Engagement with written corrective feedback by learners of Japanese as a foreign language at the beginner level in an intensive language program

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Abstract

While written corrective feedback (WCF) has been studied extensively, engagement with WCF by students of less commonly taught languages, especially at the elementary level, has not yet received scholarly attention. To address this research gap, this case study explores how two learners of Japanese as a foreign language at the elementary level engaged with WCF, using the frameworks of Ellis (2010) and Mao and Lee (2022). In addition, the roles of individual and contextual factors were investigated. The participants included two beginner learners in an intensive language program. The data were collected through three multi-draft essays, retrospective stimulated recall, course documents, and class observation. The results reveal that the participants showed extensive overall engagement with WCF. However, each student

responded to WCF differently due to individual factors, such
as attitude toward WCF, and contextual factors, such as
assignment type.

Keywords: Japanese as a foreign language; Written corrective
feedback; Engagement; Individual factors; Contextual factors

Introduction

Several researchers have stated that written corrective
feedback (WCF) plays a significant role in the acquisition of
new knowledge for students (Bitchener & Storch, 2016;
Ferris, 2010). However, despite teachers' expectations that
students will actively engage with WCF to learn from their
errors and the WCF provided, student engagement with WCF
is not always satisfactory (Ferris et al., 2013). Both individual
and contextual factors have been identified as contributing to
student (dis)engagement with WCF. On the individual level,
factors such as L2 proficiency (Ferris et al., 2013; Kang &
Han, 2015), attitudes (Ferris et al., 2013), and beliefs

(Goldstein, 2006; Han, 2017; Rummel & Bitchener, 2015) have been found to influence student engagement with WCF. Contextual factors such as institutional policy and instructional context (Lee, 2008) as well as task types (Kang & Han, 2015) have received researchers' attention and been identified as influential factors in student engagement. Thus, a comprehensive understanding of student engagement with WCF cannot be achieved without considering these factors. As a result, an increasing number of studies have focused on how learners react to WCF rather than how teachers provide it.

While myriad studies have investigated student engagement with WCF in the context of ESL/EFL (Han & Hyland, 2015, 2019; Yu et al., 2019; Zheng & Liu, 2020) and French (Lira-Gonzales et al., 2021), studies on engagement with WCF among students of less commonly taught languages, like Japanese, are relatively scarce. Therefore, this study aims to advance knowledge of student engagement with WCF in a growing yet still underexamined group: Japanese as

a foreign language (JFL) learners. Furthermore, student engagement with WCF in intensive language programs has received little attention in previous literature. This is a significant research gap, as previous studies have revealed that student engagement is a dynamic process that is impacted by individual and contextual factors. In order to address this research gap, this study reports on engagement with WCF by two JFL learners at the beginner level in an intensive language course in the United States.

Literature review

This study employs theoretical frameworks developed by Ellis (2010) and Mao and Lee (2022) for understanding the complex nature of student engagement with WCF.

Ellis's (2010) framework of engagement with written corrective feedback

Student engagement with both oral and written corrective feedback (CF) is a multi-faceted phenomenon and has been conceptualized as cognitive, behavioral, and affective

engagement (Ellis, 2010). This framework was adopted in this study along with its subconstructs, as they capture student engagement in a fine-grained way.

Cognitive engagement refers to how learners attend to CF (Ellis, 2010). Han and Hyland (2015) extended cognitive engagement to three subconstructs: a) depth (quality) of processing of WCF, b) cognitive operations, and c) metacognitive operations. Depth of processing of WCF is observed through students' notice, awareness of, and understanding of WCF (Qi & Lapkin, 2001; Sachs & Polio, 2007). Cognitive operations consist of the mental effort, skills, or strategies needed to process WCF such as metalinguistic analysis, connecting WCF with classroom instruction, and activating previous knowledge (Han & Hyland, 2015). Metacognitive operations refer to the efforts, skills, or strategies applied to regulate mental effort in order to process WCF, such as planning steps to deal with WCF, leaving revised drafts for a couple of days, and re-reading the essay with fresh eyes. Behavioral engagement refers to

student behavior after receiving CF (Ellis, 2010). Behavioral

engagement in this study is composed of a) revision

operations and b) observable actions to improve the accuracy

of the draft. Revision operations are defined by whether and

how learners revise their written work based on WCF.

Examples of observable actions to improve writing and

understanding include seeking help from teachers and/or

peers and the use of external resources. Affective engagement

refers to how learners respond attitudinally and emotionally

to WCF (Han & Hyland, 2015). Attitudinal response has been

analyzed through students' preferences regarding WCF (i.e.,

likes and dislikes). According to Zheng, Yu, and Liu (2020),

emotional response is defined by feelings (i.e., emotions

experienced upon viewing WCF and changes made during the

revision process), judgment (i.e., personal judgment of

admiration or criticism of WCF), and appreciation (i.e.,

valuing the given WCF). Table 1 below summarizes each

aspect of engagement with definitions.

