How do Spanish foreign language learners visualize written corrective feedback? A fresh panorama on students' experiences, perceptions, and preferences as writers

¿Cómo visualizan la retroalimentación escrita los aprendices de español como lengua extranjera? Un panorama actual de las experiencias, percepciones y preferencias de los estudiantes como escritores

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Original recibido: 11/11/23
Dictamen enviado: 03/05/24
Aceptado: 01/07/24

Abstract

Identifying Spanish foreign language learners' preferences and perceptions concerning written corrective feedback is crucial to empower them as writers. Studies on perceptions display incongruity between teachers' praxis and the learners' views; a mismatch that compromises the revision process and the overall growth of writing as a skill. Therefore, this study offers a fresh panorama on the matter by surveying the opinions and predilections concerning written corrective feedback of 21 intermediate Spanish foreign language learners. This study also provides a detailed profile of the participants as writers based on their self-reported practices (i.e., writing strategies) and their experiences with any formal instruction on literacy. Overall, an increase in positive perspective regarding written corrective feedback was observed as learners considered it furthered their writing abilities. They mainly favored indirect comments that a) created saliency and b) reflected metalinguistic information. Pedagogical insights to advance Spanish learners' writing aptitudes are offered.

Keywords: direct written corrective feedback, expectations, familiarity, indirect written corrective feedback, instruction, opinions, strategies

Resumen

Identificar las preferencias y percepciones de los estudiantes de español como lengua extranjera con respecto a la retroalimentación escrita es esencial para empoderar a nuestros estudiantes como escritores. Los estudios enfocados en percepciones muestran incongruencias entre las prácticas pedagógicas y las perspectivas de los estudiantes

respecto a ellas. Esta inconsistencia puede entorpecer el proceso de revisiones además de limitar el desarrollo de la escritura. Por lo tanto, este estudio ofrece un panorama actual sobre este asunto al explorar las opiniones y preferencias de 21 estudiantes intermedios de español como lengua extranjera respecto a la retroalimentación escrita. También se presenta un perfil detallado de los participantes como escritores basado en las estrategias de redacción que reportaron implementar y en sus experiencias con la enseñanza de alfabetización. Se observó una perspectiva positiva creciente respecto a la retroalimentación, pues los participantes consideraron que les ayudó a mejorar sus habilidades como escritores. A su vez, los participantes prefirieron los comentarios indirectos que (a) captaran su atención por su prominencia y (b) proveyeran información metalingüística. En este estudio la audiencia también tendrá acceso a recomendaciones pedagógicas para promover las aptitudes de sus estudiantes como escritores.
Palabras clave: *retroalimentación escrita directa, retroalimentación escrita indirecta, enseñanza, estrategias, expectativas, opiniones, familiarización*

Introduction

Identifying Spanish foreign language (FL) learners' perceptions and preferences regarding written corrective feedback (WCF) is essential for adopting efficient pedagogical practices to empower learners as writers in the target language (Valentin-Rivera, 2023). This is particularly important because "the relationship between perceptions, attitudes and behaviour is complex and not always predictable" (Storch, 2013, p. 170). For instance, Lasagabaster and Sierra (2005) observed a discrepancy in how teachers and learners perceived the effectiveness of feedback. Both noted that this mismatch could complicate the revision process, potentially hindering the overall development of writing skills. However, few studies (Greenslade & Félix-Brasdefer, 2006; Plonsky & Mills, 2006) have explored learners' opinions and preferences regarding WCF in the Spanish classroom, and, while impactful, these studies are dated. Moreover, to better understand the reasons behind students' views and predilections, it is crucial to explore their previous experiences as writers and their familiarity with specific types of corrective feedback. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous studies have focused on these matters. This study, therefore, aims to address these gaps by providing a fresh panorama of Spanish FL learners' perceptions and preferences concerning written comments. Additionally, this research will examine the learners' familiarity with various types of WCF and provide a detailed profile of the participants as writers based on their self-reported practices (e.g., writing strategies) as well as their exposure to any formal writing instruction.

Revision of the literature

Learners' beliefs concerning feedback in L2 and FL contexts

To this day, Leki's (1991) work remains a cornerstone in the examination of learners' responses and beliefs about WCF. In her study, 100 English as a Second Language (ESL) freshmen enrolled in a college-level writing course completed a survey on their expectations with regards to WCF, including which comments they found helpful for improving their writing and the types of corrections they tended to prefer and recall. The results revealed a strong desire for WCF in order to prevent future errors, with a preference for references to grammar-content handbooks and comments containing linguistic clues. Moreover, most participants indicated that they paid closer attention to corrections related to content and organization as these were the most memorable. Based on these findings, Leki (1991) strongly recommended engaging in pedagogically informed dialogues with learners regarding the efficacy of different WCF techniques and inquiring about their preferences and expectations to enhance accountability.

Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994) made further contributions in this line of research by exploring how two different settings of L2 writing (i.e., ESL and English as a Foreign Language [EFL]) impacted the learners' preferences regarding the provision of WCF. Overall, EFL students reportedly had a strong preference for feedback on form (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, mechanics). On the other hand, ESL learners showed equal interest in receiving comments that addressed both form and content (e.g., development of ideas, organization, writing style). This may be because ESL classes often approach writing as a key skill that can help position learners in higher education settings, while EFL classrooms primarily focus on literacy as an additional tool to enhance grammatical accuracy. In ESL contexts, Ferris (1995) worked with 155 composition learners who completed a survey on their views on WCF associated with a multiple-draft writing task since previous research had only focused on single-draft compositions. Three aspects were surveyed: (a) the issues addressed in the comments (e.g., organization); (b) how learners processed teachers' feedback (e.g., attention allocation); and (c) the helpfulness of WCF. Overall, the participants indicated that they primarily received grammar-related input from their instructors, with comments regarding organization, content, mechanics, and vocabulary being less frequent. Additionally, most students indicated that they primarily focused on comments related to grammar (67 %) and content (63 %) between drafts, while prioritizing vocabulary and mechanics in the final version. Furthermore, most participants reported consulting an outside source (e.g., tutors, a grammar book) to complete

their self-revisions of early drafts, while 50 % reported relying more on their own knowledge when refining their final drafts. Finally, learners' perception of WCF provision was overwhelmingly favorable, with 93 % believing that feedback helped them to understand "what to improve or avoid in the future, find their mistakes, and clarify their ideas" (p. 46). This finding demonstrates students' respect for teachers' comments and appreciation for the guidance they receive.

Recently, Valentín-Rivera (2023) explored the expectations, perceptions, level of familiarity (i.e., recognition of different strategies), and preferences of ten Chinese FLLs regarding WCF using a questionnaire and a survey. Overall, a unanimous expectation of teacher feedback as part of any writing task was observed, and teacher comments were deemed helpful. Regarding familiarity, both direct (i.e., errors fixed by the instructor) and indirect-related strategies (e.g., errors being underscored and accompanied by a comment focused on language use) were widely recognized (100 % and 93 %, respectively). Nonetheless, most participants (53.33 %) preferred indirect comments as they believed it enables and fortifies linguistic connections, which speaks to a high degree of accountability. Importantly, this study allowed the participants to identify additional types of comments or techniques that could be beneficial, of which they underscored: explaining the reasoning behind an error, assigning further writing practice, and incorporating examples into their comments. Although embedded in a different context, many of these findings (e.g., correlating dominance of grammar with writing aptitudes, and undeniably expecting feedback) align with those of studies in ESL and EFL settings, thus emphasizing the need to continue exploring learners' perceptions and preferences in the writing classroom across different languages.

Learners' perceptions regarding feedback in Spanish foreign language settings

Hedgcock and Lefkowitz's (1994) work, along with Ferris and Robert's (2001) findings regarding the enhancement of text quality as a result of two types of WCF provision (i.e., coding and saliency through underlining), as compared to no feedback provision (control group), motivated Greenslade and Félix-Brasdefer's (2006) study in Spanish L2 settings. Both scholars worked with 19 intermediate Spanish (FL) students from an intact composition course to examine the effects of two different types of WCF (i.e., underlining and codes) with respect to text quality as measured by the second draft of two individually written narratives. A secondary aim was identifying learners' perceptions concerning the efficacy of

both types of comments in relation to the use of the preterit and imperfect and achieving a higher degree of preparedness as writers. Thus, all syntactic, lexical, and mechanical errors in the first narrative were only underlined, while inaccuracies were both underlined and coded in the second narrative. Afterwards, the participants self-revised their texts within 20 minutes. Additionally, a questionnaire collected the participants' perceptions of WCF and the revising process. A significant effect of feedback on text quality when self-revising was observed, particularly when codes mediated the revisions, in contrast to Ferris and Roberts' (2001) findings. This may be explained by the more diverse types of errors (19) that were targeted, as compared to those underscored by Ferris and Roberts (i.e., five). Furthermore, coded WCF was strongly favored as participants believed such comments fortified their grammatical knowledge, comparable to the EFL learners in Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994).

In 2006, Plonsky and Mills aimed to reconcile the mismatch between 32 college FL Spanish beginners and their language teacher regarding the efficacy of WCF, as students considered it unhelpful. Therefore, the Spanish instructor that participated in the study explained the reasoning behind his strategies in addressing written errors during two different sessions (i.e., bifold treatment). Students' opinions, on the other hand, were consulted before the treatment and after each session through three questionnaires. These questionnaires focused on four areas: (a) motivation (encouragement vs. discouragement to self-revise), (b) the prioritization of grammar, (c) focusing on meaning (as opposed to reducing writing to a solely mechanical practice focused on certain grammatical points and lexicon), and (d) students' linguistic (un)readiness to revise. Overall, the perceptual mismatch on WCF decreased as students progressively viewed feedback more positively, possibly due to the bifold treatment, making students feel more involved in the learning process. Additionally, a distinct association between a strong command of grammar and successful language learning was evident (similar to the findings of Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994). These observations prompted the authors to advocate for transparent dialogues between teachers and learners to diversify pedagogical practices of self-revision in writing and encourage students to be more receptive to them.

