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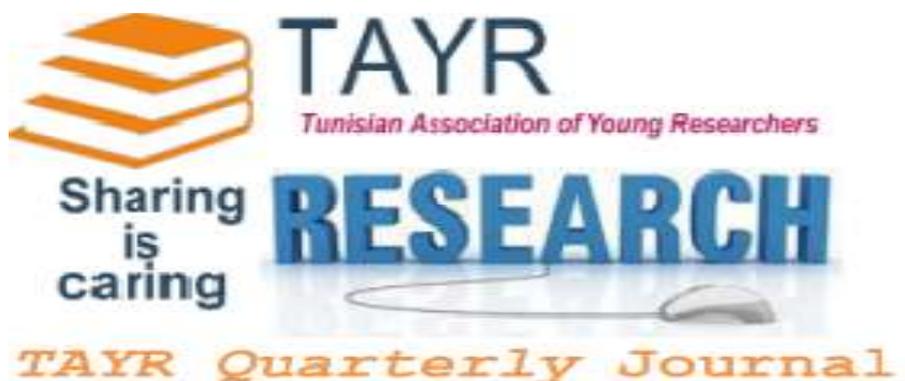
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# **A Proposed Model of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) in Relation to EFL Teachers' Professional Development (PD)**

*By Emna Maazoun*

## **Abstract**

My paper is about a suggested model in linking Written Corrective Feedback with EFL Teachers' Professional Development and Learners' Educational Outcomes. This model has been suggested to address a research gap that is about the absence of a theoretical framework that frames these pre-mentioned concepts in a unified way. In the recent few years, the concern with the educational effectiveness and its quality has received much attention. Although paper on the "quality" of professional development continues to be lacking, the ultimate measure of quality professional development is its influence on a teachers' practice which leads to improved student learning. Therefore, this paper will zoom on teachers' practice specifically as Written Corrective Feedback. Thus, the researcher links two frameworks (Desimone, 2009 and Hattie& Timperley, 2007) to craft a model that fits the current paper objectives. The paper will focus on the qualitative analysis of thirty tertiary EFL teachers' open-ended and close-ended questionnaires to gauge information about their knowledge and cognition about the first two parts of the proposed framework. The results show that these teachers are lacking basic knowledge about the practice of written corrective feedback in the foreign language classrooms. These results lead to questioning teachers' pre-service training, in-service practice and their knowledge-base to ensure instructional quality and professionalism in the Tunisian context.

## **I. Introduction**

Although there is extensive research on written corrective feedback studies and its applications theoretically and practically, surprisingly, however, there is a scarce body of systematic research in addressing the link between EFL teachers' Professional Development (PD) in cognition and practice, Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) and learning educational achievement. This shortage of research may be explained by the absence of a solid framework that succinctly and pungently approaches the intricacies between these three dimensions. Therefore, this paper comes as a reaction for this lacuna in the literature that there is no established framework that mingles (WCF) with teachers' (PD). Thus, this framework echoes the stated research gap by Lee's (2011) "there is a need to look beyond the issue of feedback per se to investigate teachers' readiness to implement change as well as the factors that might facilitate or inhibit change" (p. 10).

## **II. Literature Review**

### **1. WCF in Foreign Language writing**

#### **1.1. Uncertainties and controversies**

The first symptoms of the debate over the efficacy of written corrective feedback (WCF) in L2 writing started in the 1980s. Since Truscott (1996) concern with the practice of "grammar correction" as harmful and inefficient, the interest in the WCF research agenda ignited to pave the way to the emergence of different issues in theory and practice. Ferris (1999) strongly rejected Truscott's claim. He argues that WCF aids students to produce accurate writing. Thus, many have followed him since in highlighting the role of WCF in improving linguistic accuracy (Chandler, 2003 Russell, and Spada, 2006; Sheen, 2007 Bitchener, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008; Bruton, 2009, 2010).

In spite of the existence of these controversies, there are no conclusions about the research in supporting WCF (Ellis et al., 2008; Ferris, 2003; Guenette, 2007; Hyland and Hyland, 2006; Storch, 2010). Many scholars seem to be driven by a sense of reason in dealing with the issue of WCF. So instead of being in the arena of back-and-forth debates, they prefer to look at consistent research methods for a better WCF practice. Specifically, Ferris (2004) called for "well- designed research" (p. 49) and less debate.

#### **1.2. Focused WCF research**

Research on WCF has become more focused to investigate students' improvements in

written grammatical accuracy. Bitchener has been a leading figure in this research by conducting a line of inquiry guided by solid research principles (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener and Knoch, 2010; Bitchener et al., 2005). Bitchener et al. (2005) came with the conclusion that WCF is effective with certain error types such as the definite article and the simple present tense.