Table 1. Classification of engagement types and subconstructs

Engagement	Subconstruct of each engagement type	Definition
Cognitive engagement	(1) Depth of processing of WCF	Quality of attention, awareness, and/or understanding of WCF.
	(2) Cognitive operation	Mental effort, skills, or strategies to process WCF.
	(3) Metacognitive operation	Efforts, skills, or strategies to regulate mental effort in processing WCF.
Behavioral engagement	(1) Revision operation in response to WCF	Whether and in what way learners revise written texts based on WCF.
	(2) Observable actions to facilitate cognitive and	Actions to improve writing and understanding.

	metacognitive operation	
Affective engagement	(1) Emotional reaction to WCF	Likes and dislikes.
	(2) Attitudinal response to WCF	Emotions upon viewing the given WCF and changes during the revision process.

(Note: definitions of cognitive and metacognitive operations are adapted from Oxford (2011).

This framework has been utilized by researchers to explore student engagement with teacher feedback (Han & Hyland, 2015; Lira-Gonzales et al., 2021; Zhang & Hyland, 2018; Zheng & Yu, 2018; Zheng et al., 2020) in ESL/EFL contexts, especially writing courses. The results of these studies indicate that individual and contextual factors play a significant role in shaping student engagement with WCF. For example, using a case study approach, Han and Hyland (2015) explored students' engagement with WCF from their teacher

in a college EFL classroom in China. They found that students' engagement with WCF varied considerably depending on each student's motivation. In this study, Ying—the most motivated student among the four focal students—showed extensive engagement with WCF. Ying initiated an individual conference to receive oral feedback from her instructor, which led to a deeper processing of WCF. By contrast, Song, an unmotivated student, was overconfident about her English but less engaged with WCF. She did not process WCF deeply, deploy strategies, or express a positive attitude toward WCF. Similarly, Lira-Gonzales et al. (2021) explored engagement with WCF by learners of French as a foreign language in Costa Rica. The researchers reported that while all participants showed some aspects of engagement in similar ways (e.g., detecting teachers' intentions), other aspects of engagement varied among individuals. For example, participants experienced both positive and negative feelings, but some were able to regulate their emotions. These findings highlight the need for

inclusion of individual and contextual factors to further explore engagement with WCF.

Mao and Lee's (2022) theoretical framework of engagement with WCF

Informed by sociocultural theory, Mao and Lee's (2022) framework of engagement with WCF regards student engagement as dynamic, non-linear, and complex. In this view, student engagement with written feedback is contextualized as social practice, influenced by individual and feedback-related contextual factors. According to the researchers, student engagement with WCF is mediated by various individual factors such as 1) lived experiences (e.g., mindsets, beliefs, and personal experiences/values) and 2) developmental competencies (e.g., cognitive skills and emotional regulation/control). In addition, feedback-related contextual factors play a role in whether and to what extent learners utilize the learning opportunities provided by WCF. Contextual factors include 1) learning tasks/activities (e.g.,

types of writing tasks and evaluation criteria), 2) classroom setting (e.g., instructional focus and relationships with teachers/peers), and 3) school environment (e.g., norms, policy, and culture). The present study is informed by this framework, as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the complex nature of student engagement with WCF and various influences on the process.

Individual and contextual factors in student engagement with WCF

Researchers have argued that student engagement is influenced by various individual factors (Mao & Lee, 2022). For example, Qi and Lapkin (2001) investigated the depth of processing of reformulation of two ESL learners in Canada. The study showed that the more proficient learner was able to explain the underlying rules of reformulation more effectively than the less proficient learner. Although only two participants were examined, this study suggests that higher proficiency facilitates a deeper understanding of WCF. In addition to proficiency, learners' attitudes have received the

attention of researchers. For example, Storch and Wigglesworth's (2010) case study revealed that some participants intentionally ignored WCF when it was not the type of WCF that they preferred. This suggests that student attitudes toward WCF have the potential to impact their engagement with WCF. Another individual factor previously investigated is student beliefs. Han (2017) explored the relationship between the beliefs and engagement of Chinese college students learning English and found that beliefs both directly and indirectly impacted their engagement with WCF. For instance, students' beliefs about their own proficiency played a role in their approach to revision tasks; for instance, a student called Hong, who felt he was struggling, followed his teacher's suggestions without engaging deeply with WCF.

Studies have also investigated contextual factors such as sociocultural and instructional environment, as WCF is a form of social practice. Lee (2008), for example, suggested that teacher-centered instruction might contribute to students

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becoming passive recipients of WCF. In a teacher-centered

classroom, the teacher assumes an authoritative role and

instructs students on what to do rather than allowing them to

figure out a task alone or with peers. This classroom

environment may lead students to desire more explicit WCF.

Potential impacts of teacher-student relationships have also

been explored. Using a case study approach, Lee and Schallert

(2008) and Zheng, Yu, and Liu (2020) revealed that students

who had better relationships with their instructors engaged

with WCF more extensively, made more revisions, and thus

produced better drafts than those who did not trust their

instructors. Similarly, Han and Hyland (2019) suggested that

students who have a positive relationship with their

instructors feel more comfortable discussing their drafts.

