

GAS vs. PAS in Written Feedback: Discrepancies Between Pedagogical Beliefs and Classroom Practices

Hafsa Karamat Meo

University of Lahore, Lahore, Pakistan

Hafsa.karamat@ell.uol.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This study investigates discrepancies between teachers' beliefs, classroom practices, and student preferences regarding written corrective feedback (WCF) in postgraduate English programs in Lahore. It contrasts the Giving Answer Strategy (GAS), where teachers supply corrections, with the Prompting Answer Strategy (PAS), where teachers provide cues for self-repair. Using a convergent parallel mixed-methods design, data were collected from 30 teachers and 100 postgraduate students through marked scripts (N=100), semi-structured interviews (N=30), and questionnaires (N=100). Reliability was established through piloting and Cronbach's α ($\alpha=0.82$). Results revealed a belief–practice–preference gap: teachers' actual practices relied heavily on GAS (67.9% of corrections, with explicit correction dominant), while 83% of teachers expressed a belief in PAS. Students, however, preferred GAS, particularly explicit correction (61%) and recast (55%). These findings highlight tensions between pedagogical ideals, institutional constraints, and learner expectations, suggesting the need for teacher training that integrates PAS while orienting students to its benefits.

Keywords: Feedback, Writing, GAS, PAS, Teacher Beliefs, Student Preferences

1. INTRODUCTION

Feedback plays a crucial role in second language acquisition as it informs learners of errors and guides them to improvements [7]. Teachers employ a variety of strategies, often influenced by institutional expectations or according to learners' needs. Among these, the Giving Answer Strategy (GAS) provides direct corrections, while the Prompting Answer Strategy (PAS) offers clues that encourage self-correction. Previous research has explored corrective feedback in oral

contexts, but relatively less is known about preferences and practices in written work [4], [9], [13]. This study focuses on postgraduate settings in Lahore to examine how teachers implement GAS and PAS, how students perceive and practice align with teachers' articulated beliefs. It addresses the gap in written corrective feedback literature by adapting Lyster & Ranta's (1997) framework from oral to written contexts.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Although teacher-written feedback has been widely examined, limited attention has been given to the specific strategies employed in providing corrective feedback on students' written work. In particular, the Giving Answer Strategy (GAS) and the Prompting Answer Strategy (PAS), originally conceptualised in oral corrective feedback frameworks, remain underexplored in written contexts. This study addresses this gap by investigating teachers' awareness and use of GAS and PAS, and by comparing their reported beliefs, actual practices, and students' preferences in postgraduate English programs.

1.2 Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How frequently do university teachers employ Giving Answer Strategies (GAS) and Prompting Answer Strategies (PAS) when providing feedback on postgraduate students' written assignments?
2. What are postgraduate students' perceptions and preferences regarding GAS and PAS?
3. What are university teachers' beliefs about the effectiveness of GAS and PAS in written corrective feedback?

1.3 Implications of the Study

The findings are expected to provide teachers with greater awareness of how their written feedback practices align—or misalign—with both their stated pedagogical beliefs and students' preferences. By identifying these discrepancies, the study provides practical insights into how feedback strategies can be refined to strike a balance between efficiency, accuracy, and learner autonomy. In a broader perspective, the study underscores the necessity of context-sensitive teacher training and the paramount importance of integrating student viewpoints into feedback methodologies.

1.4 Organisation of the Paper

The remainder of this paper is organised as follows. Section 2 outlines the research methodology, including participants, instruments, procedures, and coding scheme. Section 3 presents the results of the analysis of teacher-marked scripts, teacher interviews, and student questionnaires. Section 4 presents a comprehensive analysis of the research findings, drawing upon pertinent literature for contextualisation. Section 5 concludes the discussion by summarising the key findings and proposing actionable recommendations.

Section 6 concludes the report by summarising the main points and providing a final assessment of the research. acknowledges the study's limitations. Finally, references and appendices are provided at the end of the paper.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study employed a convergent parallel mixed-methods design [7]. Data collection and analysis were conducted concurrently to triangulate findings from scripts, interviews, and questionnaires.

Participants:

A total of 30 teachers (M.Phil. qualification and over 5 years of experience) and 100 postgraduate students (aged 19–20) participated. Teachers were selected from the University of Multipurpose Technology (UMT), National University of Law and Multipurpose Technology (NUML), and University of Science and Technology (UOS). Students were randomly sampled across various faculties.

