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The Effects of Written Corrective Feedback on Korean EFL Learners' Article Accuracy*

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One of the most controversial issues in second language (L2) research is whether written corrective feedback (WCF) can benefit L2 learners' grammatical accuracy in their writing. While exploring various types of WCF, many of previous studies have investigated the rule-governed functions of the indefinite and definite English articles. However, considering that the indefinite articles were shown to be acquired later than the definite articles, there is a need for future research to separate the two functions. Thus, this study explored direct, metalinguistic WCF on both the combined and separated uses of the two English articles. Two groups of Korean learners from an online English composition class participated (N=50) with one group receiving direct, metalinguistic WCF and the other with no such feedback. Both groups completed three picture-based written tasks where their first compositions were used as pretests (after which WCF was provided in the case of the feedback group) and the final ones used as post-tests. The results indicated that although there was no significant effect of direct, metalinguistic WCF, both groups significantly improved in their use of the definite articles over time. Possible explanations are discussed along with limitations of the study and future research directions in this area.

[written corrective feedback/direct/metalinguistic feedback/English articles]

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the past 30 years, the effectiveness of WCF (or teachers' written correction to students' errors) on L2 accuracy has been of continuous debate among L2 researchers, the initiation of which arose by the opposing positions asserted by Truscott (1996, 1999) and Ferris (1999, 2004). The former views WCF as no value or even detrimental to L2

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development or gaining implicit knowledge and limits its role, at best, in the revisions of the same texts (Truscott & Hsu, 2008). The latter position, on the other hand, focuses on adult learners' need for CF or explicit knowledge to avoid fossilization, believing that learners' revisions of their errors could ultimately affect their long term L2 development.

The current study began with a favorable view of WCF, for which there are theoretical and ecological motivations (e.g., Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Shintani & Ellis, 2013; Shintani, Ellis, & Suzuki, 2014). Utilizing direct error correction as part of the WCF in the study, the theoretical arguments in favor of this type of WCF can be drawn from Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis. Long argued that positive evidence such as recasts or correction of learner errors produced in L2 oral interaction is a direct source of development of implicit knowledge. Similarly, then, direct WCF may serve this function, too, because it provides learners with positive evidence, albeit in written form. For ecological reasons, provision of WCF is also valid because it is often desired by students in an L2 writing class, although from the teacher's perspective, it requires so much workload and is time-consuming.

Thus, based on the theoretical and ecological motivations (from students' perspective), the present study investigated the effect of direct WCF supplemented by metalinguistic explanations in a large, online L2 writing classroom. As of the target structure of the study, the rule-governed functions of the indefinite and definite English articles (specifically, first mention "a/an" and second mention "the") were examined because, from previous WCF studies to be reviewed, direct WCF seemed to be more workable for the learning of rule-governed structures. Then, in the section that follows, a more detailed review of the relevant literature will be provided, particularly on the effects of different types of feedback and the target structures that have been investigated to date.

II. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS OF PREVIOUS L2 STUDIES ON WCF

The literature review has shown that WCF can be largely divided into direct versus indirect and focused versus unfocused CF. The former distinction is based on whether the teacher provides the correction for an error (direct CF) or just indicates in some ways that errors exist, letting the student self-correct (indirect CF). The latter distinction is based on whether the teacher focuses on only one type of error (focused CF) or corrects all or most of the errors produced in the student's writing (unfocused CF).

1. Studies on Indirect WCF

The studies in this category naturally employed unfocused feedback. Ashwell (2000), for example, hinting at the learners by underlining a variety of errors that occurred,

investigated in which order content and form feedback should be provided for accuracy to improve. Four groups were compared: content-then-form feedback, form-then-content feedback, form/content feedback-then-form/content feedback, and no feedback. The results were that the three feedback groups' overall accuracy gains were significantly higher than those of the no feedback group. In addition, when the feedback groups were compared, accuracy increased only immediately after the form feedback was provided, either alone or with the content feedback. Both results then indicate that, for accuracy to improve, form feedback is required, but the order of feedback types is not important. Ferris and Roberts (2001), on the other hand, looked more into different types of indirect CF, reporting that although the two feedback groups (underlined versus coded feedback by error type in addition to underlining) performed significantly better than the no feedback group, the feedback types did not notably differ. Finally, Truscott and Hue (2008), utilizing underlining only, tested its effectiveness on a new piece of writing, not the revisions, unlike the aforementioned studies. As expected, the feedback group showed significant improvement on their revisions than the no feedback group, but on their subsequent new essays, both groups performed worse with no significant difference between them. To summarize, these studies show that, for accuracy to improve, the order or types of indirect CF does not matter, but it is important to include a new piece of writing for accurate assessment of WCF.

