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Shaping written corrective feedback perspectives and practices: comparing novice and experienced instructors of English for academic purposes in Bangladesh

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Abstract

This qualitative study examined the key influences on the beliefs and approaches concerning written corrective feedback (WCF) of teachers of English for academic purposes (EAP) in Bangladesh. It fills a significant research gap concerning how Bangladeshi EAP teachers—particularly across experience levels—perceive and practice WCF, especially in relation to their understanding of writing instruction within a diverse and resource-limited higher education context. Through six interviews with experienced and novice teachers, the study explored how teacher experience affects perspectives and practices related to WCF. The findings suggest that teaching experience significantly affects beliefs about WCF because experienced teachers benefit from professional development and extensive professional networks. Furthermore, teacher education programmes and professional development opportunities do not benefit all teachers equally; novices have fewer chances, which affects their development differently from their more experienced peers. Experienced teachers—initially exposed to direct grammar-focused WCF as students—have evolved to prefer providing indirect feedback that targets broader aspects, such as content and organisation. Instead, novice teachers focus on providing direct feedback on sentence-level issues, such as grammar and spelling. Finally, it emphasises that context-aware training, institutional support, and resources are key to improving WCF and academic writing in Bangladeshi EAP programmes, with broader relevance for equitable language teaching in similar low-resource settings.

Keywords: English for academic purposes, Student assessment, Teachers' beliefs and practices, Written corrective feedback (WCF), Experienced teachers, Novice teachers

Introduction

Written corrective feedback (WCF), which includes teacher responses to student writing addressing linguistic, structural, or content issues, is crucial in English for academic purposes (EAP) writing pedagogy (Liu, 2024). It is used as a tool to help students become more accurate and coherent in their writing. Moreover, it is employed to encourage students to focus on the genre and the academic norms (Kessler & Casal, 2024). However,

WCF is also a controversial and multi-dimensional area of practice, which is influenced by a range of cognitive, situational, and experiential factors (Ferris et al., 2011; Hyland & Hyland, 2019).

In the Bangladeshi context, EAP has become central to tertiary-level courses, especially as English medium education has gained prominence in universities, both public and private. However, private universities such as North South, BRAC, and Independent have offered longer EAP programmes to develop their students' writing skills (Hamid & Jahan, 2020). The objective of these programmes is to enhance students' academic writing, reading, speaking, and critical thinking skills, which are necessary for successful study in higher education and academic discourse at the global level (Rahman & Pandia, 2018). Despite its increasing prevalence, many EAP programmes are heavily exam-focused and grammatically driven, with insufficient academic writing support provided (Hamid & Honan, 2012). However, regarding Bangladeshi EAP settings, there is a lack of research on WCF.

Some studies have explored English teaching in higher education generally (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Rahman & Pandia, 2018). However, little is known about EAP teachers, particularly regarding their views on and practices of WCF, and how it is, or is not, linked to their understanding of teaching writing. This gap is especially significant in a context as diverse as the instructional resources, assessment systems, and student learning needs of Bangladeshi universities. Moreover, the contrast between novice and experienced teachers in this situation is particularly notable, given that previous research shows teaching experience significantly influences feedback strategies, beliefs, and teacher identity (Borg, 2015; Liu, 2024).

Given this background, the present study aims to explore how some novice and experienced EAP teachers in Bangladesh perceive and implement WCF in teaching writing. This paper contributes to such a discourse by explaining how teachers' beliefs are formed, the factors that influence their feedback decisions, and the challenges they face, thereby helping to provide a more comprehensive understanding of EAP teacher cognition. It also responds to the call for more contextually focused, teacher-informed research into EAP writing and feedback practices (Kessler & Casal, 2024; Lee et al., 2021).

This study adds to the expanding body of research on teacher cognition in L2 writing (Borg, 2015), providing insights into teacher education and professional development within the EAP context. The following questions guided the data collection and analysis of this study:

1. How are the beliefs of novice and experienced Bangladeshi EAP teachers regarding WCF shaped by students' writing at the postsecondary level?
2. What forms of WCF do novice and experienced EAP teachers in Bangladesh practise and why?

Theoretical and philosophical paradigm

The study is also informed by the theoretical framework of teacher cognition, a construct that refers to the intricate and interconnected beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and assumptions that teachers have about teaching and learning (Borg, 2015; Lee, 2023).

These cognitive faculties are not static; rather, they are constantly influenced by past experiences of learning, preservice teacher education, in-service education, daily classroom practice, and the wider socio-institutional context (Moradkhani & Mansouri, 2023). Within the area of WCF, teacher cognition is very likely a central factor that influences what WCF tends to be given more attention by teachers, how they construe students' needs, and how they adjust their feedback strategies in line with classroom reality (direct > indirect, local > global).

Viewing WCF through this perspective helps us to view it not as a constraining prescription of one's production but as modulated by teachers' internal schemata and the constraints and affordances of their context of teaching (Cheng & Zhang, 2021; Fitriyah et al., 2024). For example, the educators' decisions between direct versus indirect feedback and between form- versus meaning-focused WCF are largely made on the basis of their beliefs about students' preparedness, institutional demands, and assessment pressures, all filtered by their conceptual lenses.

The study is underpinned by an interpretive paradigm that is grounded in the belief that reality is socially constructed, subjective, and context-specific (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Leavy, 2017). In this view, teacher cognition is not universal, but rather situated, nested in specific cultural institutions and political contexts. The intention of this approach is not to make generalizable claims but to articulate a sensitive side to the way individual teachers make sense of and interact with their contexts. Viewed through this lens, this study seeks an answer to the question of how Bangladeshi EAP practitioners negotiate their sense-making of their WCF practices in their professional context.

Also, teachers are seen as mediators of practice, whose practice decisions are eternally compromised in political, cultural, and institutional settings (Farrell, 2019; Lee, 2023). Their WCF-related decisions are affected not only by pedagogical considerations but also by assessment practices, curricula, workload, and their own and students' perceptions of what constitutes appropriate teaching. They contribute to teachers' professional agency (e.g. a sense of authority and of being able to make change) and teachers' beliefs as EFL writing teachers (Soruç et al., 2025), with the implication that WCF practices are not only a response to student writing but also an engagement with institutional discourse (Kessler & Casal, 2024). As such, the study locates WCF within a larger ecology of practice in which teacher cognition is (re-) produced and (re-) acted by systemic forces.