In 2019, Mikulski, Elola, Padial and Berry surveyed 56 instructors and 96 Spanish heritage language learners (SHLLs), i.e., individuals who learned Spanish at home through early exposure (Valdés, 2001). The goal was to identify the most recurrent types of WCF provision and revision practices among learners, and how teachers and students perceived them. Therefore, a survey that included a back-

ground questionnaire along with three branches with Likert-scale and multiple-choice questions was distributed nationally. Overall, three types of WCF were most prominent: incorporating a coding system, providing written explanations, and creating saliency by underscoring inaccuracies. Regarding revision practices, 96 % of the instructors requested that learners complete a second draft. This was confirmed by the cohort of students, who claimed to conduct self-revisions either always (68 %) or only sometimes (31 %). Lastly, SHLLs widely shared a positive perception of WCF: 70 % believed teachers' comments were very or somewhat useful to enhance their grammar and spelling skills. Additionally, the participants expressed their desire to receive even more comments from their teachers. Although SHLLs' linguistic background greatly differs from FLLs', Mikulski *et al.*'s (2019) results are highly relevant as the feedback techniques that were frequently reported by their participants are prevalent in Spanish FL classrooms. Thus, these WCF techniques seem to be highly transferable across both teaching contexts. This is not to say that teachers' comments should not differ depending on the linguistic background and expertise of the students.

Limitations of previous research and research questions

Previous research has provided important contributions to our understanding of learners' perceptions of WCF while equipping language instructors with tools to devise varied and effective pedagogical strategies in the L2 writing classroom. However, this line of research is still underrepresented in FL Spanish contexts, in addition to lacking an updated comprehensive review. Furthermore, only Mikulski *et al.* (2019) have recently surveyed the familiarity of Spanish learners with different strategies of feedback provision. Expanding this knowledge is key to creating a solid foundation of diverse WCF practices that (a) enable the advancement of learners' writing skills (e.g., promoting self-revisions on content in the first round of corrections while addressing form in the final draft, as recommended in Ferris' work in 1995), (b) recognize students' readiness (Plonsky & Mills, 2006), or (c) promote two-way dialogues between instructors and learners to share their views on the efficiency of feedback to achieve an inclusive understanding (Leki, 1991; Valentín-Rivera, 2023). Additionally, it is equally essential to (a) explore learners' familiarity with various WCF strategies specifically in FL Spanish contexts and (b) provide a contemporary panorama of learners' expectations, preferences, and perceptions regarding written comments. Insights on perceptions, defined by Storch (2013, p. 94) as "a set of opinions that learners have" (p. 94), are particularly crucial as "the relationship between perceptions, attitudes and behaviour is complex and not

always predictable" (p. 170), thus frequently identifying incongruity between students' views and their own linguistic performance (Storch, 2013; Valentín-Rivera, 2019). Moreover, we have limited access to comprehensive profiles of Spanish L2 writers that map out any formal instruction on L2 literacy and the strategies they recurrently use when constructing a text (Elola, Rodríguez-García & Winfrey 2008). Therefore, addressing this gap is imperative to ensure pedagogical practices that recognize and ultimately further our students' strengths (De Silva, 2015). Furthermore, a detailed profile of Spanish L2 writers will serve as a foundation to comprehend their views and expectations associated with WCF. As such, the present study builds on Valentín-Rivera (2022) to deliver an updated understanding of Spanish FL learners' (a) overall writing profile, (b) expectations when receiving WCF, and (c) their preferences for as well as their familiarity with different types of written comments by addressing the following questions:

1 What is the overall profile of intermediate learners as writers in terms of previous instruction on L2 literacy and self-reported writing practices?
2. What are Spanish FL learners' expectations (i.e., whether they want to receive WCF and how frequently) and overall perceptions (i.e., helpfulness, challenges, and suggestions for instructors) regarding WCF?
3. What are Spanish FL learners' degrees of familiarity and preferences regarding different types (direct vs. indirect) and strategies (e.g., coding vs. metalinguistic explanations) of WCF?

Methodology

Participants and settings

Twenty-one intermediate Spanish learners between the ages of 18 and 22 (M = 20.33) participated in this study. All were enrolled in two sections of a Composition and Grammar course at a Midwestern public university, which aims to equip learners with effective L2 writing practices. Thus, writing is approached as a process rather than a product (Manchón, 2011), while also enhancing students' awareness and appreciation of Hispanic cultures. Specifically, three multi-drafted writing tasks, mediated by feedback on content and form. are completed throughout the semester; one per cultural unit. Additionally, each unit is guided and accompanied by a main reading that presents sociohistorical topics (e.g., *la Colonia*) and sociocultural topics (e.g., syncretic Hispanic traditions).

It is worth mentioning that most participants were either freshmen (57.14 %) or sophomores (23.8 %) while only four of them were completing their third (9.5 %)

or last year (9.5 %) of college. Furthermore, the pool of participants largely shared similar linguistic backgrounds, except for two learners (9.5 %) who identified as Spanish heritage speakers, while only one participant (4.75 %) had studied abroad. Concerning any formal instruction, having taken Spanish for five years (mainly at the junior or high school level and in college) was the most common response (66.7 %), followed by one to four (23.8 %) and seven years (9.5 %). When asked about their interest in studying the target language, in order to understand their motivations for pursuing bilingualism, more than two reasons per learner were cited. This allowed for a detailed landscape where the predominant motivation was found to be enhancing their professional profiles to enable better job opportunities (66.7 %). Additionally, 33.4 % expressed the desire to serve the Hispanic community, especially in medical-related fields, and engage with locals when traveling to Spanish-speaking countries. Equally popular (19 % each) were the following five reasons: (a) connecting with people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds; (b) expanding the pool of people they could communicate with; (c) having an authentic passion for the language; (d) realizing that Spanish is rapidly growing in the U.S., and (e) deeming it "cool" to be multilingual. Also, both heritage speakers expressed a desire to connect with their roots.