Research on student reactions to WCF in JFL classroom

Although there have been numerous studies on student

reactions to WCF in ESL/EFL contexts, research on JFL

learners is limited. The revision operations of intermediate

JFL learners in China have been investigated by Yasuda and Wang (2016). They found that students were able to correct errors according to explicit WCF but were not always successful in correcting errors that received implicit feedback. Additionally, Takahashi (2013) found that JFL learners held varying preferences for WCF. Some learners preferred explicit WCF, as it encourages them to think about the error more carefully, while others preferred implicit feedback due to beliefs about their own limited proficiency.

Despite the wealth of research on student engagement with WCF in ESL/EFL contexts, there is limited knowledge on engagement with WCF, as defined by Ellis (2010), among JFL learners. Additionally, the participants in the studies reviewed above were EFL college students who had learned English for at least six years as well as intermediate learners of French. Therefore, limited information is available regarding student engagement for those at the beginner level. This is a critical research gap

because proficiency is a key factor in student engagement, as revealed in the literature. Furthermore, participants in previous studies were situated primarily in L2 writing classrooms, while little is known about student engagement with WCF in an intensive language learning environment. In order to expand the current knowledge of student engagement with WCF, the present study aims to address these research gaps and explore the following research questions.

> RQ1: How do JFL learners at the beginner level engage with WCF cognitively, behaviorally, and affectively?

> RQ2: What roles do individual and contextual factors play in student engagement with WCF?

Methods

To answer these research questions, a two-case study was conducted with students in a JFL online course at a U.S. college. The case study approach was chosen as it allows for

an in-depth understanding of the relationships among variables such as individual and contextual factors (Yin, 2017).

Research site

The data were collected from first-year Japanese students participating in an online intensive Japanese summer program at a U.S. college. The curriculum of this 8-week program covered content that is normally taught in two semesters at U.S. colleges. This course consisted of 16 students, three instructors, and three teaching assistants. The class met for three hours Monday through Friday, followed by one-hour office hours. In addition to the formal class and office hours, extracurricular events were offered after class almost every day. As a policy, all classes, office hours, and extracurricular events were conducted solely in Japanese.

Participants

In this study, two focal student participants, Mike and Alice (pseudonyms), were selected as they were enrolled in the

course and volunteered for this study. Both participants had

no prior formal instruction in the Japanese language. Table 2

summarizes the backgrounds of the student participants

below.

Table 2. Student participants

Name	Age	Status	Major	Reasons for studying Japanese
Mike	21	College junior	International business	To prepare for teaching abroad in Japan; interested in Japanese history
Alice	22	Recent college graduate	Sociology	To prepare for teaching abroad in Japan

Writing tasks

In this Japanese course, students were asked to write three

multi-draft essays; for each essay, students wrote a first draft,

received WCF, and made revisions based on the WCF. For Essays 1 and 2, students used a neutral polite form, the

desu/masu form, which was the only conjugation the participants were familiar with at the time of data collection. For Essay 3, students used a different style that is often used in writing, which was referred to as "short form" in the course. All essays were graded as part of the homework category, which was 16% of the total course grade. Table 3 below summarizes the writing assignments. In this course, writing was considered an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they had learned in class. Therefore, students were encouraged to use vocabulary and grammatical structures that were taught in class. It is worth noting that students did not receive any instructions on how to use WCF.

Table 3. Summary of essays

Essay	Schedule	Topic	Mode	Length	Grade

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Essay 1	Week 2	Daily routine	Handwritten	6–8 sentences	Graded
Essay 2	Week 4	Memorable trip	Typed	350–400 characters	Graded
Essay 3	Week 6	Diary (short form)	Handwritten	400–500 characters	Graded

Data collection

Data were collected from several sources: 1) semi-structured interviews, 2) retrospective stimulated recalls, 3) student texts, 4) course documents, and 5) class observation.

At the very beginning of the data collection procedure, semi-structured interviews were conducted to understand students' general backgrounds, beliefs, attitudes, goals, and motivations. Each interview took about 30 to 40 minutes and was conducted in English. Stimulated recalls were conducted using an online conference tool immediately after the participants revised their drafts of each essay. Using

the screen share feature, the students presented both the first

and revised drafts and were asked to recount their thoughts

and feelings while revising each error. The recorded

interviews and retrospective data were transcribed verbatim

for data analysis. Course documents such as the syllabus,

quizzes, exams, assignment sheets, and grading rubrics were

also collected. Last, the classes were observed throughout the

course to observe students' participation, relationships with

teachers and classmates, and attitudes toward learning

Japanese.

Data analysis

According to Ellis's (2010) framework, engagement with

WCF can be viewed as a multi-faceted construct, consisting

of cognitive, behavioral, and affective engagement with

additional subconstructs (see Table 1 in the previous section).

The data analysis consisted of two components: the text

analysis of student essays and the qualitative analysis of verbal

data, field notes, and course documents. The analysis of student texts involved the identification of error types, feedback types, and revision operation, which were coded based on the following coding schemas. A coding schema for error types was developed based on Ferris (2006) and included grammar level (verb tense, conjugation, particles, word order), diction level (word choice, expressions, substitution, spelling, and orthography), discourse level (redundancy, insertion, flow, and style), mechanics (punctuation), and handwriting. Furthermore, feedback was classified as direct or indirect, with or without metalinguistic explanation. Finally, student revisions were analyzed by degree of success, deletion, substitution, and lack of revision (Table 4).