By integrating such a perspective of teacher cognition on knowledge within an interpretive framework, the paper reflexively accounts for the interplay of belief, practice, and context. This analysis provides a more nuanced perspective on how teachers in Bangladesh think about and carry out WCF and how they construct feedback strategies as the intersection of personal, pedagogical, and institutional influences (Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

Literature review

Written corrective feedback

WCF is vital in second language writing instruction, offering both guidance and developmental support. It helps students recognise and fix grammatical errors, boost meta-language awareness, and enhance coherence (Cheng et al., 2025; Apridayani & Waluyo,

2024). Most students view feedback positively, seeing it as a learning opportunity to improve. Those with a growth mindset particularly believe feedback is for learning, not criticism (Apridayani & Waluyo, 2024).

Experienced teachers see WCF as a process-oriented dialogue that encourages learner independence and motivation for long-term writing growth. They subtly incorporate modal practices into their pedagogy, blending evidence-informed methods with professional judgement (Apridayani et al., 2024; Moradkhani & Mansouri, 2023; Soruç et al., 2025). They use writing to focus attention on key aspects (i.e. global issues) they might not otherwise notice or work on independently (Mao et al., 2024).

However, WCF on students' writing for novice teachers is made on the basis of pedagogical significance and their perceived responsibility (Apridayani et al., 2024; Liu, 2024). They tend to monumentalise WCF in bits and pieces by reconciling wordsmithing at both the global and local levels to the rubrics of high-stakes L2 writing tests (Cheng et al., 2025; Lee, 2024). According to Rasool et al. (2024), less-experienced teachers tend to focus more on surface-level grammatical errors, often relying on direct correction strategies to assert their instructional authority and demonstrate their pedagogical competence.

Teachers' WCF beliefs and influencing factors

Teachers' beliefs are complex, often tacit, and sometimes contradictory, but they influence instructional practices and student outcomes. These beliefs come from formal education, personal experiences, and classroom interactions (Liu, 2024; Soruç et al., 2025). Teacher cognition, including how feedback is tailored and errors prioritised, shapes WCF strategies (Fitriyah et al., 2024). Linguistic competence and cultural biases also impact feedback, with teachers sometimes focusing on language items aligned with their beliefs rather than providing balanced feedback (Rasool et al., 2024; Lee, 2023).

Teachers' perceptions of feedback, student needs, and writing ability guide their WCF approaches (Lee, 2024). External factors—such as policies, ethics, and cultural norms—also influence beliefs (Soruç et al., 2025). Sociocultural context and personal diversity experiences shape feedback and inclusion ideologies (Lee, 2014). These beliefs differ among individuals and are influenced by educational, cultural, and political environments (Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Lee & Schallert, 2016), with feedback practices often rooted in historical and cultural norms (Liu, 2024).

Experienced teachers and WCF

Experienced teachers often rely on accumulated practical knowledge, viewing indirect WCF as more effective because it fosters intrinsic motivation (Chong, 2020; Moradkhani & Mansouri, 2023). Their beliefs about feedback develop through teaching, research, and professional growth (Cheng et al., 2025; Lee et al., 2021). Many prefer implicit feedback influenced by their teaching and learning experiences (Liu, 2024; Sun & Zhang, 2021).

Some instructors favour explicit or mixed feedback based on their backgrounds (Liu, 2024). Rasool et al. (2024) found that some teachers prefer explicit grammar feedback due to traditional norms. Others base beliefs on writing skills or identity, favouring direct feedback on global issues like content and organisation (Mao & Crosthwaite,

2019; Nemati et al. 2017), while many advocate combining strategies based on students' needs (Moradkhani & Mansouri, 2023; Soruç et al., 2025).

Novice teachers and WCF

Novice teachers' WCF beliefs and practices are shaped by coursework, workshops, and interactions with experienced colleagues (Leow, 2023; Liu, 2024). These beliefs are influenced by their own language learning experiences, teacher training, and institutional settings. However, such settings may promote feedback practices that conflict with their training, creating an 'incongruence' between beliefs and practice (Leow, 2023). Teachers often revise their WCF practices as their beliefs evolve (Phipps & Borg, 2009), with student interactions and collaborations helping them refine their feedback strategies (Bahrouni & Tuzlukova, 2019; Reynolds, 2023).

Novice instructors prefer direct feedback—correcting errors rather than prompting self-correction—especially for less proficient students or under time constraints (Cheng & Zhang, 2021). Trial and error helps them see how WCF impacts learning (Evans, et al., 2010). They also learn to practice WCF forms by reading research and observing experienced peers (Leow, 2023; Reynolds, 2023).

Written corrective feedback taxonomy

Based on Ellis's (2009) seminal typology and subsequent research, the taxonomy may be broadly classified as follows:

- (1) Explicit correction (direct feedback)—This is guiding the learner in the correct way, fixing grammatical or spelling mistakes. It is often used to clarify the meaning and support learners with low proficiency (Ellis, 2009; Liu, 2024).
- (2) Indirect feedback—In this case, errors are indicated (e.g. underlines or marginal comments); however, students are left to correct the errors themselves. This article has recently demonstrated that indirect CF serves to heighten learner autonomy and the deepening of error (Brown et al., 2023).
- (3) Metalinguistic feedback—Contains an explicit, concise reference to grammar or language rules, like 'VT' for verb tense or error rules. Research emphasises its role in developing metacognitive awareness (Reynolds, 2023).
- (4) Focused vs unfocused feedback—Focused feedback is feedback that is related to a particular error type; on the other hand, unfocused feedback refers to the feedback across a wide variety of errors. Instructors may also adjust the emphasis according to the students' needs and proficiency level (Cheng et al., 2025).
- (5) Global vs local feedback—Global WCF involves feedback on macrostructural issues (e.g. content, organisation, coherence), and local WCF addresses micro-level issues (e.g. grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary) (Ferris et al., 2011).