2. Studies on Direct WCF

A study by Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986) is one of the oldest studies on WCF that employed direct CF in comparison to subtypes of indirect CF, both provided in the form of unfocused feedback. More specifically than in Ferris and Roberts' (2001) study, they divided the indirect CF into coded by error type, highlighted, and marginal (e.g., indicating the total number of errors per line in the margins). All groups generally improved over time, but they were not significantly different, suggesting that CF may not be worth time, so writing practice alone might be sufficient. However, this study did not have a control group, so Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima (2008) added one (who had carried a series of writing tasks), exploring the effect of direct, focused versus unfocused CF. Their focused CF targeted only the English articles (first mention "a/an" and second mention "the"), while their unfocused CF included other errors along with the two article uses. Both the CF groups performed significantly better than the writing practice only group in the delayed post-test, but the CF types did not lead to significantly different outcomes. The former results limit the role of writing practice when compared to CF, at least on article accuracy. In terms of the latter result, a later study by Sheen, Wright, and Moldawa (2009) proposed that the focused CF was not really "more focused" than unfocused CF. Thus, to further

address these issues, they employed four more detailed groups (direct focused, direct unfocused, writing practice, and control group receiving no writing tasks). What they found was the focused CF being the most beneficial (significantly better than unfocused CF and control), followed by, in order, writing practice, unfocused CF, and control. However, over time, in their delayed post-test, both the focused CF and writing practice groups outperformed the control group. In short, these studies suggest a more superior role of focused than unfocused, direct CF, and writing practice itself may be equally effective.

3. Studies on Direct WCF & Metalinguistic Explanations

The last group of studies on WCF has interest in direct CF but either supplemented by metalinguistic explanations or in comparison with the latter by itself. In terms of the former, Sheen (2007) compared three groups (direct/meta feedback, direct CF, and control who took tests only) on the two English article functions described earlier. She showed that while all three groups improved descriptively, only the direct/meta group produced significantly higher accuracy than the direct CF and control groups on the delayed post-test. Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) provided metalinguistic explanations in oral conferences where the students received additional explanations and examples on their corrected errors. Targeting definite articles (not limited to second mention "the"), simple past tenses, and prepositions,[1] they reported the significantly greater effect of the direct/meta feedback, compared to the direct CF group and the control group (who received content feedback), in simple past tenses and definite articles, respectively. Along with Sheen's results, these findings seem to indicate the supporting role of metalinguistic explanations when they are combined with direct CF, with further implication that more rule-governed errors are more likely to be influenced by corrective feedback. However, in Bitchener's (2008) later study, targeting only the two uses of English articles, while the direct/oral/written meta group as well as the direct CF group significantly outperformed the control group with brief content feedback, the direct/written meta group did not. These results, in part, may suggest more beneficial effect of face to face, oral metalinguistic explanations on learners' subsequent performance than the written explanations.

In terms of the latter studies where metalinguistic feedback was investigated separately from direct WCF, Shintani and Ellis (2013) examined the role of written metalinguistic explanations in the form of a handout given to the learners when they had finished writing. In other words, their metalinguistic feedback was not of reactive nature to the learners'

[1] Although they wrote they "focused on" the three error categories out of many identified in their students' writing, this number of targeted error types would be better stated as unfocused feedback.

individual errors, as investigated in the previous studies, but of preemptive nature, only targeting the indefinite English article (first mention "a/an"). They also examined the separate effects of direct CF and metalinguistic feedback on both revised texts and new pieces of writing. On the revised texts, only the meta group significantly improved as well as when compared to the control group (who performed the writing tasks only). In terms of new writing, the meta group, again, significantly improved between the pretest and the immediate post-test and significantly outperformed the control group on the immediate post-test as well. These results seem to suggest that when the target structure was the indefinite article, only the preemptive, metalinguistic feedback was effective, not direct CF. It should be recalled that in previous studies that showed significant effect of direct CF, their results came from the combination of both indefinite and definite articles (Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Sheen, Wright, & Moldawa, 2009).