Table 4. Summary of revision operations

Revision	Definition	Example

Successful revision	The error was corrected as the teacher intended.	*Totemo oishii deshita.* (intended: It was very delicious.) → *Totemo oishii kattadesu.* (It was very delicious.)
Unsuccessful revision	The error was addressed incorrectly, or the revision produced another error.	*Toshookan de zenzen hanashimasen.* (intended: I do not speak at the library at all.) → *Soko wa zenzen hanashimasen.* (I do not speak there.)
Deletion	The marked text was deleted to address the error.	*2019 nen no haru, hito de nihon ni ikimashita.* (In spring 2019, I went to Japanese by myself.) → *2019 nen no haru, nihon ni ikimashita.* (Interview: "I just took it [*hito de*] out completely

		because I was like…I did not want to deal with this.")
Substitution	The marked text was substituted with a correction not suggested by the teacher's marking to address the error.	*Tokidoki, yoji ni toshookan ni kaerimasu.* (intended: Sometimes, I return to the library at 4:00.) → *Tokidoki, yoji ni kooen he ikimasu.* (Sometimes, I go to the park at 4:00.)
No revision	No response to WCF.	*Kuji goro toshookan ni ikimasu.* (Sometimes, I go to the library at 9:00.) → *Kuji goro toshookan ni ikimasu.*

The second stage of data analysis identified students'
processing of WCF, cognitive operations, metacognitive
operations, actions to facilitate processing of WCF, attitudes,

emotions, individual factors, and contextual factors. Depth of
processing was coded based on if and how well the
participants provided accurate explanations for their errors
(Table 5). Other aspects of engagement, individual factors,
and contextual factors were coded inductively. The organized
transcriptions and observation notes were repeatedly
reviewed until initial codes emerged. Informed by the
literature, the preliminary codes were continuously refined
and revised. Last, themes were identified for each participant
and between both participants.

Table 5. Summary of WCF processing

Category	Subcategory	Definition
Understanding	Complete understanding	The explanation that the learner articulated was accurate.

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Incomplete understanding	Partial understanding	The explanation that the learner provided was incomplete, or the learner produced multiple possible explanations but was not sure which one was accurate.
	Misunderstanding	The explanation that the learner articulated was inaccurate.
Notice	Error acknowledged	The learner attended to WCF without articulating the reason why the error was inaccurate or did not generate a new hypothesis.
	Error overridden	The learner chose to ignore WCF because the error was trivial or unworthy of effort to revise.
Misorientation	Misorientation	The learner believed WCF was provided to address a content issue rather than a linguistic error.

Oversight	N/A	The learner did not notice the WCF at all.

Results

Mike: A risk-taking student motivated to learn

The observation notes indicated that Mike was a motivated and dedicated student. He actively participated in the classroom and rarely missed any optional extracurricular activities. When he had questions, he asked them during class or attended office hours. In terms of WCF, Mike generally displayed a positive attitude toward the feedback he received. He found the WCF helpful in understanding his errors and not repeating them in the future. During the initial interview, he mentioned that he saw these writing assignments as an opportunity to improve his Japanese by learning from his own errors.

When Mike viewed WCF from his teacher, he experienced both positive and negative feelings. At first, the presence of numerous markings on his drafts evoked feelings of

disappointment, as he took pride in his work. However, he also felt relieved because the errors were minor, and he viewed the errors as a learning opportunity. During the stimulated recall session for Essay 3, he stated:

> Every time I see correction marks all over my paper, the first thing I think is like, "oh my gosh, I did terrible on this." And it wasn't perfect, obviously. But I guess the more I look through the paper, the more I realize that I put my best effort into it and there were little things that were wrong. I learned from them [the errors] and that's fine. So, it was very good. I was very happy with it.

As this excerpt demonstrates, Mike was able to regulate his negative emotions after realizing that his errors were minor. His attitude toward the writing assignments and WCF also helped him to process these emotions. Throughout the three stimulated recall sessions, he repeatedly expressed his willingness to take risks in his essays: "So, I was trying to apply it [a word] in my paper, and I wasn't exactly sure how to

write it, but I took a risk, and I thought I would learn from it [via WCF]." He attempted to use a variety of grammatical expressions and vocabulary that he was not exactly sure how to use throughout the three writing assignments. Therefore, he expected corrections, since he was testing his language hypotheses. This affective engagement was supported by contextual factors such as grading and genre:

> I still try to take risks with these papers because they are not worth a huge portion of our grade … And then also just the fact that the assignment was pretty open-ended. It [the third essay] was a diary entry. I could write about anything. So, that also gave me a little bit more flexibility rather than on a test or heavily graded and less flexible [assignment] with regard to what you can write. So, I thought that those two things, the flexibility of what you can write, and the grading weight, allowed me to learn a lot and also

learn   from   my   mistakes   in   a   less   stressful environment.