Data collection materials

As this study primarily builds on Valentin-Rivera (2023), minimal modifications were made to the two instruments used in said investigation, namely an online background questionnaire and an online survey. An additional section was added (see "Online Survey on WCF" below) to account for the participants' profiles as writers (research question 1), as Valentin-Rivera (2023) only addressed two of the research questions guiding the current study (i.e., research questions 2 & 3). All the questions in both instruments were presented in English to prevent any language barriers that would hinder the communication or depth of responses.

Background questionnaire

This instrument facilitated an extensive participant profile through 12 inquiries: four were open-ended and eight were close-ended. This resulted in three distinct domains regardless of their degree of openness. The first domain, labeled as "circumstantial features", contained the learners' (a) gender, (b) age, (c) reasons for taking Spanish courses, and (d) college classification (i.e., freshmen, sophomore, junior, or senior) —refer to the "Participants and Settings" Section above. The second domain concentrated on the participants' overall linguistic academic

experience thus focusing on (a) the number of years studying Spanish, (b) their proficiency level, and (c) the foci of the courses they had previously completed. The last domain explored any prior experience with writing tasks and the processes involved in these tasks.

Online survey on WCF

To address the three research questions, an online survey on WCF with 36 questions (21 open-ended and 15 close-ended), was designed using Google Forms. The survey was grounded in different areas, referred to as "realms". These specifically align with any formal instruction in and experience with L2 writing, and the participants' perspectives on WCF provision. The specific aspects investigated within each realm are outlined in Table 1 (adapted from Valentín-Rivera, 2023).

Table 1. Surveyed Specifications per Realm.

Realm	Surveyed specification
1) Instruction	Previously taught writing strategies.
2) Self-reported writing practices	Approaches to planning and revising. Strategies typically used while writing following a process approach.
3) Previous experiences as writers	Known genres. Average number of compositions completed per course. Focus of independent revisions. Prioritized aspects upon the reception of WCF (i.e., content or form).
3) Expectations	Whether receiving WCF is anticipated and why. Frequency in which WCF from teachers is expected.
4) Perceptions	General perceptions on WCF in terms of helpfulness. Different challenges when writing in Spanish: Whether instructors are aware of these. Affording teachers insights on additional actions they could implement to assist their learners to overcome these challenges.
5) Familiarity	Acquaintance with different types of WCF (i.e., direct vs. indirect). Acquaintance with WCF provision strategies (e.g., coding, metalinguistic observations). Most used strategies learners observed when receiving WCF.
6) Preferences associated with WCF	Preferred type of WCF (i.e., direct, or indirect). Preferred strategies of WCF provision (e.g., underlining, coding, and metalinguistic observations). Areas that receive more attention (i.e., content and form).

Procedure

Upon approval, the researcher visited the intact classes to invite the class members to participate in this study. The students were informed that their participation was voluntary, and all attendees from both sections agreed to take part. On the day that the data was collected, the researcher explained the general aims of the investigation

(without specifying the research questions to avoid bias) and shared the consent form and the sets of materials via email. Thirty minutes were given to fill out both forms. Afterwards, all names were replaced by numbers to maintain participants' anonymity, ensuring a fair analysis process, as explained below.

Data analysis

This investigation is qualitative in nature and therefore follows Merriam's (2009) parameters to ensure an efficient collection and analysis of the data. Due to its qualitative approach, the participants' answers were initially analyzed in terms of their meaning (Richards, 2005) to consequently create a coding system that would ultimately enable the establishment of themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). For instance, early in the analysis process, among the recurrent patterns identified were the prioritization of form over content when revising. Just like in Valentin-Rivera (2023), the researcher filed the set of themes that were identified and revisited them two weeks later to verify their accuracy. To integrate an additional layer of reliability, the data set was also shared with a Spanish faculty member, who was initially part of the study as per the submission and approval of the Institutional Review Board but who only assisted with the collection of the data due to time constraints. These additional revision rounds solidified the establishment and relevance of the themes. Upon the completion of these classifications, the percentages per theme were reported, which, in turn, revealed the significance of different matters related to WCF from the learners' standpoint. It is worth noting that in several instances, for example, when asking learners about the writing strategies that they already used before enrolling in a writing course, the participants were allowed to share as many techniques as they could identify. Therefore, the percentages reported in repeated instances throughout the results represent the overall mentions of one given item, as opposed to being summative (i.e., showing a cumulative percentage of 100 % by adding all presented percentages —see Table 2 as an example).

Results

Research question 1: learners' profiles as writers

The learners' writing profiles (i.e., research question 1) were mainly determined by the survey questions related to any formal instruction they had received prior to enrolling in the Composition and Grammar course. These questions focused exclusively on the various writing strategies that the participants (a) had been taught previously and (b) self-reportedly used while constructing a text in Spanish.

With respect to the teaching of strategies related to approaching writing as a process (i.e., a cyclical endeavor that involves an interconnected trifold procedure consisting of planning, composing, and revising), the outlined techniques varied widely (Table 2).