Instruments:

Teacher-marked scripts (N=100) provided evidence of classroom practices.

Semi-structured teacher interviews (N=30) explored beliefs and rationales. A 13-item student questionnaire (N=100) elicited learner preferences. Reliability was established with Cronbach's $\alpha=0.82$. Coding scheme: Lyster & Ranta's (1997) feedback categories were adapted. GAS included explicit correction, recast, and repetition. PAS included metalinguistic cues, clarification requests, and elicitation. Mixed cases were coded with a primary (final correction) and a secondary (supporting cue).

2.1. Coding Scheme Adaptation

Coding scheme and mixed-case rule. Lyster & Ranta's (1997) oral corrective-feedback categories were adapted for written feedback and grouped under two strategies: the Giving Answer Strategy (GAS) and the Prompting Answer Strategy (PAS). For this study, the mapping was:

1. GAS (teacher supplies the answer): Explicit correction (teacher supplies the correct form), Recast (teacher reformulates the learner's sentence), Repetition (teacher highlights or re-copies the error with an explicit signal).
2. PAS (teacher prompts learner to self-correct): Metalinguistic cues (grammar codes or brief rule reminders), Clarification requests (comments indicating meaning is unclear), Elicitation (underlining, blanks, or prompts that require the learner to generate the correction).

Mixed cases: where a teacher used both prompting and a direct correction in the same episode (e.g., clarifying comment followed by a final correction), we coded primary = final

correction and secondary = preceding cue. All frequency counts reported in the tables and figures represent primary strategy codes only.

2.2. Ethical Considerations

Ethical principles were rigorously observed, adhering to four key requirements: the obligation to provide information, obtain consent, maintain confidentiality, and limit data use to research purposes. Participants were fully informed about the study's objectives and assured of their right to withdraw or refuse to answer interview questions at any time. Personal identities remain confidential outside the research team, and all collected data are managed professionally and exclusively for research purposes.

2.3. Selected Excerpts from Teacher-Marked Scripts

Written samples were obtained from postgraduate teachers. Selected excerpts from the 100 collected texts are presented below.

Excerpt 1. Explicit correction (GAS).

Learner: a tragedy for the poor or a beauty for me

Teacher: a tragedy for the poor and beauty for me

Feedback Strategy: Giving Answer Strategy (GAS)

Technique: Explicit Correction

This excerpt illustrates explicit correction, where the teacher directly provides the correct form, consistent with the Lyster and Ranta framework.

Excerpt 2. Explicit correction (GAS).

Learner: I want visit the whole world.

Teacher: I want to travel the whole world.

Feedback Strategy: GAS

Technique: Explicit Correction

Here, the teacher explicitly reformulates the sentence, offering the correct version as guidance for the learner.

Excerpt 3. Clarification request (PAS).

Learner: I joind university of central Punjab for my becholer degree program

Teacher: I joined University of Central Punjab for my becholer (spelling) degree program.

Feedback Strategy: Prompting Answer Strategy (PAS)

Technique: Clarification Request

In this case, the teacher flags a spelling problem by marking “(spelling),” prompting the student to self-correct rather than supplying the correction directly.

Excerpt 4. Mixed strategy (GAS + PAS).

Learner: if offered the chance to pursue further study at Harvard business school in the city.

Teacher: if offered the chance to pursue further studies at Harvard Business School in the city?

Feedback Strategy: GAS & PAS

Techniques: Recast (GAS) + Clarification Request (PAS)

Coding Note: This mixed case was coded as **GAS (primary)** due to the explicit correction (“study” → “studies”), with **PAS (secondary)** noted for the clarification request. The teacher both guides directly and prompts further elaboration.

Excerpt 5. Metalinguistic cue (PAS).

Learner: [long sentence omitted]

Teacher: [comment: long sentence]

Feedback Strategy: PAS

Technique: Metalinguistic Cue

Here, the teacher highlights the issue by labeling it a “long sentence,” prompting the learner to recognize and revise the structure independently.

Excerpt 6. Explicit spelling correction (GAS).

Learner: ppl, europ

Teacher: people, Europe

Feedback Strategy: GAS

Technique: Explicit Correction

This excerpt demonstrates explicit correction, where the teacher directly rewrote the misspelled words “ppl” and “europ” as “people” and “Europe.”

2.4 Excerpts from Teachers’ Interviews

Excerpt 1.

“I prefer critical thinking; therefore, instead of providing the answers, I opt for prompting students to correct their errors.”