He was able to test his hypotheses without feeling pressure, as the writing assignments were not heavily weighted with regard to his grade. Additionally, the flexible nature of the diary entry allowed him greater freedom in his writing. Last, because he was aware that he was taking risks, this attitude also emotionally prepared him to receive WCF, as he expected the risky items to potentially be corrected.

As illustrated in Table 6 below, Mike received a total of 32 pieces of WCF; text analysis indicated that the most frequent WCF type was direct feedback only (75%) followed by indirect feedback only (15.6%). In terms of depth of understanding, Table 7 demonstrates that he generally showed understanding of his errors and WCF. Mike displayed complete understanding for 24 feedback points (75%), acknowledged feedback without being able to provide an explanation four times (error acknowledged) (12.5%), and misunderstood the intentions of WCF three times (9.3%). In

terms of revision operations, the majority of his revisions were successful. He successfully revised 26 errors (81.2%), made three substitutions (9.3%), and chose not to revise only once (3.1%).

Table 6. Types of WCF Mike received

Feedback type	Essay 1	Essay 2	Essay 3	Total
DF	3	10	11	24 (75.0%)
DF+ML			3	3 (9.3%)
ID	5			5 (15.6%)
ID+ML				
Total	8	10	14	32

(Note: DF-direct feedback   ID-indirect feedback

ML-metalinguistic explanation)

Table 7. Mike's depth of processing of feedback and revision operation

	Essay 1	Essay 2	Essay 3	Total

	SR	UR	D	S	N	SR	UR	D	S	N	SR	UR	D	S	N	
CU	4					7	1				12					24 (75%)
PU																0 (0.0%)
EA				1		1					2					4 (12.5%)
MO				2			1									3 (9.3%)
OV					1											1 (3.1%)
Total	4			3	1	8	2				14					32
Total			8					10					14			32

(Note: SR-Successful revision   UR-Unsuccessful revision

D-Deletion   S-Substitution   N-No revision

CU-Complete understanding   PU-Partial understanding

EA-Error acknowledged   MO-Misorientation

OV-Oversight)

Mike's deep understanding of WCF was facilitated by multiple factors, including his solid knowledge of Japanese. His strong knowledge of Japanese allowed him to analyze errors linguistically and process WCF deeply, resulting in successful revisions. Even when he received direct feedback only, he often delved deeper to understand the underlying rules:

[*konban karaoke wo utaimashita.*]

WCF: よる [*yoru*] (night): direct feedback

Stimulated recall: I think she [teacher] meant that *konban* (tonight) was misapplied. I think *konban* in that context would be like "tonight" and then *yoru* (night) would explain better. It was like "at night I'm doing

karaoke" rather than "tonight." So, it was just a word

usage issue.

Mike processed this direct feedback deeply and

explained the error successfully. However, while he

understood many of his errors, there were instances where he

only partially understood direct feedback in the absence of

metalinguistic explanation. For example (the focus here is

only on the word choice error of *yoku*):

[*gogochuu yoku takusan taberu*.]

WCF: *itsumo*: direct feedback

Stimulated recall: I changed *yoku* (often or well) to

itsumo (always) because I think in one of the dialogues

when someone was talking about their cat in a

dialogue and said "my cat eats a lot," *yoku taberu*. I

think it is *Sora-san* (one character in the textbook), and

that's why I used *yoku* because I referred back to that

dialogue. But I don't know exactly why *yoku* is wrong,

but I know that *itsumo* means "always."

In order to analyze this error, Mike reflected on his original intention and the dialogue in the textbook. Through this process, he was able to understand the target-like word, *itsumo*, but he struggled to understand why his original word, *yoku* (well/often), was not appropriate. Additionally, he sometimes misoriented the WCF he received, especially when one word contained more than one error:

[*kujigoro toshookan ni ikimasu.* (At around nine o'clock, I go to the library.)]

> Stimulated recall:
>
> Mike: *Sensei* (teacher) underneath *toshookan* (library) wrote *te* (て) or *to* (と). And it needs to be the latter. It needs to be *to* (と) because it's a little ambiguous the way I did it in my draft. I just wasn't paying close enough attention to how it looked when I wrote it.

Researcher: So, this is more about penmanship or handwriting.

Mike: Yes, when she wrote "spell," I assume she meant the penmanship.

In this feedback episode, Mike received two pieces of feedback, on spelling and handwriting, concerning the word *toshookan,* which was supposed to be spelled *toshokan*. He only noticed the handwriting error and thought "spell" indicated the same handwriting issue when, in fact, it pointed to a spelling issue. He wrote the same word with the wrong spelling twice more after the first error and in both cases, the word *toshookan* received an underline without any further comments, as the error was the same. Due to misorientation, he substituted both instances of *toshookan* with other words, as he thought it was a problem of redundancy rather than a spelling issue.

Considering Mike's observable actions to facilitate understanding, he did not use external resources very often. This was because he was usually able to connect errors with

his internal knowledge, as noted earlier. When he consulted with external resources such as the course textbook, his own notes, and an online dictionary, it was mainly to confirm revised spellings.