Table 2. Previously taught writing strategies.

Identified strategy and corresponding process	Recognition
Outlining (planning)	52.3 %
Brainstorming (planning)	47.6 %
Integrating vocabulary, e.g., circumlocution, synonyms (composing) Incorporating researched information (composing)	28.6 %
Structuring sentences (composing) Writing a topic sentence (composing) Interpreting prompts (planning and composing) Translating ideas from English to Spanish (composing)	14.3 %
Content verification (e.g., reading out loud to verify the meaning, proofreading) (revising)	9.5 %
Using varied tenses (composing) Writing the body before the introduction and conclusion (composing) Keeping ideas simple (composing) Avoiding choppiness (composing)	4.8 %

As observed above, the strategies previously taught in the Spanish L2 classroom largely favored the composing phase, as evidenced by the diverse body of techniques related to this writing stage that the learners identified (11 out of 14). However, the two highest-rated strategies (i.e., outlining and brainstorming) corresponded to planning, while pedagogical efforts on revising (i.e., reading out loud to check for meaning and proofreading) were seemingly dismissed.

To provide a more comprehensive panorama, a comparison was made between what students had been taught and the decisions they made as writers, as discrepancies are not uncommon (Storch, 2013). Participants were asked (a) whether they habitually planned and revised their texts, and (b) which actual strategies they typically employed. When it came to planning, all the participants claimed to conduct some sort of preparation before writing. What varied was the consistency of this task, with 52.4 % stating they did so in some instances, while 47.6 % claimed to always do so. In contrast, despite not being taught a wide range of revising strategies, the majority of participants (57 %) stated that they consistently paused during the writing process to check for accuracy and fluency, while 23.8 % admitted to rarely doing so. The remaining 19.2 % of learners mentioned not revising while composing a text in Spanish. Moreover, 81 % confirmed that they conducted revisions upon the completion of the text, right before submitting their work. In

terms of the specific strategies associated with constructing a text, the participants' responses revealed the actual implementation of one of the two planning techniques they had previously been taught: outlining (directly in the target language). Additionally, generating thoughts in English first and mentally translating them into Spanish before jotting them down was almost equally popular, despite the potential counterproductivity of this practice due to its possible interference. Concerning composing, most participants (76 %) stated that they first wrote the entire text and then reviewed their printed thoughts to delete or add information accordingly to enhance their writing. Specifically, upon the completion of the draft, participants either consulted online or printed resources for form-related issues (grammar and vocabulary) and mechanics (spelling), or relied on their personal knowledge to correct errors.

In addition to explaining their approach to the different stages of the writing process, the learners also disclosed 1) the various writing genres they had practiced in previous courses, 2) the average number of compositions they had been expected to complete per semester, 3) the types of independent revisions (i.e., not mediated by teachers' comments) they completed and why, and 4) the aspects (i.e., content or form) that the participants focused on the most upon receiving teachers' WCF. Regarding the genres that the participants had worked on, summaries (95.2 %) were highly frequent, in addition to descriptions and comparisons (85.7 %). In contrast, cause-effect and argumentative texts were the least familiar, with similar percentages (33.33 % and 28.6 % respectively). Concerning the average number of essays students were required to produce per Spanish class, three to four writing pieces was the norm, which aligns with the expectations for the writing course that they were enrolled in during the study. Many participants expressed confidence in their ability to identify and correct errors during independent revisions, and provided detailed explanations of the types of corrections that they made autonomously. Specifically, 60 % stated that they prioritized accuracy over content (40 %) for the reasons presented in Table 3.

Interestingly, although accuracy was the central point of interest when self-correcting, the main reasons to focus on either aspect were interconnected. That is, whether the participants concentrated most on form or content, they identified the element of their choice as crucial to adequately convey meaning. Additionally, the independent revisions of some participants on both accounts were motivated by the degree of confidence that they felt in their linguistic knowledge on either matter. Lastly, despite underscoring the difficulty of effectively constructing a text in the L2, two participants prioritized content to

continue building on their writing skills. This speaks to a desire to make the most of their experience as Spanish learners. The prioritization of accuracy when autonomously revising matched what the participants paid most attention to when receiving WCF from their teacher, as they stated they primarily focused on comments associated with grammar due to its complexity and importance (47.7 %). Only 28.6 % equally concentrated on content and grammar, while 14.3 % mainly focused on feedback correlated with content only, since the instructor's comments would offer linguistic hints (i.e., codes) that facilitated the revision process of form. The remaining 9.5 % paid attention to the errors where most points had been taken off, as per the rubric.

Table 3. Reasoning behind the prioritization of accuracy or content when autonomously revising.

Accuracy	Content
Form-related matters are hard to master but essential for an essay to make sense (75 %)	Content is indispensable to convey the intended meaning, especially when it comes to organization (50 %)
It is easy to revise form because I feel comfortable with my grammar and vocabulary knowledge (16.7 %)	It is easy to revise issues related to content as I am confident of my skills to do so (25 %)
Grammar and vocabulary are the main emphasis of most Spanish classes (8.3 %)	Dedicating time to revising content-related matters will enhance my overall skills as a writer (25 %)

Research question 2: learners' expectations and perceptions

To address the question interconnected with Spanish FL learners' expectations and perceptions regarding WCF (RQ2), the participants answered questions directly linked to whether and why they expected written comments when completing a text in the L2 and how often. Moreover, they were also asked to identify (a) the main challenges that writing in Spanish may pose and (b) the degree of helpfulness of teachers' feedback.