### **1.3. Towards a new agenda of WCF**

In line with the need to carry out more research on focused error categories, calls for more research on the efficacy of pedagogical practices in using WCF are increasing. These pedagogical practices include three main concerns: 1) feedback should be more extensive, 2) Feedback should be on learners' needs and 3) feedback should be contextualized with writing ecology. Bruton's (2009) criticism of Truscott and Hsu' (2008) unveils his valuable contribution to measuring WCF efficacy. Bruton calls for "future research to be situated in real contexts within a decision-making framework for L2 writing tasks" (p. 601).

### **1.4. Dynamic WCF**

Why dynamic? Because of the very nature of feedback in this instructional approach which changes activity ,and immediate needs. This methodology provides feedback on what the L2 writers need most and ensures that "writing tasks and feedback are meaningful, timely, constant, and manageable for both student and teacher" (Hartshorn et al, 2010, p. 87). This instructional approach "draws on principles of L2 acquisition to facilitate improved written linguistic accuracy" (Evans et al., 2011, p. 232).

### **1.5. The effectiveness of WCF for improving learners' linguistic accuracy**

Recently the scope of research has shifted to focus on the efficacy of WCF in helping L2 writers to become better writers by producing accurate writing (Bitchener&Knoch, 2010; Sheen, 2010). Some others look for supporting evidence of the long-term effectiveness of written CF on accuracy improvement (Bitchener, 2008, 2009; Bitchener&Knoch, 2008a, 2008b,2009a, 2009b 2010; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Sheen, 2007; Sheen, Wright, & Moldawa, 2009).In spite of the existence of mounting research evidence on the link between CF and accuracy improvement over time, research on WCF effectiveness with a different range of error categories need to be more fully explored (Truscott & Hsu, 2008).

### **1.6. The relative effectiveness of different types of WCF**

A bulk of studies has looked at the potentiality of different WCF types on helping L2 writers improve the writing accuracy. These studies are grouped into (1) direct and indirect types of feedback; (2) different types of indirect feedback; and (3) different types of direct feedback. The first group compares direct and indirect types, Semke (1984) reported no difference between the

two approaches. While Chandler (2003) came with positive findings for both types of feedback. Due to the design limitations and contexts differences, make it difficult to reach the required objectives (Bitchener, 2008; Ferris, 2003; Guenette, 2007). Also, most of these studies did not provide any information about the long-term effect on writing accuracy. Therefore, further research is needed in this area.

For the third group, Bitchener (2008) investigated the effectiveness of direct feedback combinations: (1) direct error correction with written meta-linguistic explanation and oral meta-linguistic; (2) direct error correction with a written meta-linguistic explanation; (3) direct error correction; and (4) no corrective feedback. Further, he extended the study over 10 months, with the relative effectiveness of the same four approaches Bitchener and Knoch (2010). The study shows that the three treatment groups outperformed the control group. Also, this study shows the effectiveness of different types of CF on accuracy retention over time since it is a longitudinal study. Besides, Sheen's (2007) study of the relative effectiveness of direct error correction and written metalinguistic explanation showed no difference between the two feedback options in the immediate post-test, but in the delayed post-test found an improvement in accuracy gains in using written meta-linguistic explanation after 2 months. Therefore, time may have a critical impact on the improvement of written accuracy.

Considering these studies is pedagogically value-laden because they inform future research. For example, only studies that compared different types of Dynamic WCF have investigated its impact on other pieces of writing over time. Also, the provision of a metalinguistic explanation may engender more accuracy compared to other direct CF types. Further research that avoids the shortcomings of the earlier comparison between direct versus indirect CF is highly recommended (Truscott,2010).

## **2. Educational Effectiveness Research (EER)**

Educational Effectiveness Research (EER) addresses the questions on what works in education and why. Effectiveness research proves that the quality of teaching is the most important factor at the classroom level (Brophy & Good, 1986; Fraser, Walberg, Welch, & Hattie, 1987). Although research on the "quality" of professional development continues to be lacking. The ultimate measure of quality professional development is its influence on a teachers' practice which leads to improved student learning (Loucks Horsley & Matsumoto, 1999).Furthermore, researchers in the arena of effectiveness developed a range of theoretical paradigms to explain teaching factors that affect learning outcomes. However, the existing models of educational effectiveness do not contribute significantly to the improvement of teaching practice (Scheerens, Glas, &Thomas,

2003). This shortage of practicality paves the way to the emersion of a dynamic model of educational effectiveness, which attempts to establish links between two important poles. The first is effectiveness research and the second is the improvement of policy and practice (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008).

## **2.1 Research on Teachers effectiveness Research**

The main findings of teacher effectiveness research (Brophy & Good, 1986 and Fraser, Walberg, Welch, & Hattie, 1987) highlight factors that interfere with teachers' instructional role and students outcomes and achievement (Creemers, 1994). During the last two decades, Effectiveness studies show the importance of investigating teachers' role in creating an effective learning environment in his classroom through focusing on the following elements: teacher-student interaction, student-student interaction, students' treatment by the teacher, competition between students, and classroom disorder (Creemers & Kyriakides, 2008; Kyriakides & Christoforou, 2011).

## **2.2 Research on FL Teachers' cognition**

By the 1970s, the field of teacher cognition considered teachers as merely 'decision-makers' (Freeman & Johnson, 1998). The beginning of the 1980s marks the shift toward teachers' cognition. Teachers are not only 'decision-makers' but they are also 'sense-makers' who integrate the foreign classroom pedagogical concerns into "social, psychological, physical, political, and metaphysical actions embedded in the word and affected by it" (Clark, 1986, p. 12). Hence, the construct of teacher cognition encapsulates these different manifestations into "what teachers think, know, believe, and do" (Borg, 2003, p. 81). Johnson (2009), states that research into teachers' cognition explores the conceptions underlining pedagogical decision making, 'teacher education' (e.g., Baleghizadeh & Rezaei, 2010; Borg, 2006, 2011), teachers' cognition underlying 'classroom practice' (e.g. Nunan, 1992), 'teacher cognition in teaching grammar' (e.g., Underwood, 2012), and 'teacher cognition on literacy instruction' as well as theoretical beliefs guiding teachers' classroom practices (e.g., Johnson, 1992).

## **2.3 Teacher cognition of giving feedback: An under-explored area**

Responding to learners' output has long been regarded as "one of the most important and time-consuming aspects of teaching writing" (Silva & Brice, 2004, p. 78). However, teachers' response has been researched with very limited studies (Silva & Brice, 2004). Therefore investigating teachers' beliefs and practices on written feedback are the most controversial area in writing instruction. Findings related to teachers' practice of giving feedback are contradictory.

There are three issues related to this matter 1) whether error correction should be the focus of feedback; 2) the appropriate forms of written feedback; 3) whether the feedback is effective and what effects it has. The research at hand will focus on the third concern since it highlights the mediating role of WCF on teachers and students.

### **3. The suggested theoretical framework**

#### **3.1. The description of the suggested framework**

This paper is the first of its kind in approaching Corrective Feedback as a mediating tool between teachers' professional development which is defined as improving teachers' skills and competencies in relation to learners' educational outcomes (Tan, 2014) and learners' outcomes which is about learners' educational gains and improvements in the written performance. It is so because throughout the literature it seems that there is no 'one size fits all' framework that links the above-mentioned concepts. Just a few studies have shown direct and convincing evidence of teacher professional development impacting and improving students' learning (Hassel, 1999). This piece of research will provide a piece of evidence to reject the widespread claims about the limited number of research that finds the link between TPD and learners' improvement. For the sake of practicality, the proposed framework will zero on the role of WCF as a mediator in bridging the gulf between TPD and learners' educational gains.

There are many considerations to take into account before embarking on the current research design. First, to find a framework that encapsulates the three concepts in a logical way that shows the link between them. Second, to investigate the impact of written corrective feedback on both teachers' cognition and practice and learners' educational outcomes. As it was stated above, the fact of being aware of these research requirements makes the researcher blend two frameworks that fit the research questions and aims through making some rectifications so that both frameworks become in harmony.

#### **3.2. The components of the suggested Framework**

##### **3.2.1. Desimone (2009) conceptual Framework for effective Teachers' Professional Development**

In line with Guskey's (2000) and Little's (1993) approaches of professional Development among teachers, Desimone (2009:183) goes a step further through "describing trends, associations, or impacts of professional learning on knowledge, instruction, and student achievement". Desimone's (2009) conceptual framework is made up of two major steps: 1) Five Critical features and 2) operational theory which contains 1) increased teachers' knowledge and skills, change in attitudes and beliefs, 2) change in instruction and 3) Improved student learning.

The first part, Core features of professional development includes five components:

1)content focus: activities related to subject matter content and how learning occurs within this content,2) active learning: opportunities for teachers to observe and actively analyze students outcomes, 3)coherence: goals, curriculum, teachers' knowledge and beliefs, and state reform and policy,4) duration: Professional development activities in service contexts and 5) collective participation: group of teachers with the same grade who participate in professional development activities to build interactive learning. A growing body of empirical research suggests that effective professional development programs share a core set of features (e.g., Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2010; Penuel, Gallagher, & Moorthy, 2011).

However, some disappointing results of several large- scale results have demonstrated that it is not clear how to translate the five general features into effective practice. This criticism is in itself a call for more research in this area. Looking at the two sides of the coin will shape our understanding of the incorporation of these principles into an effective Professional Development Framework ((Desimone, et al 2013 and Demimonde & Stuckey, 2014).

The second part, the operational theory includes three parts: a) Increased teacher knowledge and skills change in attitude and beliefs, b) change in instruction and, c) Improved student learning. I am going to incorporate all these elements into my framework.

### **3.2.2. Hattie and Kimberly's (2007) framework on the Power of Feedback**

This framework focuses on WCF effectiveness. It is made up of four main phases which are: 1) Purpose: to reduce the existing gap between current understanding and the desired performance.2) Solutions to reduce this discrepancy by focusing on teachers' and learners' considerations.3) Conditions of effective feedback that addresses these three questions: where am I going?(Feed-Up) / How am I going?( Feed-Back)/ and where to next (Feed- Forward)? And 4) How to address these questions?

### **3.3. Operationalization of the suggested framework**

**Core features of Professional Development:** WCF as Professional Development: This phase in the model illustrates the prerequisites that EFL teachers should acquire to deal with the complexities of the WCF process. To put it simply, the five core features should be more focused on the issues of Written Corrective Feedback rather than broad educational issues. This Stage is basic in my framework since it frames teachers' orientations and goals.

**Feed- up stage:** Increased teacher Knowledge and skills, change in attitude and beliefs (teachers' cognition about Written Corrective Feedback): This phase focuses on EFL teachers' cognition in approaching issues of Written Corrective Feedback. Teachers' knowledge is of great impact on Education. This phase is highly important because it paves the way to think about EFL teachers'

practice (Where am I going?)

**Feed-back stage:** Change in instruction: This stage corresponds to EFL teachers' practice of Written Corrective Feedback which is informed by theories and teachers are more aware of their goals and their actual practice (How am I going?). EFL teachers' evaluate their actual performance and they shape a new hypothesis which marks learning. This stage is of paramount importance since it helps teachers criticize the actual performance and adjust new conceptions into their practice. This generates a change in the instruction which will inform future practice.

**Feed-Forward stage:** Improved Students' Learning and Deep Professional Development. This stage is made up of two components: 1) Improved Students' Learning: understanding the actual hardships to provide an informed solution for better future improvement and 2) Deep Professional Development: this stage of Professional Development marks a certain degree of maturity among EFL teachers in thinking and practice and even praxis (applying critical thinking in dealing with Written Corrective Feedback instruction). Thus, EFL teachers' practice of WCF impacts students' learning outcomes and teachers' professional development. (Where to next?)

**Back-ward quality professional development:** This stage is a reflective inquiry that is made both by the EFL practitioners and researchers. After acquiring certain degrees of maturity; i.e being aware of the three questions 1) Where am I going, 2) How am I going? 3) Where to next? Teachers should ask the following questions in this Back-ward stage: 1) From where did I come? 2) How Did I move? And 3) Why did I think and behave in this certain way?

This Back-ward movement is a Professional Development reflection on the whole framework stages. The teacher becomes more involved to achieve self-efficacy and agency. Besides, EFL teachers become empowered to dig into the past learning and teaching experiences to think critically and to implement critical thinking to WCF. *It is worth noting that this stage is added by the researcher to ensure teachers' self- reflection and evaluation.*

### III. Methodology

The current paper suggested a theoretical framework. Regarding some methodological constraint, we could not cover all the framework items in our methodology. Hence, the focus will be just on the first two framework components which deal with the theoretical side of the issue. Therefore, the study will be qualitative. The methodology part provides a description of the research ethics considered, methods adopted, sample selected, Instruments utilized and data collection and analysis procedures followed.

#### 1. Research Ethics

Before conducting any type of research, it is a sine qua non to consider some research ethics.

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) define research ethics when the research participants should not be coerced into administering research instruments and they have the total right to withdraw from the research at any stage. Ensuring their confidentiality by giving the researcher informed consent is basic in ethical research considerations.

## **2. Participants**

A total of 30 EFL teachers participated in this study. They are tertiary teachers and pertain to four universities in Tunisia. These teachers teach English as a foreign language to ESP students. The population is divided into 12 males and 18 females. All of them have teaching experience of at least 10 years. These teachers will answer both types of questionnaires.

## **3. Methods**

This research is based on presenting a newly framed instructional framework. For some methodological reasons, I will focus solely on the first two framework stages which deal with the theoretical and conceptual dimensions. Hence, this research is qualitative since it will investigate EFL teachers' conceptual understanding of the process of Written Corrective Feedback in the classrooms. Maxwell (2013) says that qualitative research focuses on the meaning and how the participants' understanding of the world influences the views and the meanings constructed by them. Patton (1999) highlighted the importance of triangulation in multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to develop a comprehensive understanding of phenomena. Therefore, to ensure the objectivity and validity of data triangulation was adopted (Maxwell, 2013) through the use of open-ended and close-ended questionnaires for EFL teachers.