A later study by Shintani, Ellis, and Suzuki (2014) then utilized a dictogloss task and included the rewriting opportunity, targeting the first mention, indefinite article and hypothetical conditional. Thus, five groups were formed: direct CF, meta, direct CF/rewriting, meta/rewriting, and control who only took the tests. Overall, only the hypothetical conditional had effect. Specifically, the direct CF and rewriting opportunity proved more effective than their counterparts, respectively; similarly, the direct CF/rewriting group significantly outperformed the other four groups in the long term. For the indefinite article, however, there was even no improvement over time. One explanation proposed for these results was the limited proficiency learners' usual tendency to attend to a more meaning-embedding structure when they are overloaded with information. In this study, it was the hypothetical conditional, and the second explanation is, this structure is also syntactically more complex, thus the learners' benefiting more from direct correction on their actual errors than from the preemptive, metalinguistic handout explanations.

In sum, although the previous studies do not reveal firm, conclusive results, one general finding is that the effect of CF is likely to be maximized when metalinguistic explanations are offered together, so that learners can understand the reasons of their corrected errors. Another finding is that direct CF seems to be more effective for rule-governed errors such as the first mention and second mention functions of the English articles. Despite these findings, however, previous L2 research on the acquisition order of the English articles also reported that the indefinite articles tended to be acquired later than the definite articles (Huebner, 1983; Parrish, 1987). Thus, there is a need for future research to separate these two article functions and examine them separately as well as together. In short, this study explored the effect of direct, metalinguistic CF on both the combined and separated functions of the two English articles.

III. METHOD

1. Participants and Classroom Context

The participants were 50 Korean students (14 men, 36 women) who were taking one of the two sections of an English composition course taught by one instructor in an online university. Originally, about twice more students had participated in the study. However, those who had fit at least one of the following five conditions were excluded from the final dataset: a) when they did not submit all the required writing tasks and tests, b) when they received no feedback on articles in the case of the feedback group, c) when they used online translators, d) when their pretest scores on either the first or second mention article uses were above 90%, and e) when the occurrence of either article type in their writing tasks and tests was less than 2, which was to obtain more reliable accuracy scores. Using an additional criterion of 90% as a cut-off score for inclusion of data was also for more valid assessment of accuracy improvement, as 90% accuracy is generally regarded as an indication of acquisition of a grammatical feature (Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008). As a result, except for one student, all the participants were majoring in English with their ages ranging from 23 to 65 (mean: 34, SD: 9.66).

2. Target Structure

The target structure in this study was the indefinite article, "a/an," used as first mention and the definite article, "the," used as second mention. There are three main reasons for this choice. First, as discussed earlier, previous studies investigated either the combination of the indefinite and definite articles (Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Sheen, 2007; Sheen, Wright, & Moldawa, 2009) or one of them only (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Shintani & Ellis, 2013; Shintani, Ellis, & Suzuki, 2014). Thus, in order to examine differential effects on each function, the two functions of the article system were chosen again in this study. In addition, for direct, metalinguistic CF to be maximally effective, previous studies pointed to rule-governed structures as having greater chances to be benefited than idiosyncratic structures such as prepositions (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005). In this very regard, the first mention "a/an" and the second mention "the" are the rule-governed forms of the article system. Finally, the English article system, not alone the two specific functions targeted for this study, does not exist in the Korean language,[2] resulting in Korean learners' high frequency of errors on this structure (Lee, 2007, 2008; Shin & Seong, 2013). Then, it is of particular interest whether direct,

[2] However, early in the semester, instruction covered five factors for more cohesive writing, where first mention, "a/an" and second mention, "the" were introduced, using only two connected sentences as an example. Thus, although clear instruction was provided, it was brief.

metalinguistic CF on this feature would benefit Korean learners of English.

