find a solution to a grammar problem when revising your draft?

11. What resources did you use to revise your draft?

12. Would you review and correct the parts of your text that did not receive teacher feedback? Why?

13. What do you feel about teacher feedback on grammar, in general?

14. In what respect do you think teacher feedback on grammar is the most helpful?

15. In what respect do you think teacher feedback on grammar is the least helpful?

16. What do you think your teacher should have done differently when she provided feedback on your grammatical errors over the semester?

17. Do you have further reflections or comments about teacher feedback on grammar errors, revisions, or French writing in general?

Appendix B

Instructions for Retrospective Verbal Report of Learner Participants in French (Adapted from Han, 2019)

Thank you for helping us understand how learners respond to teachers' feedback on grammar errors in writing. You are going to see teacher feedback on grammar errors in your previous draft, and your revisions will be made in the final draft. I would like to know what you were thinking at the time you were reading the feedback on these grammatical errors and using the feedback to revise the draft.

I will point to the feedback on grammatical errors you received in the first draft and the revisions you made in the second draft. Please discuss what was on your mind when you were responding to the feedback and revising your draft. Please tell me what you were thinking then rather than what you are thinking now. You may choose to recall in English, French, or a mixture of both. Do you have any questions so far? If not, let's start.