## **4. Instruments**

The open-ended questionnaire was designed to cover the five components of the core features of professional development (Desimone,2009). After considering some relevant research and studies, I came up with the following open-ended questionnaire that contains fifteen items that correspond to the five core features.

- 1- Content focus: from item 1 to item 3
- 2- Active learning: from item 4 to item 7
- 3- Coherence from: item 8 to item 11
- 4- Duration: from item 12 to item 13
- 5- Collective participation: from item 14 to item 15

The close-ended questionnaire deals with the feed-up stage that focuses on teachers' cognition. The beliefs questionnaire is made up of 11 questions about in-service teachers' attitudes about written corrective feedback. These questions focus on teachers' cognition about the practice of written corrective

feedback.

## **5. Data Collection and Data Analysis**

The collection of data took place during the first semester of the academic year 2019/2020 in the Tunisian context and more specifically in Sfax. After piloting the questionnaires, the researcher starts data collection. Participants took about 30 minutes to administer both questionnaires. It is worth noting that all participants manage to answer all items in both questionnaires.

### **5.1 Analyzing the open-ended questionnaire.**

The analysis of this questionnaire will be in relation to the five core components.

#### *The analysis of component1: Content focus*

To address this component, the researcher focused on teachers' writing test design guidelines, the choice of writing tests topics or items and finally the marking of students' written corrective feedback. In analyzing teachers' questionnaires, the participants' responses are similar in the sense that they do not have clear-cut guidelines either in designing the writing test or in the choice of the test topic or items and written corrective feedback criteria. Thus, the vagueness of the participants' answers reflects the absence of clarity in their conceptions and practical perceptions as EFL teachers.

#### *The analysis of component2: Active learning*

In addressing the active learning component, the researcher sheds light on the link between testing and error correction in class through the explanation of serious writing errors, the provision of written corrective feedback, marking and peer-assessment. The participants show little concern with the rubrics of serious writing errors and written corrective feedback provision. However, they express higher concern with marking and peer- assessment.

#### *The analysis of component3: Coherence*

In dealing with coherence the researcher relied on four dimensions. 1) teachers' training course, 2) the link between corrective feedback and students' Improvements, 3) linking teaching experience with corrective feedback types impact on learners' improvements and 4) the criteria choice in correction to students' levels. The answer of the participants on these four questionnaire items is not satisfactory and it shows an obvious lack of knowledge during pre-service and in-service stages.

#### *The analysis of component4: Duration*

In approaching the fourth dimension two questions in the questionnaire focus on two aspects. First, the measurement of students' improvement through the use of students' errors in new tests. Second, communication with other peers about some instructional results. The participants do not give importance to students' errors in designing new tests. However, they communicate with other colleagues

about instructional results.

#### *The analysis of component5: Collective participation*

The fifth component focuses on the last two questionnaire items which have to do with collaborative participation of teachers in pedagogical meetings or institutional mentoring to improve the practice of written corrective feedback. The participants show that they lack collective participation.

#### **5.2 Analyzing the close-ended questionnaire:**

The close-ended questionnaire is made up of 11 items and participants were asked to answer by yes or no. The following figure will illustrate the variance in participants' answers from one item to another. The questionnaire items were stratified from the highest percentage to the lowest percentage in both yes and no answers as follows. First, in yes answers the items' order is: 9- 11- 7 – 3- 5- 6- 1- 10-2- 4- 8. Second in NO answers the items' order is : 8- 2-4- 10- 1- 5- 6- 3- 7- 11- 9.

These percentages show the differences between items in teachers' responses to the questionnaire. These differences reflect the participants' belief system and cognitive representation of the practice of written corrective feedback in the foreign language classroom. The open-ended questionnaire in this study is more than answering yes or no. It is a belief questionnaire that reflects the participants' orientations in practicing the written corrective feedback.

## **IV. Discussion**

The analysis of both questionnaires has led to the following discussion items.

### **1. EFL Teachers' cognition about written corrective feedback**

The results of the questionnaires show that there is a concern with achieving effectiveness among the participants. This effectiveness is related to different variables. First, the targeted linguistic category in corrective feedback should be considered to achieve educational effectiveness. Based on these findings, Bitchener has carried on some studies on focused WCF to improve writing accuracy (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener and Knoch, 2008a, 2008b, 2009a, 2009b, 2010). These findings have echoes in other pieces of research such as Sheen (2007), Sheen et al. (2009) and Ellis et al. (2008). In this study, the participants show their concern about different error types in the corrective feedback. This finding goes hand in hand with Ellis et al. (2008) claim, "we need more studies looking at different grammatical features" (p. 368).