Concerning the provision of WCF, only one learner (4.7 %) specified not expecting it but rather feeling grateful for any written directives provided by the instructor. The other 95.3 % declared anticipating receiving feedback from the instructor either after completing every single writing assignment (59.1 %) or upon the completion of a long text and after submitting their revisions (40.9 %). The high expectation for WCF was associated with: (a) seeing comments as a way to become more adept writers since learning comes from mistakes (76.19 %), (b) perceiving comments as a means to identify their areas of struggle so that they could ask for specific assistance when talking to an expert in the target language, such as the instructor or a tutor (23.8 %), or (c) simply because the provision of written guidance is either a common practice in the classroom or

the teacher's job (14.28 %). Other less prominent reasons were (i) understanding the reasons behind their grade, (ii) deeming writing as a core component of the course, (iii) feeling confused and discouraged without it, and (iv) recognizing the teacher as the main source of linguistic knowledge.

In the challenges associated with writing, a broad range of complexities were reported (Table 4).

Table 4. Challenges when writing in Spanish.

Difficulties	Degree
Expressing myself accurately (grammar).	47.6 %
Providing lexical variety throughout.	28.57 %
Constructing adequate sentences (i.e., syntax).	19.04 %
Achieving fluency. Avoiding being influenced by the L1. Facing time constraints. Writing cohesively (e.g., efficient use of transitions).	14.28 %
Generating ideas. Incorporating newly studied tenses.	9.52 %
Revising accurately. Knowing the rhetoric conventions of writing in Spanish (e.g., unpracticed genres).	4.76 %

The participants' concerns reflect a heavy emphasis on form-related matters (i.e., grammar accuracy, lexical usage, and syntax issues) as compared to content (fluency, organization, cohesion). This is parallel with the overall profile of these learners as writers (research question 1). The latter showcased a prioritization of grammar-related aspects by carrying out more corrections focused on language quality and accuracy either when autonomously revising or when receiving WCF from their teacher. Additionally, the participants were asked if their previous or current instructor(s) had been aware of these struggles, to which most (42.85 %) acknowledged never having brought up this topic to the attention of their language teachers as they felt intimidated. In contrast, 33.33 % reported communicating any struggles to their Spanish instructors in private during office hours. The remaining 23.8 % felt that their Composition and Grammar instructor was aware of the difficulties they faced as the comments they had received upon the completion of their first writing task matched the areas that the learners considered to be their weaknesses.

Finally, in terms of effectiveness, the participants were required to specify the degree of helpfulness of the WCF they had received in the past as compared to that provided in the writing class they were enrolled in at the time the data was gathered (Table 5).

Table 5. Degree of the usefulness of WCF before and while taking a writing class.

Categorization of helpfulness	Before taking a writing class	While taking a writing class
Useless and confusing	4.76 %	0 %
Useless	0 %	0 %
Somewhat useful	52.38 %	14.28 %
Very useful	28.57 %	28.57 %
Extremely useful	14.2 %	52.38 %

Interestingly, before enrolling in the Composition and Grammar course, the participants largely (95.24 %) viewed WCF positively, mostly deeming it to be "somewhat" or "very" useful, while only one participant classified it as useless and confusing. More specifically, only 14.2 % deemed it as "extremely useful". However, this same category showed 52.38 % when the participants referred to the utility of the comments that came from the instructor teaching the writing course. That is, the highest possible categorization of usefulness increased by 38.18 %. To better account for this positive change, the participants had to indicate which comments were the most useful while taking a course focused on writing, in addition to determining in which ways this feedback had assisted them the most. Overall, four types of comments surfaced in the following order of prevalence: (a) WCF with hints concerning the core of the inaccuracy or examples that can guide the correction process (52.38 %), (b) feedback that assists in the improvement of form (accuracy: 14.28 %, syntax: 9.52 %, vocabulary: 4.76 %), (c) comments that promote content enhancement (9.52 %), and (d) positive remarks on what is done efficiently to provide encouragement (4.76 %). Moreover, the participants felt that their teacher's comments had equally facilitated the use of complex grammatical structures more accurately and better organization of their ideas (76.19 %).

Research question 3: learners' familiarity with WCF and preferences

To account for the participants' familiarity with WCF, some of the survey questions prompted answers concerning (a) their understanding of what direct and indirect written feedback was, (b) the differences between the written comments they received before taking a writing-focused course and those they were receiving at the time of data collection, and (c) the writing strategies they had learned in the Composition and Grammar course up to that point.

