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## Managing Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback: Perceptions of Experienced Teachers

Rachel A. Messenger  
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Managing Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback:

Perceptions of Experienced Teachers

Rachel A. Messenger

A thesis submitted to the faculty of  
Brigham Young University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

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## ABSTRACT

### Managing Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback: Perceptions of Experienced Teachers

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Error correction for English language learner's (ELL) writing has long been debated in the field of teaching English to learners of other languages (TESOL). Some researchers say that written corrective feedback (WCF) is beneficial, while others contest. This study takes a look at the manageability of the innovative strategy Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback (DWCF) and asks what factors influence the manageability of the strategy (including how long marking sessions take on average) and what suggestions experienced teachers of DWCF have. The strategy has shown to be highly effective in previous studies, but its manageability has recently been in question. A qualitative analysis of the manageability of DWCF was done via interviews of experienced teachers that have used DWCF and the author's experience and reflections using the strategy. The results indicate that this strategy can be manageable with some possible adaptations and while avoiding some common pitfalls.

*Keywords:* manageability, writing feedback, error correction

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During my graduate school journey, it has become very clear to me that those who are most impactful and generous with their time tend to be those who are the busiest and seem to have the least to spare. I have seen this time and time again with the people who were most influential in helping me enter graduate school and work on my thesis. I have a great amount of admiration and respect for my leaders and peers that took the time to help me on my journey. Their examples have inspired me to devote more time and service to others, no matter how “busy” I think I am. I am amazed at all the things my chair was juggling during my stay in the program, and he still took the time to meet with me every week. Thank you, Dr. Evans.

Someone who was extremely influential in helping me choose my thesis topic was Brooke Elizabeth Eddington. As soon as I entered the program, I knew I wanted Brooke as a mentor. She paved a path for me in a lot of ways and always made herself available to help me in any way she could. I was so blessed to have her as a mentor and example.

While writing my thesis, I needed a lot of encouragement and input from my peers. A huge thank you to Chirstin Stephens, Candice Snow, and Ruby Li for taking the time to review my early drafts and help me shape my thesis into a more polished version of the very rough copies I handed them. They were so helpful with feedback and pushed me to keep going.

Finally, I would not have even gone for my master’s degree and pushed myself to reach higher goals if it wasn’t for the encouragement, support, and confidence from my husband, Raul Gonzalez. Without Raul and my daughter, Izabel, as my fans on the sideline, I don’t think I could have gotten back up after falling down so many times. I made it to the finish line with them as my inspiration. This manuscript and my diploma are dedicated to them.

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## PREFACE

In accordance with TESOL MA program guidelines, this thesis was prepared as a manuscript to be submitted to the *System* journal. *System* was selected because it has published articles regarding Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback in the past. This study will add to the research which readers of the journal may have read previously about the strategy discussed and are more likely to have interest in the results. Even if the readers of *System* didn't read the previous articles about DWCF, the audience of the journal is researchers and practitioners in the fields of educational technology, applied linguistics, and language teaching and learning, so they are highly likely to have an interest in the strategy discussed.

Manuscripts that are submitted to the target journal should (1) follow the referencing style used by the American Psychological Association and (2) should not exceed 7000 words (not including references, appendices, etc.) This manuscript was prepared in accordance with both of these requirements. The final draft of the manuscript has 6894 words.

## Introduction

For more than two decades, scholars have inquired whether or not giving students written corrective feedback (WCF) improves the accuracy of their writing (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Chandler, 2003; Connors & Lunsford, 1993; Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, & Wolfersberger, 2010; Ferris & Robert, 2001; Hartshorn, 2008; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Kepner, 1991; Semke, 1984; Truscott, 1996; Van Beuningen, 2008; Zamel, 1985). Does returning a student's work covered in red ink really help the student improve? Does it discourage them? In the field of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), these are especially important questions since many English language learners (ELL)<sup>1</sup> have difficulty writing accurately and have a great need for teacher feedback (Ferris, 2007).

Hartshorn, Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-Krause, and Anderson (2010) challenged negative views about using grammar correction on adult ELLs' writing with their research utilizing an innovative instructional strategy. This strategy is referred to as dynamic written corrective feedback (DWCF) and is based on the principles that feedback should be manageable, meaningful, timely, and constant (Evans et al., 2010; Hartshorn, 2008). The research by Hartshorn et al. (2010) on DWCF provided evidence that feedback can significantly improve learners' linguistic accuracy. Subsequent studies on this strategy have also supported the efficacy of DWCF as they have all resulted in significant improvement for ELL writing accuracy (Evans, Hartshorn, & Strong-Krause, 2011; Hartshorn & Evans, 2012; Hartshorn & Evans, 2015; Kurzer & Eckstein, 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> While the term ELL is commonly used for K-12 learners, in this context it is used more broadly to include adult learners.