Second, the focus on the type of corrective feedback method may lead to effectiveness. The participants express their engagement with the students in the corrective feedback process. This is in line with the Dynamic WCF. Several studies have shown that Dynamic WCF has a positive

impact on the improvement of linguistic accuracy in writing (Evans et al., 2010a; Evans, Hartshorn, & Strong-Krause, 2011; Hartshorn et al., 2010; Lee, 2009). The dynamic model is based on the role of teachers as an instructor with a focus on his behavior, cognition, and practice (Brophy & Good, 1986; Rosenshine, 1983). Therefore, our study highlights the effect of teachers' opinions about reconsidering students' errors in new versions of tests to ensure accuracy. This accuracy has been tackled differently by scholars. For example (Ferris, 1999, 2006) finds out that WCF is efficient when writers were asked to revise the written output. Along with teachers' opinions, the issue of error seriousness judgment should be considered in approaching learners' errors evaluation and assessment (Zayani, 2017, 2018).

The effectiveness of written corrective feedback has been criticized by Truscott (2007) in his meta-analysis which suggested that the question "How effective is correction?" should be replaced by "How harmful is the correction?" (p. 271). Swaying between effectiveness and ineffectiveness in written corrective feedback research creates a fertile arena of debate.

## **2. Linking Professional development with EFL teachers' WCF beliefs and practices**

This paper focuses on teachers' cognition in relation to practice. Specifically, it encompasses different aspects related to teachers' practice which includes beliefs, identity, epistemologies, and pedagogy (Hewson, 2007). Also, Shinde and Karekatti (2012:70) state that "individual teachers have the power to create or break trends. They shape the curriculum according to their own beliefs, teach their values, through the implicit curriculum, and operate their classroom by their particular definitions of teaching and learning". The current paper comes as a reaction to Borg' (2003, 2006) calls to theoreticians to rejuvenate the preconception about the field of teachers' cognition in theory and practice.

The questionnaires findings reveal an obvious lack of pre-service and in-service professional development training. This is due to the lack of a well-established teachers' evaluation program in the Tunisian tertiary context. This lack has a negative effect on teachers' belief and cognition. Wilson and Berne (1999), for example, argue that there is a notable lack of empirical evidence about what teachers learn or do not learn in professional development, a position supported by numerous researchers (Dede, Ketelhut, Whitehouse, Breit & McCloskey, 2009; Guskey, 2000.; Hill, Beisiegel & Jacob, 2013; Ingvarson et al., 2005, Zehetmeier, (2008.) who all call for the development of more sophisticated methods of evaluating professional development programs that support practitioners and researchers to understand teacher learning and professional development (e.g., Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Wenger, 1998).

### **3. EFL Teachers' professional development in relation to written corrective feedback and learners' accuracy**

The analyses of the questionnaires reveal that the participants are lacking certain threshold knowledge about the way they should provide written corrective feedback as it is recommended by (Evans et al, 2010b).

EFL teachers' professional development takes different forms. First, they show their concern with the students' outcomes). This is in line with (Robinson et al., 2008 and Guskey& Sparks, 2004). Second, the participants are motivated to engage in professional development. This finding correlates with some related studies such as (Tan, Lim, & Teng, 2012 and Gorozidis& Papaioannou, 2013). Third, the participants are not satisfied with the instructional practice and they are lacking professional development training and mentoring. This point has been tackled by (Nir& Bogler, 2008).

Approaching teachers' professional development in relation to student achievement is highlighted in both questionnaires. Investigating teachers' beliefs about this area is "The next important issue for any teacher professional learning program to address is the effect of the professional development program on students' learning." (Tan et al, 2015:1585). The participants show a positive understanding about the impact of teachers' professional knowledge on students' achievements (Supovitz& Turner, 2000; Garet et al., 2001; Huffman et al., 2003; Smith & Gillespie, 2007; Yoon et al., 2007, Villegas-Reimers, 2003; DarlingHammond,2000).

The current paper approaches the notion of professional development among EFL teachers' understanding of written corrective feedback provision. It paves the way to think critically about a more effective professional development to improve students' achievement. This idea is in line with some existing literature such as (Desimone, 2009; Wallace, 2009; Yoon et al., 2007).

Teachers are considered the most important factor in student achievement (Carey, 2004) therefore, effective professional development should result in increased student achievement (Guskey, 1988, 2002; Loucks-Horsley & Matsumoto, 1999). Although much research investigates the impact of professional development on teacher change, less research exists that explicitly links professional development on student outcomes (Desimone, 2009).

### **4. The contribution of the proposed framework to the field of educational research**

The proposed framework is made up of four main steps. The discussion of the contribution of this framework in the field of research will be organized according to these four steps.

To start with, the feed-up step focuses on teachers' knowledge and skills. Richards (2009) highlights the importance of studying knowledge and skill base of language teachers through re-examining and reconsidering the acquired pre-requisites to increase the quality of the acquired

qualifications. Besides, this concern with skills and knowledge is in line with Eraut's (1994) "metaprocessing" concept which defines control knowledge as "evaluation of what one is doing and thinking, the continuing redefinition of priorities and the critical adjustment of cognitive frameworks and assumptions" (p. 115). The same point is raised by Troudi (2005, p. 5) when he called for reconceptualizing the understanding of the so-called teachers' core knowledge "The debate is not about what a language teacher should know but rather about what is considered core knowledge". Thus, the concern with teachers' knowledge-base and skills is echoed in the research area of teachers' competence that enables EFL teachers to provide effective corrective feedback. Questioning this competence paves the way to question EFL pre-service training programs which should be more focused and competency-oriented to foster teachers' clear understanding of instruction and more specifically WCF provision. (McEvoy et al. 2005).

Second, the feed-back stage is about the change in instruction. In other words, this stage in the suggested framework addresses not only EFL teachers' practice of the WCF but also their critical reflections on their practice which will lead to instructional change. First, EFL teachers' provision of the WCF is a sophisticated task. One of the most challenging questions in this concern is which error to correct? (Hendrickson, 1978, Zayani, 2018). Responding to students' errors properly requires a great amount of knowledge and know-how pedagogical skills and strategies are framed around practical priorities. The need for more focused research in teachers' provision of WCF is becoming more famous recently to achieve more effectiveness in teachers' practice. Additionally, another question that may threaten EFL teachers' practice is How to correct these errors? Thus, choosing the adequate techniques and strategies for WCF is critical and depends on many variables. Apart from the nature of the errors, there are contextual, socio-cultural, economic, institutional, political, and pedagogical variables (Kumaravadivelu, 1994; Kagan, 1992). EFL teachers should be critical in the practice of WCF through questioning assumptions to be active agents. The proposed framework re-defines EFL teachers' agency in terms of holding more awareness of the surrounding challenges in back and forth moves to evaluate their practices.

Third, feed-forward stage is made up of two components. The first component deals with students' learning and improvements. There are differences in approaching learners' improvements in learning, but in the context of WCF research it has been widely associated with accuracy. In other words, learners' correctness in writing becomes a criterion of improvement. In this respect, researchers differ in measuring learners' improvements. Truscott and Hsu (2008) highlight the importance of the revision process, while others focus on improvements on new pieces of writing (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009, Hartshorn et al., 2010). Other researchers have focused on measuring learners' improvements according

to the proficiency levels. In this proposed framework, students' improvement has a dual function, because it is related to learners' educational gains in terms of accuracy and it informs EFL teachers' professionalism. Therefore, the second component in this stage is deep professional development. This stage is governed by teachers' self reflection on their previous actions in instruction. This approach is sustained by Barlett (1990:204) when he defined reflection as sine-qua non to the professional development of language teachers. It is considered as a prerequisite for improved effectiveness as well as continuous teacher learning that leads to deep professional development as Wallace (2009) put it. The feed-forward step is a bridge between the present and the future in EFL teachers' practice and reflections in actions and on actions (Peery, 2004) about what works and what to do in the future to overcome pre-existing inconsistencies.

Finally, the fourth step is about the Back-ward quality professional development: This stage is a reflective inquiry. This step is added to Hattie and Timperly's (2007) three above mentioned steps. One of the contributions of this proposed framework is the back-ward moves that instructors make to deeply and critically reflect on the previous stages. Critical reflection is needed in WCF research to establish a prominent methodology that is able to challenge and overcome the methodological flaws which are cited in literature such as "design, execution, and analysis" (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009: 204). Additionally, seeking for informed agency in the foreign language classroom is a sign of maturity and improvement in the path of professional development. Agency is linked to professional responsibility which is the ability to reflect and evaluate one's actions in the light of the previous experience (Haste, 2001). Ensuring agency is ensured by reconsidering EFL teachers' roles and re-tracing the schematic boundaries of the WCF provision. Additionally, re-designing approaches to teacher education may have the potential of minimizing the existing gap between theory and practice (Korthagen, 2010:99).

EFL teachers should be voiced in the process of learning and teaching. Boosting the critical reflection will empower them to overcome the hegemony of the imposed Educational policies. Therefore, the call for change and transforming the existing WCF practices is the backbone of the current educational framework.

## **V. Conclusions and suggestions for research**

This paper proposed a theoretical model of written corrective feedback about EFL teachers' professional development and zoomed just on the first two framework components which deal with the teachers' cognitive approaches. There is a call for more research to test the validity and feasibility of this proposed framework in the Tunisian context and the Arab world as an attempt to find out an answer to the dilemma addressed by Hedgcock (2002) in teacher education programs which, calls for a shift to a teacher education model that focuses on reflective practice. Through looking beyond the issue of

feedback by approaching it as a mediator, we will construct a new role to the written corrective feedback which has not been investigated thoroughly yet in literature. Therefore, this framework will inform researchers since it echoes some claims and tries to fill in some existing gaps in the literature. It will guide research not only in the field of WCF studies but also it will inform syllabus and curriculum designers in their pedagogical orientations (Penuel et al, 2007).

