

The Role of Individual Differences in Second Language Writing Corrective Feedback

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Abstract

As can be deduced from current research on the effects of written corrective feedback (CF) on raising the accuracy level of the second language (L2) writers, there seems to be a gap in the literature, namely that individual differences have not received careful investigation as they may affect the usefulness of CF. This article examines the most recent studies in L2 written CF and individual differences with the intention of building an intersection between the two fields. It suggests that the contradictions in the findings of the effectiveness of different types of CF can be attributed to individual differences. Given the limited scope of this article, only aptitude and working memory will be discussed. Although individual variations in aptitude, motivation, working memory, and L2 proficiency have been proven to be useful in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research, it would appear that these differences have been overlooked by researchers in the field of written CF in L2 writing. Based on the most recent studies in L2 written CF and individual differences, this paper hypothesizes that direct metalinguistic correction would benefit learners with higher aptitude than those with lower aptitude. It also assumes that learners with higher working memory capacity will benefit more from different types of CF than learners with lower working memory capacity.

Keywords: aptitude, corrective feedback, individual differences, second language writing, working memory