This teacher emphasized that students should be given opportunities to self-correct rather than being provided with corrections for every error.

Excerpt 2.

“I prefer to give prompts for choice of words, pointing out gaps within ideas, which is ultimately essential for producing effective writing.”

The teacher here highlighted the value of PAS techniques, such as underlining errors or inserting question marks, to guide students without directly correcting them.

Excerpt 3.

“I circle the mistakes and write a note to the students to discuss it with me later on.”

This practice reflects the belief that comments and delayed discussion are sufficient to help learners identify and address errors, aligning with PAS principles.

Excerpt 4.

“No, I only give feedback on selected errors due to the lack of time. We should only comment on mistakes that are important to tell; giving comprehensive feedback requires a lot of time.”

This teacher underscored the role of time constraints, suggesting that while PAS is valued, workload often necessitates selective rather than comprehensive feedback.

Collectively, these excerpts demonstrate that educators hold a positive view of PAS as a means of fostering autonomy and critical thinking skills. However, they also recognise the existence of contextual constraints, such as time constraints and the substantial marking workload, which can impede its consistent implementation.

Table 1. Summary of Excerpts by Feedback Strategy and Technique

Excerpt	Learner Sample (simplified)	Teacher Feedback	Strategy	Technique	Notes
1	<i>a tragedy for the poor or a beauty for me</i>	<i>a tragedy for the poor and beauty for me</i>	GAS	Explicit correction	Direct correction of wording
2	<i>I want visit the whole world.</i>	<i>I want to travel the whole world.</i>	GAS	Explicit correction	Direct reformulation of verb phrase
3	<i>I joind university... becholer degree program</i>	<i>I joined... (spelling)</i>	PAS	Clarification request	Teacher flags spelling issue
4	<i>if offered... Harvard business school...</i>	<i>if offered... Harvard Business School?</i>	GAS + PAS	Recast + Clarification	Coded GAS primary, PAS secondary

5	<i>[long sentence]</i>	<i>comment: long sentence</i>	PAS	Metalinguistic cue	Teacher highlights structural problem
6	<i>ppl, europ</i>	<i>people, Europe</i>	GAS	Explicit correction	Teacher rewrites spelling directly

3. RESULTS

A total of **315 primary instances** of written feedback were coded across 100 teacher-marked scripts (see Table 1). Teachers predominantly used **GAS**, with **explicit correction** the single most frequent primary technique (176 instances, **55.9%**). Within **PAS**, **metalinguistic cues** were the most common (85 instances, **27.0%**). Elicitation (a PAS technique) was rare (4 instances, **1.3%**) and **is not** a GAS technique. Mixed cases were resolved using the primary/secondary rule described in Methods; reported frequencies reflect the primary code only. (See Figure 1 for the distribution of primary techniques.)

Table 2 – Frequency of Feedback Techniques

Technique	Frequency	Strategy
Repetition	6	GAS
Recast	8	GAS
Explicit Correction	176	GAS
Metalinguistic Cue	85	PAS
Clarification Req.	36	PAS
Elicitation	4	PAS

Table 3 – Strategy Totals

Strategy	Frequency	Percentage
GAS	190	67.9%
PAS	125	32.1%
Total	315	100%

Table 4 – Teacher Preferences for Feedback Strategy

Strategy	Number of Teachers	Percentage
-----------------	---------------------------	-------------------

GAS	5	16.7%
PAS	25	83.3%
Total	30	100%

Table 5. Group comparison of student preferences: GAS vs. PAS (N=100 students).

Group	Count	%
Students preferring GAS	61	61
Students preferring PAS	39	39

$\chi^2 (1) = 2.02, p = 0.155$ (ns)

4. DISCUSSION

The findings reveal a complex picture of written corrective feedback (WCF) practices in postgraduate English programs. Teachers' marked scripts showed a dominant reliance on Giving Answer Strategies (GAS), particularly explicit correction, despite interview data indicating strong beliefs in Prompting Answer Strategies (PAS). This mismatch reflects a wider belief–practice gap reported in L2 feedback research [1], [3], [14]. Practical pressures, such as workload and institutional demands, appear to constrain teachers from implementing their preferred approaches.

Students' responses added another layer of complexity. Although raw percentages suggested a preference for GAS, statistical testing showed the difference was not significant, indicating more balanced attitudes than initially assumed. This highlights an important nuance: while students often seek direct correction, a notable minority value PAS, suggesting potential openness to blended feedback approaches.