3. Design

This quasi-experimental study employed a pretest-treatment-post-test design and carried out both within-group and between-group comparisons. The independent variable was WCF availability with the percent accuracy of the English articles as the dependent variable. Specifically, the feedback group (n=29) received direct, metalinguistic WCF from the researcher, while the control group (n=21) did not. In terms of the metalinguistic explanations, they were the same for all the students in the former group; however, the CF and metalinguistic explanations given were not limited to the target structure of this study. They included simple past tenses (both regular and irregular), copular be-verbs, and auxiliary be-verbs in progressive when the students made some or all of these errors. These were included because they were largely rule-governed structures, shown to be affected by CF (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005). Also, given that online university students cannot easily have error correction chances from the instructor due to the large class size, the researcher decided to correct those errors, too, while checking articles. However, most of the errors corrected other than articles turned out to be simple past tenses. In short, the direct, metalinguistic CF was provided in an unfocused manner (see Appendix A).

4. Writing Tasks, Tests, & Research Procedure

In total, three picture-based writing tasks were given to both the feedback and control groups with the first and third completed compositions used as the pretest and post-test, respectively. The second task was the revision of the first composition, following the instructor's feedback on content, organization, and writing conventions excluding grammar. The first task (with its revision) was based on one large picture and to describe a busy train station crowded with people (see Appendix B), while the final task was to write a narrative composition on what is happening in an airport with a series of events sequenced through six pictures (see Appendix C) (Heaton, 1975). In addition to these writing tasks, both the groups also wrote 7 maximum weekly journals[3], in order to maximize the effect of direct, metalinguistic CF on article accuracy (Sheen, Wright, & Moldawa, 2009). The researcher's direct CF was provided soon after the students submitted the revisions of the first writing tasks. The whole procedure of this research is summarized in Figure 1.

[3] The pretest was completed before the students began writing weekly journals. The frequency of this writing practice in each group ranged from 0 to 7, with no notable mean differences between them (feedback group: 5.41, control group: 5.48)

FIGURE 1

Research Procedure

Week	Activity
3	Brief instruction on the target structure
6	Pretest submission (= First descriptive written task) – Oct. 5th
	Journal writing 1
9	Journal writing 2
10	Content/organization/convention feedback on first task given to the learners – Nov. 1st
	Journal writing 3
	Second task submission (=Revision of first descriptive written task) – Nov. 13th
11	Journal writing 4
12	Direct metalinguistic WCF on first task given to the learners – Nov. 15th
	Journal writing 5
13	Journal writing 6
14	Post-test submission (= Final new narrative written task) – Dec. 4th
	Journal writing 7

5. Data Coding & Scoring

The pretest and post-test were picture-based tasks, so somewhat constrained on what to write, but still were regarded as relatively free production tasks. Thus, for valid and reliable assessment of the article accuracy, a set of coding criteria were determined. The two basic criteria were, first, only the clear contexts or comprehensible sentences were considered for coding, and then the contexts requiring first mention "a/an" and second mention "the" were coded[4]. The contexts excluded from the final dataset[5] were a) when articles were properly omitted (e.g., a husband and wife), b) when articles were co-used with other determiners (e.g., a my nephew), and c) when idiomatic expressions involving articles were used whether they were correctly produced or not (e.g., in (a) hurry, in (a) long time). Additionally, unique to this current study is the exclusion of readily available chunks when searched in an online dictionary (e.g., take a bus, wear a suit). Unlike previous studies where the learners received in-class written tasks and tests in an offline setting, those in

[4] Added to these contexts were the cases when noncount words were used with the indefinite article (e.g., *a luggage) in order to count the learners' oversupplied uses in nonobligatory contexts. Similarly, when the definite article is also used with noncount words (e.g., *the luggage) when they were used as first mention, these instances were also included in assessing article accuracy.

[5] These criteria were also applied and explicitly described in Sheen's (2007) study.

this study were online learners; thus, coding was done more conservatively to prevent any possible effect of unwanted variables as much as possible. An independent coder, a native speaker of English, coded a subset of the data (30%), resulting in 96% agreement.

The article accuracy was calculated as percentages, employing Pica's (1991) target-like use (TLU) scores as in some of previous research (e.g., Sheen, 2007; Shintani & Ellis, 2013; Shintani, Ellis, & Suzuki, 2014). The TLU is first divided by the total number of correct suppliance in contexts by the total number of obligatory contexts and total number of oversuppliance in nonobligatory contexts, the outcome of which is then multiplied by 100. Thus, for this study, the TLU was measured for the accuracy of the combined two functions of articles as well as by calculating the accuracy of each function separately.