In summary, Mike demonstrated extensive engagement with WCF. He was able to generate new hypotheses after receiving WCF, and his understanding was supported by his strong knowledge of Japanese, positive attitude, and use of external resources. While WCF elicited some negative emotions at first, he was willing to accept and learn from his mistakes. He frequently took risks and therefore remained open to receiving WCF.

Alice: Expressing personal qualities in writing

Alice had just graduated from her college with a B.A. in sociology. She was interested in Japanese media, particularly pop culture. She applied for a job to teach English in Japan and had accepted a position. Her primary purpose in learning Japanese was to be able to have basic conversations in the

language before moving to Japan. For this reason, she did not consider writing as important as speaking. However, during the initial interview, she stated that she preferred writing to speaking because she felt she could express herself more clearly in writing. She also preferred WCF to spoken CF because she felt its visual format helped her better process the feedback.

Similar to Mike, Alice stated that she experienced mixed feelings when viewing WCF. Seeing a lot of markings on her drafts was slightly disheartening; however, she was also able to regulate her negative emotions:

> I was really thrilled because it was pretty good feedback. It was little markings as opposed to like big mistakes, which I was really happy about because I feel like I truly do not shine in class and speaking sentences. But with writing, I was really happy that I was able to create a mostly coherent essay that got my ideas.

She expressed relief upon discovering that her errors were minor, and her grade was better than she expected, especially since she perceived herself as struggling in the classroom where speaking was emphasized. The fact that she received fewer pieces of WCF and better grades than she anticipated gave her a sense of confidence in her writing skills.

As Table 8 illustrates below, an analysis of Alice's essays showed that she received a total of 40 pieces of WCF, with 35 (87.5%) being direct feedback only and five (12.5%) being indirect feedback only. As demonstrated in Table 9, she showed complete understanding 33 times (82.5%). Some errors in her essays were relatively simple, such as missing one stroke of a *hiragana* character, but others were more complex. On six occasions, she acknowledged the error but could not provide an explanation (15%). In terms of revision operations, she successfully revised 37 errors (92.5%), made two deletions (5%), and revised unsuccessfully only once (2.5%).

Table 8. Types of WCF Alice received

Feedback type	Essay 1	Essay 2	Essay 3	Total
DF	3	14	18	35 (87.5%)
DF+ML				
ID		3	2	5 (12.5%)
ID+ML				
Total	3	17	20	40

Table 9. Alice's depth of processing of feedback and revision operation

	Essay 1					Essay 2					Essay 3					Total
	SR	UR	D	S	N	SR	UR	D	S	N	SR	UR	D	S	N	
CU	3					12					17	1				33 (82.5%)

PU								1					1 (2.5%)
EA				3	2		1						6 (15.0%)
MO													
OV													
Total	3			15	2		19	1					40
Total		3			17			20					40

As previously mentioned, Alice generally demonstrated understanding of the WCF. Her understanding was supported by her utilization of external resources such as the course textbook:

[*nyuuyooku ni tomodachi ni au ni itta.* (I went to New York to see my friend.)]

WCF: 会いに行った。 (direct feedback)

Upon receiving direct feedback, Alice noticed that she was supposed to use the verb stem (*ai*) rather than the infinitive form (*au*). She referred to the textbook to understand the underlying rules of the grammatical structure and read the examples. This helped her understand the meaning and form of this structure, and thus, she was able to revise the sentence successfully. Later in the same draft, she was able to correct an error of the same grammatical structure, even though it was only underlined.

Although Alice generally showed her understanding of the errors and WCF, she was sometimes unable to understand the underlying rules:

[*ryoo to sakkaa o shimashita.* (I played soccer with my dorm.)]

WCF: で [*de*] (direct feedback)

Correction: *ryoo de sakkaa o shimashita.* (I played soccer at my dorm.)

Stimulated recall: I followed what she did and I changed it, but what I wanted to say was "I played soccer with the people of my dormitory." … So I said と [*to*] with the intention of like "I was playing with them" but I guess I just didn't have the right word initially anyway. So, I guess で [*de*] did make more sense. … But, at first, I was confused because I was like "I'm playing with them." But then I was like, I don't think it was the right word.

Alice intended to express "with people in my dormitory" with this sentence. She knew that if she used the particle *de* in this sentence, it would express the location, "at my dormitory," which was not the intended meaning. Despite this knowledge, she followed the direct feedback without fully understanding it because she did not know how to clearly

communicate her ideas. When she was unable to understand the errors, she displayed confusion and frustration in response to WCF. She also experienced negative feelings when she was unable to express her personal qualities in writing:

[*totemo oishi deshita!* (It was delicious!)]