To avoid confusion, the survey also included a concise but detailed explanation of both types of WCF (direct and indirect). The results indicated that the participants were highly aware of the features that define direct (95.23 %) and

indirect (90.47 %) feedback. The degree of familiarity with direct WCF was particularly visible in the participants' responses connected to the written comments that they frequently received prior to their experience in the Composition and Grammar course they were taking at the time. Overall, 15 participants (71.42 %) reported only having received WCF that targeted grammar-related errors. More specifically, the main technique associated with direct feedback known by these participants was getting their (grammatical) errors underlined, crossed out, or circled in addition to having them corrected by their professors. Three additional recurrent techniques were reported. First, having participants' errors only pointed out and being encouraged to consult their instructor individually to request additional information on the nature and reasoning behind the inaccuracies, which was deemed as demotivating as in most occasions no revisions were required. Second, having any errors identified (by circling or underlining) with barely any pointers about the root of the issue. Third, receiving a general summary at the bottom of their texts explaining what could be improved in terms of content. The remaining six participants declared being familiar with indirect WCF (19.04 %) or both types (9.5 %). The most popular technique corresponding to indirect WCF was the use of codes or receiving a general explanation from the teacher focused on the most common issues that the class (as a whole) displayed in their texts.

According to the participants, the WCF that they had received in the writing course they were enrolled in was significantly better. The participants overwhelmingly asserted that the comments were more detailed and incorporated specific examples, which served as directives that facilitated the revision process and allowed them to make connections and better understand matters that they were having difficulties comprehending, especially in terms of language use. Another aspect that made the comments more meaningful in their overall learning experience was the balanced focus on elements related to form and content, which was consistent with the distribution of the points proposed in the rubric. Moreover, while three participants expressed their disapproval for the provision of codes, most participants felt they were beneficial as they both provided a hint concerning the linguistic nature of the error and motivated them to fix the errors on their own. This speaks to the participants' high level of accountability to make learning plausible. Another element that was considered positively impactful was analyzing the readings that served as the base for each of the three units and compositions of the course (see the Methods Section for an explanation of the organization and aims of the class). In addition to being informative, as

the readings covered complex and important topics related to Hispanic culture, the participants considered that they also served as a model that depicted how to structure a text in Spanish.

In terms of new writing strategies that the participants had learned while taking Composition and Grammar, 85.71 % reported acquiring new practices. These practices included: (a) working with codes, (b) incorporating new planning strategies by answering content questions before writing the first draft, which enabled the participants to write fluidly, (c) using the main readings as writing models, and (d) visualizing ideas in a specific order to better illustrate timing and sequence through the use of various grammatical structures.

The participants' preferences regarding WCF were also outlined through some of the survey questions. Initially, the majority of the learners (62 %) favored indirect WCF over direct corrections (33.33 %). The preference for indirect comments was mainly associated with its helpfulness as it aids in understanding the core issues, as well as recognizing errors and completing self-revisions, thus empowering learners to improve their language skills and abilities as writers. This is a significant finding, especially considering that four participants who expressed a preference for indirect WCF had never been required to submit a second corrected draft of their written works. In contrast, some of those that showed more interest in direct corrections highlighted its practicality in error identification and understanding the reasoning behind them, while others emphasized their lack of time for self-correction or their inability to identify the root of the inaccuracies on their own. Only one participant (4.76 %) expressed a desire to receive a combination of both types due to the importance of the task grade-wise. That is, s/he considered that direct corrections should be provided in high-stake assignments, while indirect comments should be provided for low-stake compositions.

Discussion

This study offers an updated panorama of Spanish FL learners' expectations, preferences, and perceptions regarding the efficacy of WCF. In order to gain a deeper understanding of these singularities, and to further implement impactful pedagogical practices in the Spanish FL classroom, a detailed profile of the participants as writers and their degree of familiarity with various forms of corrective feedback is also provided.

Overall, like Leki (1991) and Valentin-Rivera (2023), most participants (95.3 %) claimed to eagerly anticipate written comments from their instructors since they saw feedback as a way to further their writing abilities. The point of

divergence with Leki (1991) resided in the aspect that the learners dedicated most attention to when being provided with WCF. In Leki's investigation, the participants focused on feedback targeting content more consistently, while those in this study predominantly focused on grammar-related inaccuracies. The prioritization of linguistic issues, however, is in line with Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994) and Plonsky and Mills (2006). Specifically, the foreign language learners in Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994) also reportedly expected to receive more feedback associated with form only, while those in Plonsky and Mills (2006) associated a high grammar commandment with successful language learning. Similarly, many Spanish FL learners in this study felt their grammar knowledge was still inadequate and believed that its mastery was key to conveying meaning accurately while writing. The prevalent association of grammatical precision with writing efficiency, which relegates content-related matters (e.g., organization, cohesion, coherence, supporting ideas efficiently) to a secondary sphere, may be explained by two factors. First, it is hypothesized that a heavy focus on form is primarily caused by the essence of the type of WCF that the learners previously received (71.42 % only focused on linguistic matters), thus supporting Ferris' (1995) observations. Second, the participants' limited experience with more complex genres may also account for these results. That is, structuring more complex writing tasks was significantly less familiar as most participants had only completed summaries, descriptions, and comparisons. Consequently, this issue limited the students' abilities to provide evidence to support an idea, which is a crucial endeavor in academic writing, such as argumentative texts.