Overall, the triangulation of teacher beliefs, teacher practices, and student preferences demonstrates that WCF is shaped not only by pedagogical philosophy but also by institutional structures and learner expectations. The key implication is that sustainable feedback practice requires integration of both strategies, tailored to context and supported by training and awareness-building.

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study contributes to understanding how teachers' beliefs, actual practices, and students' preferences intersect in the domain of written corrective feedback. The evidence points to a three-way misalignment, where teachers favour PAS in principle, employ GAS in practice, and students lean toward GAS but with mixed attitudes. Rather than privileging one approach, the study

emphasises the need for balance and adaptability in WCF, where strategies are blended to address accuracy, autonomy, and contextual realities.

Several recommendations emerge from the findings. Firstly, teacher education should emphasise flexible feedback strategies that integrate immediacy (GAS) with developmental support (PAS). Secondly, institutional measures are necessary to reduce workload barriers that limit the utilisation of PAS. Thirdly, student orientation should highlight the long-term value of PAS to mitigate reliance on direct correction. Finally, future research should adopt longitudinal, cross-institutional designs to trace the development of blended feedback practices and evolving student attitudes. Collectively, these measures can promote a more balanced feedback culture that supports both accuracy and learner autonomy.

6. LIMITATIONS

This study is subject to limitations due to its reliance on a convenience sample from three Lahore Universities, which restricts its generalizability. The dataset size (100 scripts, 30 interviews, 100 questionnaires) was relatively small, and the quantitative analysis employed only frequency counts and χ^2 tests. Furthermore, the study relied on self-reported data from teachers and students, which may be susceptible to bias. Future research should adopt larger and more diverse samples and longitudinal designs to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

REFERENCES

- [1] Ç. Atmaca, "Contrasting perceptions of students and teachers: Written corrective feedback," *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, pp. 166–182, 2016.
- [2] N. Alkhatib, *Written corrective feedback at a Saudi university: English language teachers' beliefs, students' preferences, and teachers' practices*. PhD dissertation, Univ. of Essex, 2015.
- [3] S. Albakri, "Written corrective feedback: Teachers' beliefs, practices and challenges in an Omani context," *Arab Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 44–73, 2016.
- [4] J. Bitchener, S. Young, and D. Cameron, "The effect of difficult types of corrective feedback on ESL student writing," *Journal of Second Language Writing*, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 191–205, 2005.
- [5] J. Chandler, "The efficacy of various kinds of error feedback for improvement in the accuracy and fluency of student writing," *Journal of Second Language Writing*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 267–296, 2003.
- [6] S. Chen, H. Nassaji, and Q. Liu, "EFL learners' perceptions and preferences of written corrective feedback: A case study of university students from mainland China," *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 217–226, 2016.
- [7] R. Ellis, *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994.

- [8] D. Ferris, *Treatment of error in second language writing*. Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 2002.
- [9] D. Ferris, "The 'grammar correction' debate in L2 writing: Where are we, and where do we go from here?" *Journal of Second Language Writing*, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 49–62, 2004.
- [10] D. Ferris and B. Roberts, "Error feedback in L2 writing classes: How explicit does it need to be?" *Journal of Second Language Writing*, vol. 10, no. 3, pp. 161–184, 2001.
- [11] M. Thurlings, M. Vermeulen, K. Kreijns, T. Bastiaens, and S. Stijnen, "Development of the teacher feedback observation scheme: Evaluating the quality of feedback in peer groups," *Journal of Education for Teaching*, vol. 38, no. 2, pp. 193–208, 2012.
- [12] M. Thurlings, M. Vermeulen, T. Bastiaens, and S. Stijnen, "Understanding feedback: A learning theory perspective," *Educational Research Review*, vol. 9, pp. 1–15, 2013.
- [13] S. Kaivanpanah, S. M. Alavi, and S. Sepehrinia, "Preferences for interactional feedback: Differences between learners and teachers," *Language Learning Journal*, vol. 43, no. 1, pp. 74–93, 2015.
- [14] H. T. Min, "A case study of an EFL writing teacher's belief and practice about written feedback," *System*, vol. 41, no. 3, pp. 625–638, 2013.

APPENDIX A – Student Questionnaire Items

Section A – Feedback Preference

Q1. If there are errors in your writing, which type of feedback should the teacher give, and why?

- a) **Giving Answer Strategy (GAS):** Teachers correct or reformulate the text.
 b) **Prompting Answer Strategy (PAS):** