

Written Corrective Feedback in the Post-Pandemic Era: Evolving Practices in Written Corrective Feedback Post-Pandemic

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Abstract

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic instigated a paradigm shift in global educational practices, especially within second language (L2) writing instruction. This paper explores the evolution of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) from traditional to digital modalities, with a particular focus on the pedagogical shifts necessitated by the pandemic and sustained in the post-pandemic era. Grounded in relevant literature, this study examines the affordances and limitations of both traditional and digital WCF methods. Additionally, it investigates the integration of artificial intelligence (AI)-powered tools, such as ChatGPT, in providing efficient, personalized, and constructive feedback. The paper proposes a hybrid WCF model tailored for the post-pandemic classroom, offering practical implications for educators and instructional designers aiming to enhance feedback efficacy in diverse learning contexts.

1. Introduction

Corrective feedback plays an indispensable role in second language writing development. Traditionally rooted in handwritten comments and face-to-face conferencing, WCF has evolved in response to technological advancements and pedagogical needs. The COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed this transformation, forcing educators worldwide to rapidly adopt digital tools for instruction and feedback. This transition underscored the need for feedback practices that are not only effective but also adaptable to fluctuating educational contexts. In this paper, I chronicle the development of WCF across three key phases: pre-pandemic, during the pandemic, and post-pandemic. I analyze both traditional and digital feedback strategies, highlighting their theoretical underpinnings, practical implementations, and impacts on student learning. In the latter sections, I introduce AI-powered tools such as ChatGPT and explore their implications for personalized, scalable, and pedagogically sound feedback delivery. The aim is to offer a comprehensive framework for understanding and improving WCF in the modern educational landscape.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Traditional Corrective Feedback Approaches

Before the advent of widespread digital tools, traditional WCF methods were the norm in language classrooms. These included handwritten annotations on student work, oral feedback delivered in face-to-face conferences, grading rubrics, peer reviews, and self-assessments. Russell and Spada (2006) define corrective feedback as any intervention aimed at signaling linguistic inaccuracies to facilitate learner correction. According to Matsumura and Hann (2004), traditional feedback is efficient for enhancing writing accuracy due to its directness and contextual relevance. However, its efficacy is often limited by time constraints, inconsistencies in grading, legibility issues, and a lack of emphasis on positive reinforcement.

2.2. The Rise of Digital Feedback During the Pandemic

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019 imposed unprecedented challenges on educational institutions, compelling teachers to shift to online platforms. Feedback methods during this period included digital annotations via Google Classroom, Blackboard, and Canvas; personalized feedback through email; and video-recorded commentary. These modalities offered new possibilities but also presented limitations. Asynchronous feedback lacked immediacy, while technical difficulties often disrupted communication. Despite these challenges, studies such as Hadiyanto (2019) highlight the effectiveness of computer-mediated corrective feedback in improving L2 writing accuracy. These methods allowed for broader reach, increased documentation, and the flexibility to revisit feedback.

2.3. Emergence of AI-Powered Feedback Tools

The post-pandemic era has witnessed the increasing integration of AI-powered technologies in education. Tools such as Grammarly, Turnitin, and FeedbackFruits introduced automated grammar and plagiarism checks. More advanced tools like ChatGPT provide real-time, nuanced feedback on content, structure, tone, and coherence. Sauro (2009) and Kim (2014) affirm that AI-mediated feedback can facilitate the acquisition of complex grammatical structures and foster metalinguistic awareness. AI tools not only improve efficiency but also help bridge the feedback gap in large classrooms, making personalized feedback scalable.

3. Methodology

This paper utilizes a descriptive-analytical methodology. Rather than conducting empirical research, it synthesizes theoretical literature, pedagogical case studies, and practitioner insights to analyze the transformation of WCF across different temporal phases. Sources were selected based on relevance, scholarly credibility, and their contributions to the field of second language writing and technology-enhanced learning. A comparative analysis framework is employed to evaluate the

affordances and constraints of traditional, digital, and AI-assisted feedback methods. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of how pedagogical contexts and technological tools influence feedback practices and outcomes.

4. Analysis and Discussion

4.1. Feedback Before the Pandemic

Prior to the pandemic, WCF was grounded in physical interaction. Teachers provided feedback through:

- **Handwritten Comments:** These offered direct, personalized input but often suffered from issues of legibility and were time-consuming to produce.
- **Verbal Conferences:** Facilitated dialogue between teacher and student but were limited by scheduling and class sizes.
- **Grading Rubrics:** Provided consistency in evaluation but lacked qualitative detail.
- **Peer and Self-Assessments:** Encouraged learner autonomy but often varied in reliability.

While effective in many cases, traditional feedback approaches often failed to meet the demands of increasing class sizes and diverse learner needs.

4.2. Feedback During the Pandemic

The sudden pivot to online instruction necessitated alternative feedback strategies:

- **Online Platform Annotations:** Teachers used digital tools to comment on submitted work; however, this process was time-intensive and sometimes hindered by platform limitations.
- **Email Feedback:** Allowed for detailed commentary but often went unnoticed by students.
- **Video Feedback:** Enhanced clarity and engagement but was technically and logistically demanding.

Despite these hurdles, digital feedback methods improved documentation, flexibility, and accessibility, aligning with the asynchronous nature of remote learning.

4.3. Feedback After the Pandemic

The current educational climate favors hybrid models that integrate the best of both traditional and digital feedback. AI tools such as ChatGPT have emerged as transformative solutions. They:

- Deliver immediate, individualized feedback.
- Maintain consistency across multiple drafts.
- Identify grammar, syntax, and stylistic issues.
- Offer constructive suggestions on organization and content.
- Enhance accessibility for both teachers and students.

Nonetheless, concerns regarding overreliance, ethical usage, and potential erosion of teacher-student interaction remain critical.

5. Implications for Pedagogy

The integration of AI and digital tools in feedback practices should be guided by sound pedagogical principles. Key recommendations include:

- **Needs-Based Customization:** Feedback should align with student proficiency levels and learning styles.
- **Clarity and Accessibility:** Use simple, unambiguous language and ensure timely delivery.
- **Balanced Approach:** Combine praise with constructive criticism to boost learner motivation.
- **Scaffolding Student Engagement:** Encourage learners to reflect on and apply feedback in revision tasks.
- **Ethical Use of AI:** Establish guidelines for responsible integration of AI tools, ensuring they augment rather than replace human judgment.

These strategies help foster a culture of feedback literacy, where students learn to value, interpret, and act upon feedback to enhance their writing.

6. Conclusion

The post-pandemic era offers an unprecedented opportunity to rethink and revitalize written corrective feedback practices. While traditional methods remain valuable for their human touch and pedagogical depth, digital and AI-enhanced tools provide scalability, efficiency, and personalization. A hybrid feedback model that synergizes these approaches can better meet the needs of 21st-century learners. Future research should explore the longitudinal effects of AI-mediated feedback on writing development and investigate how teacher training programs can incorporate AI literacy. Ultimately, effective feedback must remain student-centered, timely, and pedagogically grounded.

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