Methods

This study adopted an exploratory qualitative approach, allowing an in-depth investigation of participants' experiences, beliefs, and behaviours through interviews, focus groups, and observations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). It

emphasises flexibility in design and data collection, enabling researchers to adapt as new insights emerge (Morese, 2015).

Participants

Following Farrell's (2012) procedure, this study used purposive and convenience sampling to recruit six writing instructors—three experienced (over 5 years of teaching) and three novice (5 years or less). The small sample size suited this exploratory qualitative study, which values depth over breadth (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Morese, 2015). Participants were chosen based on teaching experience, writing expertise, and willingness to participate.

I conducted virtual semi-structured interviews using a protocol consisting of 11 questions (see Appendix A). Virtual interviews provided participants with greater accessibility and allowed them to participate from the comfort of their homes or workplaces, thereby reducing scheduling challenges (Evans et al., 2010).

Data collection instrument

To gather data capable of addressing my research questions, I conducted semi-structured interviews following a protocol with 11 questions (see Appendix A). The interviews were conducted online to offer greater convenience to participants, allowing them to participate from the comfort of their own homes or workplaces and reducing scheduling difficulties (Braun & Clarke, 2022; Evans et al., 2010). Semi-structured interviews typically involve a set of open-ended questions designed to elicit rich, detailed responses while still enabling the researcher to steer the conversation towards the research aims. Prior to the interview, I sent the instructor-participants the consent forms and questions so they could become familiar with the research topic and questions beforehand. The interview was planned to last approximately 90 min.

Data collection procedures

The online interviews followed the procedures outlined below.

- (1) I sent invitation emails to three experienced and three novice instructors based on their years of teaching experience.
- (2) When the participants agreed to the interview, I emailed them the consent form, which briefly summarises the study's risks and benefits while also outlining other procedures. All of the participants signed the consent forms and returned them to me.
- (3) After the interview was scheduled, the consent form was obtained.
- (4) I emailed the interview questions and meeting link as soon as the meeting schedule was finalised. I sent the interview questions ahead of time so that the teachers could review them and produce more relevant ideas in response to the questions.
- (5) Recordings and transcriptions were uploaded to my UM OneDrive. I uploaded the recordings immediately after the interview. I enabled the transcription feature in TEAMS to transcribe the data. Although the recording was transcribed, I listened to the recording several times to identify any discrepancies between the AI transcription and the participants' voices.

- (6) After editing the transcriptions, I sent them to the teachers for member checking, but none of them added or deleted anything.
- (7) Data analysis was conducted as described below.

Data analysis techniques

Qualitative data analysis is an iterative process that involves constant reflection, revisiting data, and refining analytic categories, and the goal of qualitative data analysis is to engage in a continuous process of sense-making rather than simply coding data (Saldana, 2021). In my paper, I used a deductive thematic analysis because the themes were defined by my research questions. This approach starts with preconceived themes based on a framework or questions, guiding data analysis (Saldana, 2021). Coding systematically classifies data segments, with patterns as repeated trends in coded data (Saldana, 2021), and categories as higher-level groups organising coded data into conceptual domains (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). Coding, finding patterns, and categorising data is a qualitative data analysis approach that can be employed deductively, as I did, to align interview data with preconceived themes from my research questions and/or the existing literature while still remaining open to discovering new themes (Braun & Clarke, 2022).

There were two major themes derived from the questions and the literature review: (a) factors shaping teachers' WCF beliefs and (b) factors influencing teachers' practices of WCF.

Saldana (2021) outlines the steps involved in conducting a deductive thematic analysis. The steps are as follows. First, I delved into the data by interviewing, transcribing, and reading the transcriptions to get a thorough understanding of the data. I examined existing literature and frameworks to identify relevant codes and categories. For the first theme, I used Borg's (2003) teacher cognition and practice theory, adding categories to fit the data. Borg states that ideas stem from prior education and language learning, but I found teaching experience also shapes WCF ideology, so I added it as a new category. For the second theme on factors affecting teachers' WCF practices, I used categories from Borg (2015) and Peterson & Kim (2013). Although they listed influencing categories, I discovered that 'institutional policy' did not impact the WCF practices of the three experienced teachers I interviewed in the Bangladesh context.

Next, I summarised interview data, quoting teachers to support analysis. I grouped ideas under categories and organised them by theme—for example grouping 'prior education and training' under 'factors shaping teachers' WCF beliefs'. Once themes, categories, and codes were fixed, and I created tables illustrating the code list used to analyse interview data.

I analysed the data, citing direct excerpts from teachers' interviews and supporting my interpretation with literature. I created new codes for interview data that did not fit existing themes, categories, or codes, but no new themes emerged from the local data.

I started with a code list based on the literature and research questions and then analysed my interview data using it. The deductively derived thematic structure effectively helped in presenting and discussing my findings.

Criteria for ensuring validity

Validity in qualitative research can be ensured in several ways. Using comprehensive data-gathering methods increases validity (Morese, 2015). My study used only one method, so it is not comprehensive—a limitation. However, I followed other criteria by emailing transcripts for participant verification, ensuring an accurate reflection of views. To enhance validity, researchers should also consider transferability by providing detailed descriptions of the environment, participants, and procedures, helping readers assess applicability to their circumstances (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). I followed this advice by providing detailed information on the research context, participants, and procedures to help readers assess the findings' relevance and applicability (Morese, 2015). This enables readers to determine if the results suit their circumstances. Additionally, dependability supports validity in qualitative research by documenting the study process, including data collection and analysis (Morese, 2015). In my work, I outlined data collection phases, procedures, and analysis methods, adding examples to facilitate understanding.

Results and discussion

This study relied solely on data from six interviews. Table 1 presents the participant and interview details. Tables 2 and 3 show the starter code lists and overarching themes used to analyse the data derived from the interview questions and literature. New codes that emerged from the interview data are presented in separate lines with grey shadows. Findings are organised around the two themes discussed: (a) Factors shaping teachers' WCF beliefs and (b) types of feedback teachers provide and why.

Writing instructors and their WCF beliefs

In university-based EAP programmes in Bangladesh, less-experienced as well as more experienced teachers espouse complex and dynamic beliefs about what the role, remit, and implementation of WCF should be.