IV. RESULTS

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of each group's article uses in both the pretest and post-test[6]. In order to examine if there are significant differences within each group, the paired samples t-tests were used on their pretest and post-test scores. As presented in Tables 2 and 3, each group significantly improved from the pretests to the post-tests when both article functions were combined, but it was readily known that this improvement was, in fact, due to the significant improvement of the definite article's second mention function.

TABLE 1

Group Means and Standard Deviations

Group (n)	Pretest						Post-test					
	Total		A/an		The		Total		A/an		The	
	M%	SD	M%	SD	M%	SD	M%	SD	M%	SD	M%	SD
FG (29)	53.1	20.8	52.3	25.4	52.6	23.9	63.5	21.1	53.5	23.7	70.5	25.5
NFG (21)	52.9	20.5	49.6	25.1	54.6	25.9	64.6	24.8	55.3	29.6	73.5	27.6

Note. FG = the (direct metalinguistic) feedback group, NFG = no feedback group, M% = Mean %.

[6] No statistically significant differences were found between the two groups' pretest scores, which means both groups had comparable understanding of the targeted article functions when they started participating in the study (.712 for "a/an," .776 for "the," and .971 for total articles).

TABLE 2

Summary of Findings from Paired Samples t-Test for Feedback Group

Article	Post-and pretest difference			
	M%	SD	t	p-value
Total	10.42	20.51	2.74*	.011
A/an	1.20	28.86	.22	.825
The	17.94	24.54	3.94***	.000

Note. * p<.05, ** p<.001, M% = Mean %.

TABLE 3

Summary of Findings from Paired Samples t-Test for No Feedback Group

Article	Post-and pretest difference			
	M%	SD	t	p-value
Total	11.73	25.14	2.14*	.045
A/an	5.70	34.57	.76	.459
The	18.91	34.38	2.52*	.020

Note. * p<.05, M% = Mean %

In addition, the independent samples t-test was also carried out to check if there are any significant differences in terms of the extent of improvement between the groups, particularly on the measure of the indefinite article, since this article showed more difference in improvement (1.20 vs. 5.70) than that of the definite article. However, as in Table 4, no significant differences were found; that is, the extent of improvement between the groups was similar on all three measures of the articles, either combined or separated.

TABLE 4

Summary of Findings from Independent Samples t-Test between Groups

Article	Group	Post-and pretest difference			
		M%	SD	t	p-value
Total	FG (n=29)	10.42	20.51	-.202	.841
	NFG (n=21)	11.73	25.14		
A/an	FG (n=29)	1.20	28.86	-.501	.619
	NFG (n=21)	5.70	34.57		
The	FG (n=29)	17.94	24.54	-.117	.908
	NFG (n=21)	18.91	34.38		

Note. FG = the (direct metalinguistic) feedback group, NFG = no feedback group, M% = Mean %

V. DISCUSSION

The research question asked whether unfocused, direct WCF supplemented by written

metalinguistic explanations has any effect on the English article accuracy, specifically, the indefinite article "a/an" for first mention and the definite article "the" for second mention. As shown in the results section, no effect of feedback was found, as both the feedback and no feedback groups improved between the tests on all measures, though the extent of improvement was not significant. However, this may not readily indicate no role of CF on the English article accuracy. A careful look into the whole research procedure of this study (see Figure 1) may suggest the possibility that other variables might have removed the effect of direct, metalinguistic CF on the feedback group.

Three weeks before the pretest was due for submission and the learners' weekly journal writing practice began, both groups received explicit instruction on the two article functions as a possible factor for more cohesive writing. However, because the instruction was very brief, using two short example sentences only, it did not seem to influence both groups' subsequent production accuracy of articles; their written pretest scores were low (slightly above 50% as shown in Table 1). However, as they engaged in an over-time, journal writing practice from week 6 to week 14 (with the mean frequency of writing of about 5 times for both groups), their merely noticing level (Schmidt, 1993) of the article rules from the earlier instruction may have been transformed into the level of understanding or development of explicit knowledge (Shintani & Ellis, 2013). This possibility is, of course, limited to the definite article function, as revealed from the results section and will be further discussed later; however, explicit instruction and writing practice may have played certain roles. That is, they may have made the direct, metalinguistic CF not distinct enough a variable for the feedback group, whereas, in the case of the no feedback group, they may have replaced the absence of the CF. These possible roles of instruction and writing practice seem to be further supported by previous research. For example, the accuracy gains from Sheen's (2007) study where direct, metalinguistic CF proved the most beneficial were brought out from those who had not received explicit teaching on articles during the research period. This seemed to be possible because her study context was general ESL classrooms, not L2 writing classrooms, unlike the context of the current study. In terms of the role of writing practice, the study by Sheen, Wright, and Moldawa (2009) also showed when writing practice continued over time, it led to significant improvement compared to the control group with no writing practice.