Due to the positive results of DWCF research, a linguistic accuracy class centered on this strategy has been implemented at an intensive English program (IEP). However, manageability, which is central to the effectiveness of this instructional strategy, has become an issue for many teachers (Eddington, 2014; Shelley, 2014). Various studies have attempted to alleviate this issue by lowering the number of new drafts to be corrected per week or giving teachers a handbook with explicit directions and practice for teaching DWCF, which has helped some teachers achieve manageability (Eddington, 2014; Kurzer & Eckstein, 2014; Shelley, 2014). However, the problem of manageability still remains for many of the teachers at the IEP in this study.

It is unknown whether the source of this problem lies with the original methodology, the characteristics of the teachers, or the varied approaches applied to the original framework. The purpose of this study is to inquire of teachers who use DWCF about their perceptions of manageability and isolate elements that may be contributing to decreased manageability. With the information gathered from (a) a personal reflection log as the researcher taught the class and (b) interviews with teachers who have taught using DWCF, an in-depth analysis of the manageability of DWCF will be formulated and common pitfalls will be identified that teachers can avoid in the future. Overall, this study seeks to explore the concept of manageability as it pertains to teachers' perceptions of DWCF manageability.

## **Literature Review**

### **The History and Efficacy of DWCF**

In efforts to help ELLs improve their writing accuracy, different approaches of WCF have been experimented with and researched. While Truscott (1996) made the bold conclusion that grammar correction should be abandoned altogether, other researchers have responded in defense of WCF with grammar correction. For example, studies by Chandler (2003), Van

Beuningen (2008), and Bitchener and Knoch (2010) concluded that there are benefits of form-focused feedback. Additionally, Ferris and Roberts (2001) found that students “want and expect feedback on their written errors from their teachers” (p. 161).

A significant issue with WCF has been to find a good balance to make the process meaningful and manageable for both students and teachers. Many researchers have concluded that the implementation of written feedback is more beneficial than no feedback (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Robert, 2001; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Van Beuningen, 2008), but finding solutions to questions such as how long the writing samples should be, how many errors should be focused on, and how quickly students should receive feedback remains a struggle for many teachers (Evans et al., 2010; Hartshorn, 2008). In response to these concerns, researchers have investigated the effect of DWCF and found that error correction can be effective with statistical significance when it is manageable, meaningful, timely, and constant (Eddington, 2014; Evans et al., 2011; Hartshorn & Evans, 2012; Hartshorn & Evans, 2015; Kurzer & Eckstein, 2014).

Evidence of the efficacy of DWCF has been expanding over the past decade (Eddington, 2014; Evans et al., 2011; Hartshorn, 2008; Kurzer & Eckstein, 2014). The strategy has demonstrated that it is effective in numerous ELL contexts as studies show that participants of DWCF continue to have significant improvement in their writing accuracy when compared to control groups (Evans et al., 2011; Hartshorn, 2008; Hartshorn et al., 2010; Hartshorn & Evans, 2012; Hartshorn & Evans, 2015). For example, DWCF was used in treatment groups for two different studies for IEP writing classes where the control groups were traditional writing classes (Hartshorn, 2008; Hartshorn et al., 2012). In both studies, the writing accuracy of the treatment groups significantly improve. However, in these studies, the writing content and rhetoric did not

improve in the 15-week period between the pre-and post- tests. In 2015, Hartshorn & Evans did a similar study over a 30-week period and arrived at similar results: linguistic accuracy significantly improved for the treatment group, but no other improvements in writing content or rhetoric were observed. Another study used DWCF with a treatment group in comparison with a control group in a university-matriculated ESL class (Evans et al., 2011). Again, the treatment group resulted in significant improvement with linguistic accuracy for students. Therefore, the efficacy of DWCF is not in question for some instructors as much as the manageability, as demonstrated by Eddington (2014) and Shelley (2014).

### **How It Works**

The process of DWCF can be broken up into six steps. First, the students write a 10-minute paragraph at the beginning of almost every class session or at least three or four times a week (if the class does not meet that often during the week, paragraphs may be completed and submitted online). Next, the teacher collects those samples and marks them, outside of class, for lexical and syntactic accuracy using established error-correction symbols (see Appendix A). The next class period, the teacher hands back the marked paragraphs for students to complete step three: students keep a tally of errors by type, keep a list of all errors in context, and then edit, type, and resubmit the paragraph to the teacher for a second review. Students should not add any extra ideas to their original work. The fourth step consists of the instructor marking the second draft by highlighting, circling, or underlining to bring attention to the remaining errors. Codes may still be used if the error remains problematic. The final steps are for the teacher to return the draft to the student and repeat the process in steps 3 and 4 until the student has submitted an error free paragraph. Usually, the students will have a deadline of one week for each new paragraph to be error free. In most of the studies regarding the instructional methodology of DWCF, the

strategy was used daily in classes that met three or four times per week, which would amount to 3 or 4 new paragraphs per week (Evans et al., 2010).

### **The Four Principles**

**Timely.** According to Evans et al. (2010), feedback is timely when there is a minimum amount of time that lapses between when the students write and when the teacher provides them with their feedback. The ideal would be to return the writing samples with feedback the next class period. Students are also expected to use and record the feedback in a timely manner according to the process listed above.

**Constant.** The process is constant when students write a new sample (in this case, one paragraph) and receive feedback from teachers on their previous paragraphs regularly and at the beginning of each class session. In the original framework of DWCF, teachers would assign a new paragraph each class period, which totaled three or four paragraphs per week. In courses that meet fewer than three times a week, additional paragraphs may be assigned via internet submissions in order to keep the process constant.

**Meaningful.** Meaningful feedback means that students can understand the feedback and then use it to improve writing. To achieve this, students keep a log of their personal error types and work with their own writing for assignments and quizzes. Every error is marked and coded on the first draft, which gives the student a holistic view of their error types.

**Manageable.** The manageability of the feedback comes from using shorter pieces of writing produced in 10 minutes, as opposed to longer essays, which should allow teachers to “have enough time to attend to the quality of what they convey to their students” (Evans et al., 2010, p. 453). Students should also have enough time to process, learn from, and apply the feedback the teacher provides for the process to be manageable. The primary issue with the

definition of manageability provided by DWCF studies is that it remains subjective and isn't operationalized to the point that it wouldn't vary from person to person.

### **The Problem with Manageability**

McQuillan (2012) questioned the manageability of DWCF and criticized the research stating, "it is dubious whether teachers would think the considerable effort involved in carrying out this 'all-correction, all-the-time' agenda in their own classrooms [is] worth it." This statement seems to be supported by some teachers (Eddington, 2014). In addition, further research and studies looking specifically at the manageability of DWCF have been conducted in the past few years due to complaints that the strategy wasn't manageable by teachers at an IEP that implemented DWCF (Eddington, 2014; Shelley, 2014).

Shelley (2014) devoted her Master's Thesis to researching DWCF and creating a handbook for teachers to achieve manageability and consistency with the strategy after witnessing many new teachers struggle with its manageability. Eddington (2014) researched a modified version of DWCF that sought to improve the strategy as she observed teachers experience "burnout or lack of motivation" due to concerns with practicality and manageability (Eddington, 2014, p. 60).

At the IEP where both Shelley and Eddington taught using DWCF, this issue "fueled instructors...to experiment with variations of [DWCF] that are less time-intensive" (Eddington, 2014, p. 18) when compared to the original strategy as described by Hartshorn et al. (2010). Thus, a modified strategy of DWCF was created with specific changes in the areas of practicality and manageability, which include recycling prompts, building of prompt context and background knowledge, and using more specific coding symbols to mark grammar errors in writing (Eddington, 2014). Each of the modifications were attempts to make DWCF more manageable

for L2 writing accuracy instructors and students (Eddington, 2014). While the accuracy of students' writing after these modifications showed no significant variation from Hartshorn's (2008) accuracy results, it is important to note that in the Hartshorn (2008) and Hartshorn et al. (2010) studies, the treatment groups included a single class with DWCF which replaced a traditional writing class while the Eddington study included students that were taking a concurrent traditional writing class. This could have affected the results. Another key limitation that Eddington (2014) was that a numerical record of time spent on marking drafts outside of class were not considered in her study or in Hartshorn's (2008). McQuillan (2012) also noted that there have never been records of approximate time it takes teachers to grade drafts for DWCF. This lack of record is concerning, as draft marking time is a significant factor in terms of manageability for teachers.

While the previous studies suggest that some teachers may struggle with the manageability of DWCF, there is no research that provides answers to the questions of why or how they struggle. These questions regarding the manageability of the strategy were the motivation for this study. With evidence of the efficacy of DWCF (Eddington, 2014; Evans et al., 2010; Evans et al., 2011; Hartshorn, 2008; Hartshorn et al., 2010; Hartshorn & Evans, 2012; Hartshorn & Evans 2015; Kurzer & Eckstein, 2014), looking further into how this strategy can be applied in ELL classes in a more manageable way is the ultimate goal of this research. It is known that the strategy works, but can it be manageable enough for many teachers to use in their classrooms?

### **Research Questions**

1. What factors influence the manageability of teaching a class using Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback?



2. How long does it take experienced teachers to grade drafts using Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback?
3. What suggestions do teachers who have taught using Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback have for enhancing its manageability?

### **Methodology**

This is a qualitative study. Data was gathered from the researcher's log of her experience teaching with DWCF along with in-depth interviews of teachers who have taught using DWCF. The theoretical framework that guided the study was largely based on phenomenology. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach which has the purpose to "elucidate the essence of the experience of a phenomenon for an individual or group" (Patton, 2010, p. 410). In other words, the researcher's own experience and the experience of others with the manageability of DWCF were reviewed with the intent to analyze and summarize them into one common experience. Using the phenomenological approach resulted in a rich amount of qualitative data to analyze in order to discover emergent patterns and relationships (Patton, 1990).

### **Data collection methods**

**Self-study.** The primary research of DWCF manageability in this study is from the researcher's reflections on teaching a linguistic accuracy class using the strategy at a university IEP. This particular class had 16 students ranging from approximately intermediate-mid to intermediate-high in proficiency according to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) standards (American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2012).

. As the researcher taught the linguistic accuracy class and used DWCF for a 10-week period, she logged her time spent on marking and reflected on the manageability in great detail.

**Participant interviews.** Five teachers were interviewed. These teachers were chosen because they were all of the teachers in the area that were trained only with the approach of the original strategy. Many other teachers were not included in this research because they were trained in the modified approach referred to in Eddington's (2014) study, which would alter the perceptions of the manageability of the original strategy.

Four of the teachers chosen have had experience with the strategy since at least 2008, and one has only had about a year of experience with it. Their background and experience will be presented more specifically in the "Participants" section below. The five teachers were given consent and audio release forms and interviewed separately about their views on the manageability of DWCF (see Appendix B for the semi-structured interview questions).

### **Data Analysis**

There are five phases in the heuristic process of phenomenological analysis: *immersion*, *incubation*, *illumination*, *explication*, and *creative synthesis* (Moustakas, 1990). For this study, the researcher immersed herself in teaching using DWCF. By teaching the class, she was able to have her own personal experience with the manageability of the strategy and was then able to incubate, or have a time of "quiet contemplation" regarding the insights documented in the reflection log and understanding of the research questions (Patton, 1990, p. 409).

The researcher then contemplated both her experience and the experiences of the five interviewees which brought her to the illumination stage. In this stage, a deeper meaning and awareness of the phenomenon of manageability in DWCF was established. In the explication stage of the analysis, the researcher was able to "make new connections... [and] explore primary

themes” among the data (Patton, 1990, p. 410). To develop those themes, the “grounded theory” approach was used. Grounded theory involves data collection, coding, and analytic memo writing in order to reformulate the notes into “emergent categories” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 72). Coding and memo writing was done by reviewing the interview transcripts and reflection log and recording repeated categories and properties that emerged.

Developing the ideas and principles in great detail in the explication stage led to the final stage of the process: creative synthesis. In this final stage, the data was brought together and the main relationships and meaningful patterns were pulled out from the total experience. These patterns and relationships are presented in the Discussion section of this document.

### **Participants**

The participant teachers that were interviewed in this study will be referred to by their pseudonyms “Ebert,” “Campbell,” “Smith,” “Rivera,” and “Adams.” Each teacher was chosen because of their experience teaching with the original strategy of DWCF. Short introductions for each teacher are listed below, as well as the researcher’s background information.

**Ebert.** Ebert has been teaching English as a second language (ESL) since 2004. Ebert was on the “ground floor” of the DWCF strategy research and started using it in 2008. He continued using it systematically for the next 7 years until he stopped teaching ESL classes. Ebert has presented about DWCF in professional conferences and aided in its implementation in two ESL university departments in the United States.

**Campbell.** Campbell has been teaching ESL since 1986. Campbell’s history with DWCF goes back to its “very beginnings.” Before the strategy was formally called DWCF, Campbell was working with the strategy until it evolved into what was eventually named in

2008. Campbell was inspired to develop DWCF because of his frustrations with marking students' papers and handing them back while the learning cycle never seemed to be finished.

**Smith.** Smith has been teaching ESL since 1974. She used DWCF when teaching matriculated undergraduate and graduate ELLs for approximately five or six semesters. Smith has also been a part of research in the ESL field regarding DWCF and authored some of the literature.

**Rivera.** Rivera has been teaching ESL since 1985. As an instructor, Rivera had adopted portions of the methodology of DWCF before he even came in contact with the strategy itself. He noticed a lot of pitfalls in traditional error correction and written corrective feedback, so he was especially interested in getting involved in the DWCF research when it was in its initial stages. Rivera taught using DWCF a handful of times in 2006 and 2007, and has extensive knowledge of the strategy due to his own research of it.