Experienced teachers

Most experienced EAP instructors advocate a 'balanced' approach to WCF, targeting global issues like coherence and content and local issues like grammar. However, this balance can be complex within and between essays and conference papers. Their feedback tends to be indirect, encouraging students to identify and correct errors to promote autonomy, critical thinking, and engagement (Cheng & Zhang, 2021; Moradkhani

Table 1 Participants' backgrounds and interview durations

Teacher	Education	Experience (years)	Interview duration
ET1	TESOL, CELTA	10	93:53 min
ET2	TESOL, CELTA, DELTA	8	83:45 min
ET3	ELT, TESOL	17	80:37 min
NT1	TESOL	1.5	82:00 min
NT2	TESOL	1	79:00 min
NT3	ELT	1	92:23 min

ET experienced teacher, NT novice teacher

Table 2 Theme 1: Factors shaping EAP teachers' beliefs

Experienced teacher	Novice teachers
Category 1: Teacher education and professional development Subcategory 1: <i>Formal SLE education</i> Code: CELTA, Diploma in English Language Teaching to Adults (DELTA), TESOL Code: Reading assessment-related documents Subcategory 2: <i>Professional development</i> Code: Targeted professional development sessions (PDs)	Category 1: Teacher education and professional development Subcategory 1: <i>Formal second language education</i> Codes: English language teaching (ELT), CELTA (Certification in English Language Teaching to Adults), and Teaching English as Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Code: Reading assessment-related documents Subcategory 2: <i>Professional development</i> Code: Targeted PDs
Category 2: Prior language learning experiences Subcategory 1: <i>Learning experience</i> Code: Receiving feedback	Category 2: Prior language learning experiences Subcategory 1: <i>Learning experience</i> Code: Receiving feedback
Category 3: Teaching experience Subcategory 1: <i>Teaching writing</i> Code: WCF provision experience Subcategory 2: <i>Creating a professional network</i> Code: Peer interactions	Category 3: Teaching experience Subcategory 1: <i>Teaching writing</i> Code: WCF provision experience Subcategory 2: <i>Creating professional network</i> Code: Peer interactions

Table 3 Theme 3: Types and reasons for specific feedback preferences

Experienced teacher	Novice teacher
Category 1: Types of feedback Code: Direct Code: Indirect Code: Metalinguistics Code: Focused Code: Unfocused Code: Local Code: Global	Category 1: Types of feedback Code: Direct Code: Indirect Code: Metalinguistics Code: Focused Code: Unfocused Code: Local Code: Global
Category 2: Reasons for feedback type Subcategory 1: <i>Students' improvement</i> Code: Automaticity Code: Retention of learning Subcategory 3: <i>Students' proficiency</i> Code: Linguistic proficiency	Category 2: Reasons for feedback type Subcategory 1: <i>Students' improvement</i> Code: Immediate success Subcategory 2: <i>Practical ground</i> Code: Easy to navigate Subcategory 3: <i>Students' proficiency</i> Code: Linguistics proficiency

& Mansouri, 2023). As ET1 observed, 'Talking about everything at once is overwhelming for students; we need to prioritise topics'. The principle of focused and staged feedback is consistent with pedagogical best practices (Ferris et al., 2011; Reynolds, 2023).

Novice teachers

Novice teachers, despite their theoretical knowledge about student-centred feedback from all MA TESOL and CELTA programmes, tend to use more direct, form-focused feedback, especially on grammar and vocabulary. This is driven by the need to maintain professional credit, meet student expectations, and follow institutional norms of factuality and assessment readiness (Kessler & Casal, 2024; Liu, 2024). As NT2 stated, 'I have a duty to "redress" the wrong, especially if it concerns language, since that is what students expect!' This aligns with findings that novice teachers develop comprehensive feedback

habits due to their teaching identity and anxiety about student satisfaction (Liao & Zhang, 2022).

Both believed in the motivating power of positive feedback. Expert teachers balanced praise and criticism, using praise to support learning. Inexperienced teachers, however, focus on correction and overlook emotional aspects (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). This highlights the slow development of feedback literacy, which includes technical skills and delivering feedback that boosts learner confidence and agency (Lee et al., 2021; Liu, 2024).

Factors shaping teachers' WCF beliefs

Teachers' attitudes towards WCF are influenced by various factors, although some common sources are apparent. While Borg (2015) identifies formal education and prior language learning experiences as key influences, local data emphasises teaching experience as a major factor shaping WCF beliefs.

Teacher education and professional development

Experienced teachers

Teacher education and professional development are seen as crucial in shaping teachers' beliefs about WCF (Borg, 2015). The three experienced teachers in this study shared how their training contributed to their WCF approaches. ET1 noted, 'CELTA helped me to be more specific about the feedback, I learned the importance of being direct and precise in providing feedback.' They previously corrected everything in students' papers, but CELTA taught them to focus on key feedback areas. ET1 also said, 'TESOL worked in a way that built my theoretical understanding and gave me a sense of real-life implementation.' These experiences significantly influenced their WCF beliefs. Similarly, Sun & Zhang (2021) argue that exposure to higher education shapes teachers' WCF practices. ET2 agreed, 'The programmes helped me decide what to focus on during feedback. For example, I don't highlight grammatical errors if they do not substantially affect the content.' TESOL, CELTA, and DELTA are practicum based and encourage learning through application, which Mao et al. (2024) suggest plays an important role in shaping beliefs.

Reading research during teacher training also influenced WCF beliefs. ET2 shared, 'Reading research papers by Truscott and Ferris changed my view of WCF; now I give more feedback on content rather than language items.' Liu et al. (2022) support this observation by arguing that reading assessment documents help keep teachers informed. ET1 noted that Krashen's (1982) I+1 theory assisted them in identifying feedback zones, indicating that teachers provide input slightly above the students' current level—a reflection-based approach endorsed by Evans et al. (2010).

Professional development (PD) also shaped beliefs. ET3 reported learning on a PD course, 'KISS [Keep it Simple and Short] your feedback on students' writing', which was particularly useful in a low proficiency context. This aligns with Truscott's (2023) concern that complex feedback can confuse students. ET2 added, '[I attended PD on] how to promote peer feedback process', a strategy supported by Lee (2024), who advocated for collaborative learning. ET1 mentioned a PD course titled 'How to Improve Students' Critical Thinking through Feedback', which helped them appreciate the

role of indirect feedback in fostering critical thinking. As Mao et al. (2024) note, PD courses support teachers in implementing nuanced feedback practices.

Novice teachers

Beginner EAP teachers in Bangladesh, mostly with less than 5 years' experience, said their beliefs about WCF were shaped mainly by their teacher education programmes and lacked growth through professional development (PD). Literature shows that teacher preparation is crucial for early-career teachers' feedback development (Cho & Kim, 2018). NT1, for instance, pointed out how their MA in TESOL influenced their feedback-giving: 'It helped me to decide the effective strategies-[like] one style doesn't fit all', which indicates that they became more aware of the necessity of providing individualised feedback based on student language proficiency and academic task. This aligns with the findings of Fitriyah et al. (2024), who emphasise the importance of using the differentiated WCF method to support students with diverse needs in multilingual settings.

Current research shows student reactions to feedback vary by competence levels. Lee (2024) noted that higher proficiency learners can interpret and apply WCF more independently, while Ellis (2010) stated that lower proficiency students need more scaffolded, explicit correction. NT1 acknowledged these nuances, expressing doubts about adjusting feedback for the broad spectrum of proficiency levels in large, mixed-ability classes—a common challenge in EAP contexts in the Global South (Rahman & Pandia, 2018).

NT2 focused on learning balanced feedback approaches (motivational, constructive and cognitive) during training. This aligns with Lee and Mohebbi's (2020) model, which states that good feedback should confirm strengths, reveal discrepancies, and facilitate cognition. NT3 also explained how his/her TESOL coursework informed them about peer feedback strategies, which they then modified for classroom settings: 'Peer feedback strategies during the TESOL programme were transferred into the classroom practice'. This is consistent with the results by Soruç et al. (2025) who claim that peer feedback promotes autonomous learning, enables learners to work together and encourages students to engage more with the written task.

Self-study also influenced WCF beliefs. NT2 and NT3 watched YouTube videos and read texts like Truscott (2023), helping them navigate debates on form-focused versus meaning-focused feedback. Lee et al. (2021) supports that research-based resources promote reflective teaching and guide decisions, while Yang et al. (2021) emphasise their importance for teachers forming their identity early in their careers.

While beginning teachers reported that they had little formal access to PD opportunities, they did, however, acknowledge their influence. NT1 also reminded training sessions around grading being something that led to early understanding of feedback. NT2 participated in a PD on peer feedback, and this reminder indicates how easily and powerfully an inexpensive intervention can help change teaching. In line with Cho & Kim (2018) and Soruç et al. (2025), the studies indicate that peer review and collaborative assessment 'enrich the feedback process', providing diverse insights into student writing, which promote inclusion and engagement.

Prior language learning

EAP and ESL teachers usually study language themselves and receive feedback on their skills, including writing. Their experience as learners influence their WCF beliefs and teaching approaches (Borg, 2015).

Experienced teachers

The three advanced teachers had the same language learning background, that is, receiving WCF that were mainly grammar-focused instead of being about content or organisation. ET1 noted, '[I] got lots of feedback on forms' marking more of a focus on grammar, as was commonly the case in the Bangladeshi setting 10 years ago. In the meantime, however, the teachers have modified their practices. ET3 mentioned, 'Mostly, I had comments about grammar, and the teacher corrected my errors always with a red pen' signalling dependence on direct form-based feedback.

This feedback reflects a traditional approach now revisited in recent research. Liu (2024) argues that overemphasising grammar can limit students' focus on language and genre expectations in academic writing. Conversely, Kessler & Casal (2024) suggest that grammatical feedback with metalinguistic hints promotes accuracy and awareness. These differing views highlight ongoing debates and, in experienced teachers, a shift towards balanced, communicative feedback that addresses both global and local issues. This shift aligns with the move to more student-centred, process-driven EAP instruction.

Novice teachers

Interviews with the novice teachers confirmed experiences similar to those that had been reported by the experienced teachers but from different standpoints. NT1, a student of an English medium school, got heavy-content-focused feedback, whereas both NT2 and NT3, learning under the National Board Textbook Curriculum, remembered grammar-focused feedback based primarily on sentence structure, spelling, and punctuation. These priors played into their current WCF practices—NT2 and NT3 prioritised grammar, whereas NT1 saw form feedback as less effective (Liu, 2024); Rahman & Pandia, 2018).

Recent studies show teachers' WCF beliefs are linked to their language learning backgrounds (Liao & Zhang, 2022; Soruç et al., 2025). Supportive, meaning-focused feedback for learners encourages a reflective approach. Notably, three skilled teachers shifted from direct, grammar-focused feedback to indirect, content-focused feedback. Conversely, novice teachers' practices are more influenced by prior learning experiences, which are crucial in their early careers (Kessler & Casal, 2024; Liu, 2024).

Teaching experience

Experienced teachers

Previous research focused on formal instruction and language learning experience influencing WCF beliefs, but interviews showed that teaching experience alone also shaped instructor views (Liao & Zhang, 2022; Liu, 2024). ET1 reflected, 'I used to take the front end off the approach and give direct feedback on nearly everything in

the essay in the beginning. Now I just kind of focus on what's important in an essay', indicating movement toward emphasising feed-forward. The more experienced the teachers got, the more they thought about clarity, organisation, and the 'sound' of the writing, rather than picking at mistakes in the wording. This is consistent with the findings of Kessler & Casal (2024), who suggest that more experienced instructors refine their feedback approaches through cycles of classroom instruction.

ET2 also highlighted the 'importance of positive but constructive feedback', which aligns with findings that positive and balanced feedback leads to an increase in learner confidence and performance (Fitriyah et al., 2024). ET3 summed up, 'I believe in student autonomy, let me give indirect feedback to them and they themselves change their own mistakes', indicating a belief in autonomy of learners, consistent with recent evidence of learner-centred WCF (Soruç et al., 2025).

Experience was evidenced in the practices adopted by teachers based on the interaction and feedback from students. ET2 and ET3 refined their approach as they observed students' reactions and received feedback. ET1 involves sharing student polls for feedback supporting Cheng & Zhang (2021), which focuses on upskilling through a student-informed pedagogy. Second, peer collaboration contributed to belief formation. ET1 said, 'Teachers group students on the basis of the level', and ET3 mentioned, 'We talk with each other for the purpose of guiding and helping in giving feedback and assessment', indicating the role of professional networks. This complements Lee (2023), who identifies the importance of peer discussion in the formation of WCF beliefs and practices.

Novice teachers

In the interviews, NT1 shared having 1.5 years of writing instruction experience, while NT2 and NT3 had 1 year. Although they believed teaching experience shaped WCF beliefs, they had not yet observed substantial changes in their own practices. NT1 noted, 'In my case, the chair has encouraged me to talk to experienced teachers to gain more confidence about feedback', highlighting the role of mentorship. NT3 added, 'I found my senior colleagues scoring more organised and specific', reflecting how peer interactions inform evolving beliefs.

Recent research shows that feedback quality improves with teaching experience (Liu, 2024). However, novice teachers often lack professional networks, limiting access to collaborative learning (Kessler & Casal, 2024). While early studies emphasised teacher education as key to WCF beliefs, newer work highlights ongoing teaching as crucial for refining feedback and meeting diverse student needs (Lee, 2023; Soruç et al., 2025).

Overall, the local data offers nuanced insights into how contextual and experiential factors shape Bangladeshi EAP teachers' beliefs and practices surrounding WCF, contributing to this literature for the first time. Unlike earlier studies focusing on formal teacher education and previous language learning (e.g. Borg, 2015), this research emphasises teaching experience, peer collaboration, and student feedback as key in developing more responsive, student-centred WCF, especially among experienced teachers (Kessler & Casal, 2024; Liu, 2024). Notably, it shows that new teachers, trained in differentiated and balanced feedback, often default to grammar feedback due to limited PD

opportunities and institutional norms—a tension seen in recent EAP research (Rahman & Pandia, 2018; Soruç et al., 2025).

Additionally, the research identifies a reflective reconceptualization amongst experienced teachers moving towards more oblique and dialogic feedback sensitive to student needs, peer discussion, and classroom experimentation, representing WCF as a dynamic, practice-embedded concept. This finding also echoes the emerging understanding in the field of applied linguistics that teacher cognition is dynamic and contextually bound, and that professional identity is constantly reconstructed in the process through experiential learning (Lee, 2023; Liao & Zhang, 2022). These findings call for greater localised, dialogic, and sustained models of PD in Bangladesh that can narrow the theory–practice gap, especially for early-career EAP teachers as they negotiate the complexities of giving and responding to feedback in linguistically diverse classrooms.

Types and reasons for specific feedback preferences of teachers

Table 3 presents the most typical types of feedback provided by teachers and the motivations for each type.

Types of writing corrective feedback

Experienced teachers

The experienced interviewees tended to employ indirect WCF, modifying their strategies as a result of circumstance. ET1 said, ‘I want students to explore their own learning and problem solve, so the [I think] way to give feedback is indirect’, through error codes and scaffolding to help self-correct. These align with the findings of recent studies that highlight the role of metalinguistic awareness and learner autonomy (Liu, 2024; Soruç et al., 2025). ET2 stated, ‘[I] take a sample paper and have students find their errors... the students are their own editors/they editorialise/feedback to one another’, which is a dialogic-student-based style of teaching (Bahrouni & Tuzlukova, 2019). Despite ET1 and ET2 being indirect, ET3 mentioned, ‘There are common mistakes and repetitions, so those kinds of errors I challenge in the class through more holistic feedback’, which shows a mixed approach.

All three teachers also placed a high value on metalinguistic support, frequently providing examples or source materials to support independent revision. This is consistent with evidence that activities with scaffolding promote engagement and language learning (Kessler & Casal, 2024). Regarding targeted WCF, the teachers described reducing feedback on issues of influence. ET1 and ET2 focused on grammar only if meaning was affected and underscored that writing should be organised and clear—a response which supports claims that targeted feedback promotes writing development without overwhelming students (Fitriyah et al., 2024). In terms of global vs. local issues, teachers prioritised content, coherence, and structure. ET2 clarified, ‘...Outline or road map of the paper, flow of writing, and ask questions to get the correct version, indicating a change from focusing on surface-level errors to one that is meaning-oriented’ (Lee, 2023).

Novice teachers

The interview revealed that the novice teachers mainly used direct feedback, occasionally supplementing it with indirect feedback. NT1 stated that ‘practising indirect

feedback doesn't make sense for the students because they must write a couple of papers within a tri-semester', reflecting time constraints in intensive course models. In countries like Bangladesh, where short academic cycles and inadequate instructional hours dominate, direct WCF can lead to faster understanding. As NT2 also observed, 'Many students don't know the significance of what they're doing because they haven't been able to handle the language, so they need direct response', highlighting the need for more explicitness and instruction in low proficiency environments. Recent research corroborates this view, indicating that direct WCF promote comprehension of and engagement with feedback for students with lower levels of language awareness (Fitriyah et al., 2024; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019).

Regarding metalinguistic feedback, NT1 did not provide it as students were not interested. NT2 and NT3 used it selectively, often adding verbal justifications in tutorials to written feedback. As NT2 says, 'I correct the errors or give hints and explain for further consultation [I do not explain all the stuff on the paper]', representing a blend of both. The concomitant promotion of metalinguistic awareness in finding and correcting errors aligns with studies that show metalinguistic input, given teacher-directed behaviour, is directed toward teacher-corrected errors and focuses on form (Kessler & Casal, 2024; Lee, 2023).

Regarding whether focused or unfocused feedback is more effective, NT1 leaned towards focused WCF, especially on writing organisation, asserting that 'writing process-related areas ... focus students' attention and encourage writing skills'. On the contrary, NT2 and NT3 supported extensive feedback under the assumption that learners would be able to use WCF in all areas. NT3 stated, 'They [students] apply their learning in other courses, so they need to learn correct ideas', advocating transfer in academic writing. This finding aligns with recent evidence suggesting that unfocused WCF enhances global accuracy and fluency in particular, particularly in EAP classes (Lee, 2009; Soruç et al., 2025).

Regarding local vs. global feedback, preservice teachers favoured local concerns, although they acknowledged the importance of both. NT2 stressed, '(I think) the content and the language are the key elements of writing together (both are the parts that need to be provided feedback)', promoting the two focal points of writing development. Recent studies advocate for integrated feedback to enhance form and meaning (Lee, 2023; Yang et al., 2021). NT1, by contrast, focused on global issues (organisation, coherence) and only corrected local ones (word order, agreement) if meaning was obscure. On the other hand, NT3 pointed out, 'I would like to provide direct feedback on forms and the content of the students' writing', thus stressing the importance of clear, form-focused feedback for students of English as a foreign language (Bahrouni & Tuzlukova, 2019). Although direct, explicit WCF- and NCTB-based teaching and learning are both novice's pedagogical intention and student-centred response, which is reasonable considering that most students have experience with NCTB-based teaching and learning.

Reasons for the feedback type

Experienced and novice teachers find WCF useful, but they use it differently. In second language education, experienced teachers see WCF as a strategic tool to improve students' language development and writing fluency (Liu, 2024; Soruç et al., 2025).

Inexperienced teachers also view WCF as a way to help students become better writers, believing it directly enhances writing quality (Fitriyah et al., 2024; Kessler & Casal, 2024).

Experienced teachers

The experienced teachers in this study gave certain forms of WCF as a result of their experience, which is in line with the findings of recent teacher cognition studies. ET1 endorses an indirect (individualism) approach to both local and global writing problems, stating that, albeit difficult to implement, it is more convenient for students. This is consistent with Liu (2024) and Soruç et al. (2025) that customisation of WCF to the individual student learner is resource-intensive, particularly for a larger class size, but is conducive to deep learning.

ET2 also utilises mediated and focused feedback, taking sample writings to their peers for feedback to encourage learner autonomy—a practice resonant with Lee (2023) and Kessler and Casal (2024), both of whom emphasise the benefits of establishing learner-led direction in EAP teaching. Indeed, both ET1 and ET2 think that indirect WCF-scaffolded support helps low-proficiency students to grow in an incremental and autonomous way.

ET3 is more adaptable; first, it checks students' profiles, and then it selects the feedback type. As the teacher commented, 'some students belonged to English medium... whereas many students are NCTB students who mostly face a linguistic barrier in my class.' This perspective is in line with new findings that WCF needs to be targeted to students' linguistic knowledge and educational backgrounds (Fitriyah et al., 2024). ET3 also assumes that local concerns, such as errors, can be mitigated by code and results, while detailed feedback is constructed to avoid confusion at a global level.

Novice teachers

Novice teachers give WCF to ensure student success, address time limits, and consider linguistic skills. NT1 offers direct feedback for quick improvement and motivation, per Reynolds (2023). NT3 also offers direct feedback on language issues, aiding learners in transferring skills to new writing tasks (Lee, 2023). Due to limited class time, novice teachers find it practical to offer direct, focused WCF on local issues.

NT3 estimates that they give 'around 70% direct feedback and 30% indirect feedback,' tailoring WCF based on student proficiency—indirect for stronger students, direct for weaker ones—consistent with Zhang and Elder (2017).

Experienced teachers use indirect feedback to support learner autonomy, retention, and metalinguistic development, as Soruç et al. (2025) note. Although Zhang & Elder (2017) suggest adjusting WCF based on proficiency, the teachers in this study mostly used indirect WCF regardless of student level. Novices, however, favoured direct WCF from the start, often as a default rather than workload related. This contrasts with Ferris (Liu, 2024), who suggests the WCF type may change under time pressure.

Overall, this study shows that experienced EAP instructors in Bangladesh use indirect, scaffolded feedback that aims to promote learner autonomy, long-term development, and metalinguistic awareness, even under high-enrolment, low-resource circumstances. This is notable because such practices are typically seen in smaller, resource-rich settings (Lee, 2023). The teachers also adapted their feedback based on learners' language

backgrounds and institutional contexts (i.e. English medium and NCTB trained), confirming the need for customised WCF to suit learners' educational pathways (Fitriyah et al., 2024; Lee, 2023). This shift from a one-size-fits-all approach to what can be described as good pedagogy is an important development, yet it remains insufficiently explored in most South Asian WCF research. Second, despite their TESOL preparation, novice teachers relied on direct, form-focused feedback, driven by structural constraints like short semesters, large classes, and low student proficiency levels. While earlier studies associate WCF feedback with novice authority and correctness (Zhang & Elder, 2017), this research demonstrates that school-level pressures significantly shape WCF practices. Therefore, context—not simply beliefs—determines pedagogical practice (Lee, 2023; Reynolds, 2023).

The research highlights a shift from grammar correction to addressing overall writing issues like content, coherence, and structure among experienced teachers, aligning with academic writing goals. The emphasis on peer feedback and revisions shows a collaborative, socially mediated approach (Bahrouni & Tuzlukova, 2019; Kessler & Casal, 2024). This also shifts teachers from correctors to facilitators, challenging traditional authority in postcolonial contexts.

The results emphasise incorporating WCF activities into teacher training. Even novice teachers trained in differentiation found providing differentiated feedback challenging. Ongoing, just-in-time PD is essential to bridge the gap between theory and practice (Fitriyah et al., 2024; Soruç et al., 2025). Teacher cognition is dynamic, socially bound, and shaped by interaction and reflection experience.

Implications for policy and improving WCF practice in Bangladesh

This study's results impact policy reform and teaching in Bangladesh's EAP, especially WCF. Based on novice and experienced teachers, suggestions are given to improve WCF and teacher agency in EAP classes.

Novice teachers tend to prefer superficial, grammar-focused WCF due to limited feedback training. This gap can be addressed by adding explicit modules on feedback literacy—covering WCF types, timing, focus, and student engagement—in teacher education or workshops (Lee et al., 2021; Liu, 2024). Training should combine theory and classroom practice, encouraging reflection (Lee et al., 2021). Additionally, institutions should recognise WCF as a key formative assessment in EAP courses, with grading policies emphasising drafting, revision, and process writing to promote responsiveness. Furthermore, institutional rubrics will need to be updated to separate lower-order skills from the higher-order ones (e.g. coherence or argumentation), allowing teachers to provide less biased feedback (Moradkhani & Mansouri, 2023; Soruç et al., 2025). In addition, time constraints and large classes were mentioned as the main obstacles to providing extensive and personal WCF, particularly by less-experienced teachers. Institutions might need to reduce or cap student–teacher ratios in writing-intensive EAP classes or provide digital platforms for more efficient generation of audio or coded feedback. Allocating sufficient time and resources for revision-based writing instruction would enhance the quality of teacher feedback as well as student engagement (Cheng et al., 2025; Liu, 2024).

In light of the practices of experienced teachers, EAP practitioners are advised to implement focused WCF—focusing on one to two types of errors at a time—when teaching writers with lower proficiency levels. This approach also avoids cognitive overload and allows students to internalise patterns across time (Ferris et al., 2011; Moradkhani & Mansouri, 2023). Teachers might shift the focus of the feedback on different writing tasks over time to tackle a set of issues incrementally. Second, although local (grammar) feedback is more frequent, experienced teachers tend to focus on global (i.e. involving organisation, clarity, and cohesion) as they are key in academic writing. Metalinguistic signals (e.g. brief comments, codes, or think-aloud prompts) might be promoted by EAP teachers to help guide students' understanding of why they should revise an activity (Reynolds, 2023). Expert teachers are more likely to involve students in feedback, encouraging reflection and revision. New teachers can gradually adopt dialogic feedback methods like peer review and self-assessment, reducing their feedback load and fostering student autonomy (Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Kessler & Casal, 2024). EAP instructors, especially novices, may also need training in reflective practices such as recording teaching journals, annotating student work, or joining discussion circles. These strategies are designed to link WCF messages with student behaviours and to build beliefs-practice consistency with time (Borg, 2015; Farrell, 2019).

Limitations and directions for future research of the study

There are several limitations to this study that guide the interpretation of the findings. Firstly, the small and local nature of the sample (i.e. novice and experienced EAP teachers from one Bangladeshi institution) limits the ability to generalise the findings to other educational contexts (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Second, self-reported interview-based data should be considered from a reliability point of view, as it is susceptible to bias as a result of selective memory, self-presentation, or perceived expectations (Maxwell, 2013; Dörnyei, 2007). Again, bias such as this may undermine the validity of the teachers' professed beliefs and behaviours. Third, no classroom observations or student perspectives were taken as reference means that triangulation is not feasible and does not further elaborate on how WCF is realised and perceived in practice. Future studies may thus usefully use mixed-method designs, such as classroom observations and student interviews, to paint a more complete empirically based picture of WCF practice in EAP contexts (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Future work should use a combination of methods (classroom observation, student interview, analysis of feedback artefacts) to triangulate teacher-reported information and develop a more complete picture of how WCF is implemented and received in practice. Studies employing longitudinal data to examine how teachers' WCF beliefs and practices change over time would also contribute to an understanding of professional development and pedagogical change. Further, comparative analyses between institutions and regions (both across and outside of South Asia) could be conducted to investigate how institutional culture, policy requirements, and teacher agency intersect to influence WCF practices in different EAP settings.

Conclusions

This study explored Bangladeshi EAP teachers' beliefs and WCF-related practices, and there was an evident disparity between the experienced and inexperienced teachers. The experienced teachers preferred indirect and scaffolded feedback that develops learner autonomy and metalinguistic knowledge, whereas the inexperienced teachers favoured direct feedback with a focus on form, which could be attributed to institutional pressures, curriculum time limitations, and learners with low proficiency levels (Fitriyah et al., 2024; Soruç et al., 2025). Crucially, the results indicate that feedback practices can be more influenced by contextual constraints such as student profile, timetabling, and institution policy than pedagogical training or theoretical perspective (Reynolds, 2023; Lee, 2023).

This study is significant for adding to a relatively underrepresented area of WCF literature—South Asia, where the context involving limited resources for EAP remains the least researched. The literature on WCF has largely originated from Western or affluent educational settings, and this paper responds to growing calls for localised, contextually attentive stories for feedback work in the Global South (Kessler & Casal, 2024; Liu, 2024). Through teachers' stories of coping with these conflicting pressures, the analysis challenges the notion of effective WCF strategies as something to develop in one location that can then be transported into other environments.

Additionally, the study adds momentum to ecological and systems views of teacher decision-making (e.g. Borg, 2015; Farrell, 2019) by providing evidence that teachers' WCF practices are contextualised and responsive to socio-institutional environments and not carried out in a vacuum. The finding of continued indirect WCF for experienced teachers—even in low-resource/high-enrollment contexts—suggests the potential for learner-centred and reflective (LCR) strategies embedded in context-responsive pedagogy. Meanwhile, the dependence on direct WCF by new teachers points to the pressing need for a more manageable form of ongoing professional development to support the gap between theory and practice (Mao et al., 2024; Soruç et al., 2025).

Overall, the study highlights the need for reflective, situated, and socially mediated teacher education to allow teachers—particularly those in the initial stages of their career—to adapt feedback practices that are pedagogically appropriate and contextually feasible. This has significant implications for improving equitable and effective academic writing instruction in EAP programmes in other under-resourced contexts worldwide.

Supplementary Information

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Supplementary Material 1. Appendix A. Interview questions.

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Author's contributions

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Data availability

No datasets were generated or analysed during the current study.

Declarations

Ethics approval and consent to participate

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS 2 2022). Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board, which is known as REB-2, and all procedures complied with institutional and national research standards. The protocol identification number is HE2023-0378. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to their participation in the study. Participants were assured of confidentiality, anonymity, and their right to withdraw from the study before starting the data analysis process.

Consent for publication

All participants provided informed consent for their data to be used in this research and for the findings to be published in anonymised form. No identifying personal information is included in the manuscript.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

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