Another possible reason for the no between-group differences may go back to the study participants' learning environment as just briefly mentioned in Sheen's (2007) study. Shintani and Ellis (2013) found no effect of direct CF on the learners' use of indefinite articles, linking this result to their being ESL learners, not EFL learners who are generally more exposed to grammar teaching and thus more sensitive to their own grammatical competence. The current study, in fact, employed Korean learners of English in an EFL context, which may then imply that both the feedback and no feedback groups were

already psycolinguistically ready to use any grammatical information in their L2 written production, especially equipped by the explicit instruction followed by writing practice, as described previously. Another possible cause of the no effect of direct, metalinguistic CF in this study, related to the L2 learning environment, lies with the manner of delivering metalinguistic explanations to the learners. The learners in this study were online learners enrolled in an online university; thus, their only way of receiving metalinguistic explanations was through writing. However, as synthesized earlier on the findings of the two studies (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005), oral provision of metalinguistic explanations may be more effective than the written version. In explaining certain errors of language that learners have made, face to face communication is assumed to be more effective for drawing their attention than one-way written delivery. Although there are some other studies where written metalinguistic explanations served beneficial (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Sheen, 2007; Shintani & Ellis, 2013) their participants were daily or weekly engaged in a real-time, face to face communication with their teachers, unlike the learners in this study whose main communication was done online, but in a no-real time manner. In other words, in this kind of context, even when explaining certain errors that learners made themselves, the extent of their individual interest or motivations for attending to the written explanations may make a difference in their learning outcome. This attention issue in a no-real time, online learning environment requires further research.

Finally, this study revealed that what appeared to improve when both the indefinite and definite articles were combined was actually due to the improvement of the definite articles correctly used as second mention. The previous discussion on the possible effect of explicit instruction followed by writing practice may also explain this improvement by both groups, but another perspective can also be taken, specifically, the learning task of indefinite versus definite articles. The fact that the learners improved only on the definite articles in this study can be interpreted as their having less difficulty with that particular function. It may be true that learning the indefinite article requires more knowledge than learning the definite article. For example, in order to correctly use the indefinite article when a noun is first mentioned, learners first need to know the countability of that noun (e.g., a suitcase vs. luggage). Thus, if a learner used "a luggage" for first mention in his or her story, the indefinite article accuracy would decrease as the result of oversuppliance of the article in an nonobligatory context. In the case of the definite article, in contrast, if, for example, the noun "luggage" is used to refer to a noun previously mentioned, then "the luggage" can be correctly used (e.g., The other thief stole his luggage. After stealing the luggage, the two thieves ran away.). In other words, even if the learner did not know that "luggage" is a noncount noun, they would be able to correctly use "the" because the definite article as second mention is not constrained by the countability of a noun. These then may explain

why the learners in this study improved only on the use of the definite article. In fact, the indefinite article was reported to be late acquired from previous research (Huebner, 1983; Parrish, 1987).

VI. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

This study was carried out with two main purposes, that is, a) to investigate whether the rule-governed article accuracy can be improved by an L2 writing instructor's direct, metalinguistic WCF provided in an unfocused manner and b) to assess the article accuracy of both the combined and separate functions of the articles used as first and second mention, a gap in previous research. Although the use of the definite articles significantly improved over time, the results showed no effect of the specific feedback type implemented in this particular researched context. The main reasons for these findings were previously discussed; however, more limitations of this study exist and need to be acknowledged with the implications for better-designed future research. First, the order of the two picture-based written tasks (descriptive and narrative tasks) was not counterbalanced. However, in a future research setting, if this counterbalancing is allowed, it would be better to use tasks in a different order so as to minimize the possible order effect. Second, the use of the different pictures resulted in quite different numbers of the indefinite and definite articles. This should also be considered in future research. Based on the experience of using the two different genres of pictures in this study, a narrative, story telling picture seems to be better for eliciting relatively comparable numbers of both the indefinite and definite articles rather than a descriptive picture containing a range of various characters but with no readily shown storyline. Third, the nature of the direct, metalinguistic CF provided in this study was reactive; that is, the feedback was provided as a response to the learners' actual errors. This type of reactive CF takes a lot of time, causing L2 instructors to hesitate to give error correction, especially if the class size is large as in the online university investigated in this study. Thus, as in Shintani and Ellis' (2013) study - using a handout of written metalinguistic explanations – future research could explore this use of preemptive treatment in improving L2 learners' grammatical accuracy. It is hoped that the findings of future research will provide both time-efficient and effective L2 writing instruction.

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APPENDIX A

Student Sample Writing & Example of Direct, Metalinguistic WCF[7]

When I was 23 years-old, I went to Europe to travel. I went around France, Italy, the United Kingdom, and greece. It was **very exciting and special time (-> a very exciting and special time)** to me. because I could learn about other counties culture and refresh myself. While I was waiting for a train to France from the United Kingdom, I took pictures. At that time, I saw **a boy who were crying** in the subway station. But nobody helped him.

The subway station was full of people, and they looked very busy. There were two trains both sides. one just arrived at the station. They took buses or got on taxies. And the other **be (-> was)** scheduled to depart to Greenfields at 8:55. The time was at 8:53. so, some people was running not **to late (-> to be late)**. After a director checked the ticket, they could take a seat. They were breathing hard on the chairs. The right side, a woman

[7] The student essay and the researcher's WCF were retyped here with no changes made except the following: The metalinguistic explanations, originally provided in Korean, are presented in English, and the red, brown, and blue colors, originally used to code different types of errors, were removed and are now presented in bold.

sold some tea and snacks in front of a restaurant. two handsome guys and the pretty woman were talking about something. There were laughing continuously. maybe they knew each other. because their talking didn't stop until I left. Anyway, like that, Everybody were busy, so anybody didn't care of **a (-> the) crybaby** who sat on **the (-> a)** big brown suitcase. Once, a officer man who worked at the railroad passed by him. But he didn't ask anything to him. The officer just walked fast to other place. I asked the cry baby. "Why were you alone". He answered, "I lost my mother". I decided to help him. Actually, I had hesitated to help him because my English skill was not good. but, When I heard his story, I made up my mind. First of all, He said to me his mother. She had blond hair, and wearing glasses, blue-shirts and darked-pants. She was tall and thin. I went around the subway station to look for her. but I could not find. After I went to The railroad office with him to be on the air. finally, his mother came to there. Tears formed up her eyes and I as also. She wanted to invite me to her house, but could not go because I had to go.

It happened 3years ago. But sometimes I remind the happening when I see **crying boy (-> a crying boy).** and I wonder he is ok. Someday, hope to see him again.

Red color: As instructed in the task directions, the writer visited the train station in the picture before, so when describing the train station, the verb tense must be the past tense.
Brown color: When we use a count noun in English, we need to use either the indefinite article (a/an) or the definite article (the) before that noun. One of the reasons for this usage is that as indicated in the task directions provided previously, the writer wants to help the reader who has never visited the train station in the picture imagine what it looked like. Therefore, when a person or thing is first introduced to the reader, we use the indefinite article (a/an) which means the noun used is new information to the reader. However, if this noun is mentioned again later, we use the definite article (the), which tells the reader that the noun with the definite article is the same person or thing described earlier with the indefinite article.
Blue color: As used in the sentence, when the adjective (late) is used with the to-infinitive, there must be the be-verb before the adjective.

APPENDIX B

Picture Used for Descriptive Written Task

Directions: The given picture describes a busy train station. Imagine that you visited the place before, and now you're describing the station to someone who has never visited it before. Please describe the station in detail and as precisely as possible. However, you may also use your imagination if it can help make your composition more interesting.



APPENDIX C

Picture Used for Narrative Written Task

Directions: There are six pictures in total. If you connect them in the order provided, they will become one interesting story. Based on these pictures, please write a narrative paragraph.



Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: Secondary and tertiary

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