There is a need for more methodological investigations by adopting this proposed framework in action research studies to highlight the link between TPD, WCF, and learners' educational outcomes. This paper proposes a framework that will contribute to the making of an established theory of WCF in theory and practice. It will inform policymakers about the importance of "recognizing and rewarding teachers' contributions" (Troudi, 2009:60) by empowering EFL teachers' cognition and actions to enhance their professional development and learners' educational outcomes. What I would like to suggest is that for research on WCF to have more pedagogical relevance for language teachers through sustaining ecological validity in research. Highlighting the role of context and real classroom conditions should be part and parcel of the methodological orientations (Duff, 2006). Additionally, focusing on EFL teachers' schemata scope about WCF provision needs to be further investigated. Understanding these schemata will impact not only researchers but also mentors (Schmidt 1975, 1977). Questioning the quality of this training is of high importance because it contributes to EFL teachers' professional development. Therefore, future research should focus on the content and the quality of the pre-service EFL teachers' programs which should integrate critical elements of practice. Furthermore, more research is needed in evaluating EFL teachers' WCF practices as a measure of professional maturity. It is worth noting that research addressing the depth of EFL teachers' professional development is still lacking theoretical and practical evidence. The proposed framework will pave the way to reconsider the "Goldilocks principle" (Kagan, 1990) in relation to WCF, learners' accuracy and professional development.

The need for setting a new agenda in the WCF research area is gaining more importance among practitioners, mentors, researchers, curriculum designers and policy makers. This need has to be reflected in actions through changing the challenges and problems into opportunities to achieve educational effectiveness or as it is labeled by (Peery, 2004, p.7) as "probletunities". However, this framework begs practitioners and researchers to take the initiative to test its feasibility and to measure its reliability to bridge the gap between theory, practice, and praxis.

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**Appendix**

**Appendix 1: The open-ended questionnaire (1)**

Thank you for agreeing to complete these Questionnaires. We ask you to feel free to express what you think and to answer All the questions. Thank you for your time.

Full name:

Gender:

Teaching experience:

1- Do you have specific guidelines or specifications that you and your colleagues follow to design your writing tests?

.....  
.....

2- How do you decide on the number of items/ topics to include in your writing tests?

.....  
.....

3- What are the main criteria you take into consideration when marking your students' written corrective feedback?

.....  
.....

4- Do you correct each test in class and explain some of the writing problems that you judge seriously?

.....  
.....

5- Do you provide your students with feedback on their performances in each test? If yes, how?

.....  
.....

6- Do you give the tests back to your students after marking them?

.....  
.....

7- Do you encourage your students to be involved in peer-assessment?

.....  
.....

8-As an EFL teacher, have you ever had a training course in corrective feedback?

.....  
.....

9- Do you think that corrective feedback may lead to improvements among students, if yes how?

.....  
.....

10-According to your teaching experience, which type of corrective feedback may lead to better educational gains?

.....  
.....

11-What criteria do you use to ensure that the assessment checklist that you adopt in your written corrective feedback is appropriate to the level of the students you teach in terms of length and difficulty?

.....  
.....

12-After providing your written corrective feedback, do you utilize your students' errors in designing new tests to major their improvements?

.....  
.....

13- Do you communicate your instructional results to other teachers or researchers?

.....  
 .....  
 14-Do you have workshops or organized meetings to negotiate some hardships and faced challenges in the way you administer written corrective feedback? If yes, how many and when?  
 .....

.....  
 .....  
 15-Do you receive any kind of mentorship for a better institutional practice?  
 .....

**Appendix 2: The close-ended questionnaire (2)**

Questions	YES	NO
1)Are you satisfied with the quality of written corrective feedback that you provide to your students?		
2) During the pre-service stage did you get any training sessions about the written corrective feedback?		
3) In dealing with your students assignments do you highlight on all errors that you encounter ?		
4) Do you have a priority scale in correcting your students' errors?		
5) Should teachers reformulate students' errors by giving the correct form?		
6) Should teachers give metalinguistic feedback,i.e use of grammatical terms such as past, present, future, verb,,,in their corrective feedback ?		
7)Should teachers correct their students errors immediately after the error has been made ?		
8) Do you use different techniques in providing your written corrective feedback ?		
9) Do you think that a good practice of Written corrective feedback may lead to better educational gains within learners ?		
10)As in- service teachers do you receive any professional development training in your institutions ?		
11) Are you ready to improve your Written corrective feedback practice ?		