In terms of familiarity and preferences related to WCF, the learners were well-versed in direct feedback techniques but preferred indirect comments as they helped them understand the reasons behind the errors. This discovery is consistent with Valentin-Rivera (2023) and Greenslade and Félix-Brasdefer (2006), indicating a genuine interest on the participants' part to enhance their aptitudes as authors. Moreover, the most recurrent strategies used by the instructors in previous classes to provide WCF included creating saliency (e.g., underlining, crossing out, circling), which align with Mikulski *et al.*'s (2019) findings. Moreover, some of the challenges faced (e.g., difficulties in achieving language accuracy due to incomplete mastery of certain grammatical forms, limited lexicon, and inadequate sentence structuring) and the reported benefits of WCF were comparable to those seen in Valentin-Rivera (2023). Specifically, the learners found teachers' comments most helpful when they facilitated the overall correction process and assisted them in overcoming the challenges they faced. Additionally, corrections

that provided some sort of metalinguistic guidance (e.g., coding, examples, brief grammar reminders, etc.) were preferred by the participants who favored indirect WCF, supporting Greenslade and Félix-Brasdefer (2006) as their participants showed a preference for a coding system.

Two additional points of convergence with Ferris (1995) were found. The first point is the two most recurrent strategies that the learners reported using to self-revise, which include consulting online and printed grammar resources, as well as relying on their own linguistic knowledge. The second point is the elevated number of participants who considered WCF to be highly useful and why they felt this way (e.g., the identification of areas of struggle and the ability to correct errors in the future, thereby enhancing their overall writing skills). These differences may be attributed to the variations in the design of both studies in question. Conversely, the highly positive perception of WCF aligns with the views expressed by the Spanish learners that participated in Mikulski *et al*. (2019) and Plonsky and Mills (2006). It is worth noting that in this study, the reported usefulness of WCF increased by 38 % when participants took a course primarily focused on writing skills, perhaps due to the more specific and comprehensive feedback that addressed both form and content. A similar trend was observed in Plonsky and Mills (2006), which the authors attributed to the informed conversation about the importance of WCF that the instructor had with the learners as part of the treatment.

There are other significant matters to consider in the advancement of pedagogical practices in the Spanish FL classroom. First, the participants' profiles as writers (RQ1) depicted individuals that (a) had been taught different techniques to approach writing as a process, such as planning, composing, and revising, and (b) were continually preparing and revising their texts (similar to the findings in Mikulski *et al*., 2019). However, the learners' declarations regarding their perceptions (RQ2) and preferences (RQ3) for WCF revealed a literacy landscape where writing techniques were used only superficially. For example, planning strategies like outlining and brainstorming that had been taught before enrolling in the Spanish composition course were most prominently incorporated. Nevertheless, several participants mentioned learning more sophisticated planning strategies during the writing course, such as answering content questions before writing the first draft, which promoted fluency and critical thinking. As a result, the participants felt better prepared to compose their texts. Something similar was observed in the "composing" process, which is not surprising given that almost 30 % of the participants had rarely or never had to submit a corrected draft of

their compositions previously. Furthermore, it was noted that while most participants focused on form, those emphasizing content did so to continue developing their aptitudes as writers. They also highlighted that their teacher at the time of the data collection facilitated the correction process by providing concrete examples in the comments and including a reading focused on socio-cultural aspects of the Hispanic world. The reading reportedly served as a model to better understand Spanish writing conventions and enhance cultural awareness through discussions and reflections that were also incorporated in the students' essays. Being awarded with points allocated to the revision of form and content-related matters also appeared to have a positive impact. Therefore, these pedagogical practices should be considered by L2 writing instructors and gradually incorporated into lower-level curricula. This will enable a more consistent and continuous L2 literacy training at the college level, equipping learners to: 1) become more familiar with different genres, including argumentative texts, 2) recognize the value of writing as a cyclical endeavor, 3) feel motivated to communicate effectively both orally and in writing, 4) be receptive to various forms of WCF, particularly those that prioritize content as much as form, and 5) continue developing complex linguistic skills, such as writing. Additionally, these findings support Leki (1991) and Valentin-Rivera's (2023) recommendation to include a two-way dialogue on the pedagogical significance of WCF in writing (see the model used in Plonsky and Mills, 2006). Conversations should not only take place between learners and instructors but also *among* language teachers to discuss the adoption and progression of feedback practices *and* writing strategies for planning, composing, and revising essays under mediation and autonomously.

Conclusion

The results observed here further support previous contributions that have been conducted in broader FL contexts (Valentin-Rivera, 2023) and on a larger scale (Leki, 1991; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Ferris, 1995) concerning learners' undeniable expectation of WCF and overall positive perception regarding the helpfulness of teachers' comments to become more adept writers. Particularly, this study concentrates on Spanish FL contexts by delivering an updated panorama of learners' expectations, views, and preferences regarding the impact of WCF while also providing a detailed profile of intermediate learners as writers. This type of knowledge should be considered to advance students' writing practices from an early stage in their overall L2 learning process, as opposed to allocating these efforts to specialized classes that usually follow lower-sequence courses that

may take up to two years to complete. Despite their relevance, these findings need to be cautiously interpreted as some limitations are part of this study. For instance, the participant pool size is somewhat limited, and future studies should incorporate a larger number of them. Moreover, similar studies should explore additional elements that can deepen our understanding of FL learners' profile as writers, such as the effect of different types of WCF directly triangulated with pieces of writing (i.e., first drafts as compared to revised drafts) produced by the participants. Other than this, the design of future investigations should consider incorporating a quantitative element for applicability purposes.

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