

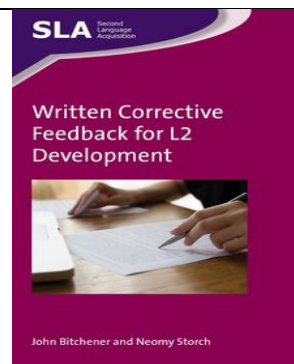


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Written Corrective Feedback for L2 Development (2016)

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Written Corrective Feedback (CF) and L2 development are two key issues in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The aim of this book is to explore whether or not written CF can facilitate the L2 development over time based on two theoretical views: cognitive and sociocultural. The main focus is geared towards the learning process, not to the editing process. It also reviews the empirical research conducted on this topic from the two perspectives trying to explain how and why written CF contributes to L2 development.

Chapter 1, “Introduction,” introduces the topic by explaining the key terms, the goal of the book, and the rationale for choosing this topic. It then explains the focus and organizations of the chapters. The authors describe the structure of every chapter in detail by stating the main concepts and theories to be covered in an engaging and simplified way.

Chapter 2, “The Cognitive Perspective on Written CF for L2 Development,” discusses the cognitive view regarding the facilitative role of written CF and it also seeks answers on how and why CF has the potential to develop the L2 learning process. The authors discuss the (counter-) arguments from different cognitive theories and views including the skill acquisition models, the conscious information-processing stages, and the Gass framework of the five stages in the processing of new knowledge (i.e. attention to and noticing of input, comprehended input, intake, integration, and output). Further, the chapter outlines some of the individual internal and external factors that facilitate or impede the learners’ progress to reach new stages in the cognitive processing.

Chapter 3, “Cognitively Informed Research on Written CF for L2 Development,” critically reviews the empirical research that has been conducted on the contribution of written CF to developing the L2 based on the cognitive view of thought. The effect of written CF on the accuracy of text revisions and writing a new text were two of the main areas discussed in this chapter. Throughout the chapter, the authors try to uncover the mystery of four key inquiries in the field. These inquiries include the efficiency of written CF in general, the probability of one type of CF to be superior to the others (i.e. direct, indirect, metalinguistic), the effectiveness of focused and unfused CF, and the role of other factors such as individual and contextual in hindering or facilitating the L2 development.

Chapter 4, “The sociocultural Perspective on Written CF for L2 development,” discusses the written CF and L2 development from the perspective of the sociocultural theory (SCT). The

discussion was based on three important sets of constructs in the SCT including the zone of proximal development (ZPD) and scaffolding, mediation tools, and the notion of Activity Theory (AT). The chapter tries to explain how these constructs relate to written CF, and, most importantly, why written CF sometimes facilitates and other times impedes the development of the L2. In the SCT, written CF is seen as a type of assistance offered by experts (teachers or peers) to the novice (learners) in an interaction.

Chapter 5, “Socioculturally Informed Research on Written CF for L2 Development,” provides a critical review of the written CF studies informed by SCT and AT. The chapter is organized into three main sections: (1) reviewing feedback with the ZPD as a type of scaffolding, (2) reviewing the effect of mediational tools on written CF, and (3) examining written CF as an activity based on the AT. Many of the why-questions were answered in this chapter such as why some feedback might be more effective than the others, and why some students succeed and others fail to incorporate the feedback provided by their teachers or peers, and what personal and contextual dimensions could explain the students’ actions toward the feedback.

Chapter 6, “Conclusion,” summarizes the previous chapters in two sections. The first section briefly reviews the theoretical and empirical research conducted on the written CF informed by the cognitive theory. The second section sums up the theoretical and empirical studies conducted on written CF based on the SCT perspective. Based on the findings, the authors outline a direction for future studies in these two areas where CF needs more clarifications and explanations. Finally, the authors end the chapter with personal thoughts and reflections based on their experience writing the book and what they found so far in researching these two leading theories.

The book consists of 155 pages and is divided into 6 chapters. Its price is reasonable considering its benefits. It is quite an informative book that tackles most of the pedagogical and theoretical questions concerning the role of written CF in the students’ L2 development. What makes it unique is its focus on the two leading theories in the field of SLA which are the cognitive and sociocultural theories. Despite the complexities of the two theories, the authors tried to simplify the information and present it in an organized way, which makes it easier for the reader to understand the material. I like the sequence of the chapters where the authors started with the theoretical part and then followed it with the empirical studies.

Written CF constitutes a big concern for many writing teachers who are eager to know if it facilitates or hinders the quality of their students’ writing. This book answers many of the pedagogical questions concerning this issue and presents invaluable information for both teachers and researchers who advocate the effectiveness of written CF. It also refutes and rejects some of the assumptions and criticisms regarding the contribution of written CF to the learning process such as Truscott’s argument in 1996.

In conclusion, I have personally benefited from the detailed and thorough information presented in this book, and I highly recommend it for every teacher and researcher who is interested in exploring the role of CF in developing the learners’ L2 writing skills.

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