> WCF: Don't use "!" (Direct feedback)
>
> Correction: *oishi katta desu.* [It was delicious.]
>
> Stimulated recall: When I write in English, I feel like I'm always very expressive and like I show excitement. So, I thought I would do that to show in my Japanese writing, too. … I was confused about why [it's not okay to use an exclamation mark]. Why not? And I guess I'm still kind of confused about whether or not exclamation marks are used in Japanese writing at all.
>
> In her first draft, Alice used an exclamation mark to express her excitement because as she mentioned during the initial interview, it was important for her to add a personal

quality to her writing, even at the beginner level. However, the teacher commented "Don't use '!'" without providing a further explanation for why this was not appropriate. She tried to create a new hypothesis regarding why it is not appropriate to use exclamation marks, but never reached full understanding. She was likely frustrated because not only she could not understand the rules underlying the correction, but also because she was not allowed to express herself in her writing.

Alice appeared to lose motivation to communicate her ideas when her teacher did not understand what she was trying to portray in her first draft, and she did not know how to fix the sentence. The first word underlined below exemplifies this (*pandan*):

[*pandan* (pandan) *no* [a]*isu kuriimu o tabemashita.* (I ate pandan-flavored ice cream.)]

WCF: "?"on パンダン (pandan)

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Stimulated recall: I guess it just kind of got lost in
translation. So, I just took it out completely because I
don't want to deal with this. I'm worried. People aren't
going to get what I'm trying to convey. So, I just took
it all out.

Alice attempted to write "I ate pandan-flavored ice
cream" and provided an English translation for the word
"pandan." She looked up how to write the word in Japanese,
and what she wrote was correct. Knowing that pandan is not
common in Japan or in the U.S., she provided an English
translation for it so that the teacher could look it up in case
she was not familiar with this flavor. However, the teacher
simply inserted a question mark, indicating that she did not
understand this word at all. The lack of understanding from
the teacher resulted in Alice losing the motivation to
communicate her idea. This was probably because she
realized that while was willing to express herself, the teacher
was not willing to understand her intention. This

misalignment of willingness to communicate reduced Alice's motivation to communicate her ideas, and she deleted the sentence entirely because she was worried about not being able to communicate her ideas clearly.

In summary, Alice showed an overall high level of engagement. Upon viewing WCF, she was mildly disappointed to notice that there were many markings but also relieved to discover that they were not indications of major errors. She was able to provide a metalinguistic explanation for many of her errors, and her understanding was supported by the effective use of external resources such as the textbook. However, she struggled with instances where the WCF was unclear or not aligned with her intended meaning, leading to frustration and a decline in motivation.

Discussion

This two-case study explored cognitive, behavioral, and affective engagement with WCF as well as the roles played by individual and contextual factors. While both participants

generally engaged extensively with WCF, detailed data analysis

showed that the two participants displayed different levels of

engagement, influenced by both individual and contextual

factors. Therefore, this study confirms the findings of

previous studies on student engagement with WCF including

the work of Han and Hyland (2015; 2019) and Mao and Lee

(2022), who have demonstrated how individual and

contextual factors interact with engagement, empirically and

theoretically.

In terms of cognitive engagement, the two

participants noticed all errors on their drafts. As stated by

Ellis (2010) and Williams (2012), WCF can be easily noticed

and processed because of its   permanency and the

slow-paced nature of writing compared to oral CF. However,

both participants occasionally misinterpreted and

misidentified the WCF, similar to the findings of Han and

Hyland's (2015) study. This is surprising given that the

participants were motivated learners who had solid

knowledge of Japanese for the beginner level, based on classroom observation and course grades. Additionally, given that they were at the beginner level, the two student participants did not make a wide range of complicated errors compared to advanced learners. Their occasional misunderstanding and misidentification of WCF can be attributed to the fact that they did not receive instructions as to the meaning of each piece of implicit feedback and how students should use WCF. Furthermore, they had not had much experience receiving WCF from the teachers in this Japanese course.

Regarding behavioral engagement, both participants were able to correct most errors successfully. However, a detailed analysis showed that successful revision should not simply be equated to deep understanding of the error. In this study, Alice sometimes revised correctly without knowing the teachers' intentions, especially when she received direct feedback, which is in line with Han and Hyland's (2015) findings. This observation raises the question of the

effectiveness of an assessment approach that evaluates student essays based solely on the accuracy of written products when teachers adopt the writing-to-learn method (Manchón, 2011). As the data analysis suggests, students can eradicate errors without completely understanding them by deleting or substituting simpler sentences for their errors. This manner of revision leads to a reduction in the number of inaccurate usages of the target language, and thus, students receive a better grade for higher accuracy. Considering the actions taken to facilitate the processing of WCF, the participants utilized course materials and online tools but never sought help from their teachers for the writing assignments. This was surprising given that office hours were held every day and both participants perceived the teachers as friendly and approachable. This lack of consultation with teachers could be attributed to the fact that it would likely be intimidating to communicate exclusively in Japanese at this level. It is also possible that as they did not make complex

errors, and the writing assignments did not have a major impact on their course grades, they did not feel the need to seek further help. More data is needed to verify this reasoning.

With regard to affective engagement, the stimulated recalls revealed that both participants experienced negative emotions when viewing WCF, which aligns with the findings of Lira-Gonzales et al. (2021). For example, the participants expressed disappointment upon seeing the number of markings on their drafts. However, they were able to regulate their emotions so that they would not be affected negatively. Additionally, the students felt reassured when they examined the WCF more closely and found that their errors were not major.