**Adams.** Adams has been teaching ESL with a master's degree in TESOL since 2010. She started teaching grammar at the university level using a modified version of DWCF about two years ago. In fall semester 2016, she started using the unmodified version of DWCF with matriculated university ELLs.

**The researcher.** The researcher has been teaching ESL since 2008. Before teaching a linguistic accuracy class using DWCF, she studied the strategy along with error correction and Written Corrective Feedback for two semesters. She also studied a Master's thesis by Shelley (2014) and accompanying handbook to prepare to teach the course. The researcher observed the course being taught by an experienced DWCF instructor for one 16-week semester immediately preceding the semester she taught it.

## Results

The results are organized according to the research questions of the study. Each section will present the responses from the participants, including the researcher's own reflections.

### What Factors Influence the Manageability of Teaching a Class Using DWCF?

**Ebert.** Ebert finds DWCF to be “super manageable” in his own experience. A main reason for this is because the time he spent marking drafts doubled as his planning time. This was because the errors students were making generated the grammar that would be taught in the next class session. Due to the dynamic nature of the methodology, the data gathered while marking student drafts lead into the materials used in this class for examples, quizzes, tests, etc.

Something that Ebert tweaked a little from the original strategy was that he kept the number of drafts he marked to two instead of having students continue until the draft was entirely error free. His reasoning for this was that he didn't want to take extra drafts home to grade. As an alternative to marking extra drafts at home, Ebert marked second drafts during class time while students were writing their next paragraph.

**Campbell.** Campbell was confident that DWCF is manageable with the mindset that “writing classes take time.” Some factors that made it more manageable for him were the length of feedback being limited to coding, students only having one week to produce an error-free draft, and the length of writing being limited to 10 minutes. Another important factor that made DWCF manageable for Campbell was that error marking and class preparation were “all rolled into one.”

**Smith.** An important factor that influenced the manageability for Smith was that the materials for class came from drafts she marked. The quizzes she created came directly from

students' drafts. Another factor that made the strategy more manageable for Smith was that the students she taught had higher English language proficiency, which resulted in fewer errors.

However, Smith did make some modifications to the strategy in order to make it more manageable. These included having students write their first drafts at home instead of in class and giving only error feedback and not rhetorical feedback (the original strategy assigned a score for content and organization). Smith also did not score the drafts or assess them, other than the error coding, in order for marking sessions to be more manageable. Students were given completion points for the assignment.

**Rivera.** Rivera listed many factors that made DWCF manageable for him, one of the main aspects being that there wasn't a lot of preparation time needed for the course because planning, scoring, and marking drafts were "all rolled together." He also talked about the time limitation of 10 minutes for writing and the one-week period students had to produce error-free paragraphs as being manageability factors.

Another aspect that made the DWCF experience manageable for Rivera was his personal perspective on marking. He does not consider himself a perfectionist, and this helped him approach marking in a manageable way. He felt justified in missing a few corrections, or he wouldn't think too long about what code to give each error.

Rivera noted that the proficiency level of the students he taught also played a significant role in the manageability of DWCF. He was able to quickly go through marking errors because his students were highly proficient and were only making "three or four or five errors" per paragraph. He said that if students were at a lower proficiency level and making over ten errors per paragraph, many aspects of the strategy may be harder for the student and teacher in terms of keeping the strategy manageable.

**Adams.** Adams' overall perception of DWCF was that it is unmanageable, and she identified several factors contributing to this: re-editing drafts, scoring drafts, error tally sheets, edit logs, and error lists. Because these factors made the process less manageable for her, Adams made a lot of modifications to DWCF as it was implemented in her classes. For the most part, she altogether eliminated elements such as scoring drafts or having students keep tally sheets and logs. The re-edits became "cumbersome" in her classes, so she eventually started having students go see a tutor for help correcting their first draft as opposed to engaging in the process herself. Adams also noted that it was easier for her to correct the drafts of her higher-proficiency students because there were fewer corrections overall to make.

**The researcher.** The dynamic nature of teaching a class using DWCF may be intimidating for some. A structured syllabus is not followed in a lot of ways; what is to be taught is not known far in advance, hence the title "dynamic." In the researcher's experience, this made teaching the class more manageable in many ways. First of all, she didn't have to spend a lot of time planning her calendar for the entire semester. She was able to plan as she went when it came to grammar concepts and exercises. The whole class revolved around what the students produced in their daily paragraphs.

Because the paragraphs were only 10-minute snapshots, the researcher was able to mark them in a reasonable amount of time and then the students did a lot of the planning work by logging their errors and keeping track of what types of errors they were making. Checking in on their error tally sheets and error lists provided the researcher with a lot of material to use for instruction planning and materials. Those elements, with the overall experience reviewing paragraphs, provided her with much to utilize in a manageable amount of time spent marking and planning.

Another factor that influenced the manageability of DWCF was the use of technology in organizing the assignments and submissions. Every step working with drafts was done with technology, except for marking the first drafts. The first drafts that students typed during class were printed, marked on paper (which was preferred by the researcher), and then the rest of the back-and-forth with the drafts and error logging was done on a learning management system. Once the system was organized how the researcher wanted it, submissions and all assignments for the course were much more manageable.

However, getting started and getting all the technology to work was not manageable in the beginning. For example, using the learning management system required setting up all of the paragraph assignments, edit logs, error tally sheets, and error lists with their submission options ahead of time. Also, there was some trouble getting started with utilization of the computer systems needed for all 16 students to type and submit their paragraphs during class. Once the researcher and students became accustomed to the process, it became increasingly manageable.

### **How Long Does It Take Teachers to Grade Drafts Using DWCF?**

One of the critical issues with research regarding the manageability of DWCF is that there is no record of how long it takes to grade all the drafts produced on a regular basis. During interviews, each teacher was asked about how long a typical session of marking drafts took. The researcher also timed and recorded her own marking sessions during the semester she taught.

**All five teachers.** Ebert said in a class of 16-20 students, he spent about 45 minutes a day. In a class of about 15 students, Campbell recalls spending about 20-25 minutes on first drafts. According to him, total marking time combined with planning time would have never gone over 90 minutes. Smith estimated that it took her about 60 minutes to grade all drafts for one day's submission. This included the first drafts as well as other drafts from previous



assignment. Rivera stated that his marking sessions were normally 20-30 minutes. He also reported that if there were lots of drafts, he would grade them quickly and didn't catch everything. In the semester when Adams taught using the original strategy of DWCF, she said it took her about 30 minutes to mark all the drafts for her class of six students.

**The researcher.** The researcher timed her marking sessions at the beginning of the semester, then mid-semester, and then again at the end of the semester. In Table 1, it is interesting to see the significant decrease in time it took to grade drafts as she grew accustomed to the process.

Table 1

*Researcher's Marking Session Time (minutes) Over the Course of One Semester*

Draft	Beginning		Middle		End	
	No.	Time	No.	Time	No.	Time
1 <sup>st</sup>	15	50	15	30	15	27
2 <sup>nd</sup>	11	20	10	18	11	14
3 <sup>rd</sup>	12	20	10	15	10	9
4 <sup>th</sup>	5	10	8	10	5	6
Total	43	<b>100</b>	43	<b>73</b>	41	<b>56</b>

*Note.* Total minutes of marking time for each period of the semester are shown in boldface.

The data suggests a learning curve for marking and the possibility of becoming more manageable over time. The researcher followed the original strategy exactly, so these times include the first through the fourth drafts for 16 students in her class.

## **What Suggestions Do Teachers Who Have Taught Using DWCF Have for Enhancing Its Manageability?**

**Ebert.** Ebert had several suggestions for maintaining manageability. He suggests that teachers adapt the number of drafts they grade at home in order to keep marking time at a maximum of about 40-45 minutes a day. He says if it starts going over that, cut off the number of drafts students are turning in to only the second draft. Additionally, Ebert noted that lingering past a second draft was “defeating the purpose” of the strategy for his students as they would stop “feeling the benefits” of the process if they had to keep doing multiple drafts to get it perfect. He also suggested that teachers not try to be perfect with error coding.

**Campbell.** Campbell had many suggestions for teachers to follow in order to enhance manageability. Some of them regarded the preparation and knowledge of teachers themselves before even starting the course. He suggests that teachers must have experience teaching ESL and have a “sense of the grammar of English” before teaching using DWCF.

One of Campbell’s strongest suggestions was to read Shelley’s handbook on DWCF. This handbook not only provides material and explains the process of DWCF, it has tutorials and opportunities for teachers to practice with the error coding. This type of preparation and practice marking is crucial according to Campbell.

In addition, he suggested to use the error codes “?” or “AWK” (awkward) when errors in students writing get complex. The “?” code should be used if the sentence has so many errors that it wasn’t clear what writers are trying to express. Instead of taking time to mark every little grammar error in that confusing sentence, it is better to put the question mark since the student will need to rewrite it anyway in order to clarify the sentence. The “AWK” code is best used when what the student is trying to express is understood, but he or she presents it in a

grammatically incorrect and complex way that is far from what would be used by a native speaker. Instead of writing it out for the students and restructuring the sentence, it is more efficient to use “AWK” in that situation.

Another suggestion by Campbell was to modify the number of paragraphs or drafts when needed. Some examples of modifications were to do only two new paragraphs during the week if there was a test or the instructor was overloaded with work. Another example would be to hold back some paragraphs when getting overwhelmed, instead of marking them, so they could be used for assessment later. These modifications would be for the teacher to use when needed for manageability, not permanent modifications to the strategy. The last suggestion that he added was to refrain from teaching more than one linguistic accuracy course in a semester.