The detailed analysis of stimulated recall sessions showed that Alice sometimes felt discouraged when trying to communicate her ideas in writing. As Truscott (1996) stated, this can be considered one negative aspect of WCF. This negative impact is best exemplified by the instance where

Alice deleted the sentence containing the word *pandan* in Essay 2. In this feedback episode, Alice was eager to communicate her ideas, and she provided an English translation for the word in case the teacher did not know the word. However, contrary to her expectations, the teacher simply left a "?" on this word without looking it up, causing Alice to feel unsupported in trying to express her ideas in an understandable way. This misalignment between the student's motivation to communicate and the reader's motivation to understand resulted in the complete deletion of her text, or—conversely—her acceptance of the teacher's suggestion despite disagreement, as exemplified in the sentence containing the phrase "with my dorm." As Truscott (1996) suggested, WCF could be harmful if not provided appropriately, especially for students like Alice who believe in writing as a communication tool to express themselves.

The second research question concerns the roles of individual and contextual factors in student engagement with

WCF. The data showed that beliefs about writing saliently mediate student engagement with WCF. Therefore, the results of this study support those of Han (2017) and Storch and Wigglesworth (2010), who suggested that student beliefs influence student engagement with WCF. In this study, Alice,

who found it important to express her personal qualities in writing even at the beginner level, showed frustration when her expressions of personality were not accepted by the teacher (e.g., correction of "!"). Interestingly, while Alice did not favor this feedback, she followed the teachers' correction reluctantly without asking the teachers for clarification. This is contradictory to the observations of Storch and Wigglesworth (2010), whose participants followed what they believed instead of accepting their teacher's correction. Alice followed the WCF instead of her beliefs likely because she was at the early beginner level; she may have perceived power relations between herself and her teachers and had not yet

developed a sense of authorship in Japanese. However, more data is needed to verify these points.

The data also revealed that task types such as genre and grading played a role in students' attitudes toward WCF. This was clear when the two participants received an assignment to write a diary entry. For example, Mike, who thought of writing as a learning activity, benefitted from the flexibility of a diary and lightly weighted grading, which allowed him to test his hypotheses about vocabulary and grammatical structures that he was not exactly sure how to use. Because he took risks to test his language hypotheses in writing, he was able to anticipate feedback and stay calm even after viewing WCF. In contrast, Alice experienced negative emotions when she viewed a correction on the expressive writing style in her diary entry. This is in line with the findings of Kang and Han's (2015) meta-analysis, which found a significantly lower effect size of WCF on journal entry-style writing assignments than WCF on other genres of writing, as students might be reluctant to receive WCF on journal

writing because they perceive it as personal and stress-free. The current study partially confirms Kang and Han's point, especially when WCF is provided on the expression of personal qualities for those who believe that self-expression is important in writing.

Conclusion

This case study reported student engagement with WCF by two JFL learners at the beginner level in an intensive language program. Informed by Mao and Lee (2022), engagement with WCF, individual factors, and contextual factors were explored. Student engagement with WCF was analyzed in terms of cognitive, behavioral, and affective engagement, using Ellis's (2010) framework. Both learners showed extensive engagement with WCF in general but also displayed different types of engagement due to individual and contextual factors.

Although the current study was conducted with a careful research design, some limitations can be identified. First, this study only examined students in an intensive language program; its findings cannot be generalized to other learners in a different environment and course structure. Therefore, future studies should investigate students with various backgrounds in different learning contexts, such as struggling or unmotivated learners in a traditional language course at a college. This is particularly important as engagement with WCF by struggling learners has received little attention thus far (Zheng & Yu, 2018; Zheng et al., 2020). Second, while retrospective data was collected soon after the participants revised their first draft, the data could have been gathered with less intrusive technology, such as screen recording. Third, it would be beneficial to explore how students use WCF on their written homework. Student engagement with WCF changes constantly, and thus, it is important to observe how WCF from other course assignments contributes to the development of feedback

literacy and engagement. Longitudinal studies would effectively capture the development of student feedback literacy and engagement.

While there are limitations in the current study, it has also generated pedagogical implications. First, language teachers should be aware that while they hope that students will learn from their errors and WCF through engaging with WCF, sometimes students' engagement is not satisfactory

even if the students are motivated. Therefore, it is beneficial to provide explicit expectations for student engagement with WCF, and to explain why teachers provide WCF in the way they do. With clear expectations, students can better understand how to engage with WCF and how to seek appropriate help. By also justifying how feedback is given before providing the feedback, teachers can help students comprehend the intentions behind WCF, which will help align teachers' purposes and students' expectations of WCF.

Second, this study raises a critical question on whether assessing students' essays solely based on accuracy of writing is effective, especially for those who adopt a writing-to-learn language approach (Manchón, 2011). This study showed that successful revision does not always reflect student understanding because students can eradicate errors by deleting, substituting, or following suggestions from direct feedback without understanding the rules underlying their mistakes. Thus, it may be necessary to establish a criterion that accounts for students' learning through the revision process.

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