**Smith.** Some of Smith’s biggest suggestions for teachers were that they “need to know grammar” and “be positive” and encouraging to students, remembering that this strategy works. Smith also suggested that other teachers use some adaptations that she found more manageable including having students do their first drafts at home and print them out and avoiding doing more than two drafts with students. She said some students may need to have a third draft, but it usually wasn’t necessary to pay attention to the few errors left in the second draft.

**Rivera.** Rivera’s main suggestion was to use DWCF for “higher-level” students. Higher-level in Rivera’s definition would equate to the ACTFL (2012) proficiency standard of advanced-low and higher. He believes that if there are more than 10 errors per paragraph, the process is not as manageable. He also suggests that teachers not overthink their marking or overthink the plan for class. He said to simply have students work with the errors from marking sessions for the next class.

Something that Rivera felt strongly about was regarding making appropriate adaptations to keep manageability. He suggests that if teachers are to adapt anything for manageability's sake, they should not cut into the number of drafts or paragraphs because it would make the process less constant. Instead, teachers should try taking down the time of the paragraphs written in class to more like seven or five minutes, if anything.

**Adams.** Adams suggests that teachers send students to writing tutors with their coded first drafts. She tried the original strategy for one 16-week semester, but felt that having students work with an external ESL tutor on their subsequent corrections was much more manageable for everyone involved. When Adams used the original strategy, she would try to mark the second draft during the time in class when students were writing their new 10-minute paragraphs. Adams added that teaching with DWCF takes a while to get used to, and it's important to remember that it's effective and not give up using it.

**The researcher.** One of the researcher's main suggestions for any teacher that plans to teach a course using DWCF is to prepare by reading Shelley's handbook on DWCF and having a mentor who has taught using DWCF before. Teaching DWCF has a steep learning curve. It takes a while to get used to it, even if one has researched it and read all of the steps in Shelley's handbook. Having a mentor to ask questions about how to execute that strategy was crucial for the researcher to find manageability.

Teaching with DWCF was stressful in the beginning, but the researcher always walked into the class with an excitement for the "paragraph party" and the effective work that would be done with the strategy. When enthusiasm was shown for DWCF and the strategy was explicitly introduced as something that is significantly effective, the students were motivated and excited to

work hard and see their progress. The strategy can be positive and motivating depending on the enthusiasm and motivation the teacher brings to the classroom.

Something else that helped the researcher to keep the marking sessions manageable was holding onto some of the students' writing instead of marking them, as suggested by Campbell. If the researcher was stressed because of her work load, she would use some of the writing pieces as a quiz or future assignment. This cut down on marking time and planning time for future materials. This was also extremely meaningful for students to be working with their own writing and editing their own paragraphs for proficiency assessment.

### **Discussion**

While interpreting and synthesizing the data, common themes were found. Please note that there were a number of suggestions, such as having students see a tutor, which were not shared by the other teachers and were, therefore, not included. Only patterns and relationships that more than two or three participants noted in interviews are mentioned in this section. The following are some important things that could be considered when planning to teach using DWCF.

#### **Remembering the Strategy Is Effective: Staying Positive and Motivated**

Every person interviewed commented that this strategy works. That is powerful motivation for teachers, and it can also be powerful motivation for students as the process and research regarding its efficacy is explicitly taught. It seems that when teachers are positive and enthusiastic about DWCF, it is contagious for students and they feel motivated.

#### **There Is a Learning Curve**

Remembering that the strategy is effective could also be important to help those utilizing DWCF get through the learning curve of the strategy. There is a learning curve for both teachers

and students as both get used to the complex process. Most of the teachers agreed that it took them a while to get used to implementing DWCF, and some teachers made major modifications because of it. Manageability comes with time, but can be worth the wait because of the positive effects of the strategy. Reading Shelley's handbook and having a mentor can help teachers get through the beginning of the semester, and manageability can increase from there.

### **Remembering That Marking Time Is Also Preparation Time**

There is some speculation about whether all the marking time is worth it when DWCF is used. According to the results, the average total marking time between all of the participants and researcher was about 55 minutes per day. When considering that the marking time is also a large part of the preparation time, the experience can become much more manageable as a whole process. The error-filled sentences that students produce and document become the materials for instruction, assignments, and assessments.

### **Experience Is Needed**

Most teachers mentioned that adequate professional development and grammar knowledge is needed to manageably implement DWCF. If the teacher lacks a good command of English grammar, identifying and coding grammar mistakes may take much longer and be more difficult. Also, because of the complex and dynamic nature of the strategy, it may be better that novice teachers not attempt employing DWCF.

### **Using This Strategy for Higher-level Students**

It was unanimous that this strategy works best with higher-level students. In this study, higher-level students might correspond with matriculated university students or students at the ACTFL (2012) level of academic-low and higher. The reason for this is because the students will produce an overwhelming amount of errors if they have a lower level of proficiency. This

echoes research done by Lee (2009) which concluded that there was no improvement in writing accuracy for students at the ACTFL intermediate level of proficiency when DWCF was implemented. It becomes more manageable when students produce fewer errors and have the ability to process and understand the strategy when explicitly taught.

### **It Is Acceptable to Skip Days**

It is a clear pattern that most of the teachers occasionally skipped days of having students write new 10-minute paragraphs in order to keep it more manageable. The original strategy is designed for students to write new paragraphs every day of class, but sometimes instructors were overwhelmed with work and needed to give themselves and the students a break to catch up. An ideal time to skip new drafts could be on the day of a test or an in-class essay.

### **Keeping the Number of Drafts to Two**

Many of the teachers interviewed revealed that they preferred not to mark more than two drafts per paragraph. Some of those teachers also shared that they only took the first drafts home to code, and they marked the second drafts during class time as the students wrote their new paragraphs. This resulted in teachers only marking first drafts during their marking sessions for the entire semester, which made it more manageable for them. Some of the teachers admitted that they cut off the drafts after draft two, even if they observed some lingering errors. They felt that the last few weren't critical, and they put more emphasis on keeping it manageable for the student and teacher.

As a note of caution, it may be important to remember that the fundamental principles of DWCF include being manageable as well as constant, timely, and meaningful. If the number of drafts were cut off before the student achieved an error-free draft, this could threaten the

meaningful component from a student's perspective. In order for DWCF to be effective, there must be a balance between the four principles.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

In this study, manageability was subjective and was analyzed via other people's perceptions of it. For future research, it would be helpful to define manageability and make it more operationalized for a more quantitative review of whether DWCF is manageable. Another limitation in this study was that four of the five teachers interviewed had not been recently teaching with DWCF. Future research would benefit by looking at more current teachers of DWCF and would have more updated data.

Additionally, there were some adaptations that were introduced in this study that would be interesting to follow up on. For example, a possible research question could be whether the efficacy of DWCF is affected when paragraphs are limited to only five minutes. Finding a proper balance between the principles of constant and manageable is also something that could be the topic for further research with regard to paragraph and draft amount and frequency.

Finally, while this research was focused on the manageability of the strategy for teachers, it would be interesting to collect data on student perceptions of the manageability of DWCF. Whether qualitative interviews and surveys or quantitative measurements of time spent fixing drafts, there is abundant data that could be gathered in terms of students' experiences with the strategy. The framework of DWCF is designed to be manageable for both the teacher and the student, so this would be an area that would be highly relevant and contribute to the literature in this area.



## Conclusions

DWCF has a proven history of efficacy, but it is not without flaws. Of the four principles that feedback should be manageable, meaningful, timely, and constant, manageability seems to be the most challenging for practitioners. DWCF can be demanding, however, the seasoned teachers in this study have provided helpful insights on how to make this process more manageable while preserving its efficacy. Taking these suggestions into consideration, higher proficiency students can significantly improve their writing accuracy as teachers implement this strategy in their second language writing and grammar classrooms.

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### Appendix A

Error correction symbols

D	= Determiner	S/PL	= Singular/Plural
SV	= Subject Verb Agreement	C/NC	= Count/Noncount
VF	= Verb Form	?	= Meaning is not clear
ro	= Run-on Sentence	AWK	= Awkward Wording
inc	= Incomplete sentence		= Word Order
VT	= Verb Tense	C	= Capitalization
PP	= Preposition	P	= Punctuation
SPG	= Spelling		= Omit
WF	= Word Form		= Something is missing
WC	= Word Choice		= New Paragraph

### Appendix B

Semi-structured Interview Questions

1. I'm interviewing you for this research because DWCF has been a part of your teaching. Can you give me a sense of your history with that? How long have you taught English to speakers of other languages? How long did you teach using the Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback method?
2. You've taught using DWCF. Walk me through the process of how you use it in your classroom.

3. With DWCF, there are 4 basic principles of being timely, constant, meaningful, and manageable. Tell me about the manageability as you teach it.

(#4 is optional if they don't say anything about poor manageability in the interview)

4. What changes could be made to the method as described in Hartshorn's dissertation to improve manageability that wouldn't detract from the other principles of timeliness, meaningfulness, and constancy, if any.
5. What suggestions would you give to teachers who are about to teach a class using Dynamic Written Corrective feedback for the first time to help them attain manageability? Why?
6. Is there anything else you would like to say about the manageability of DWCF?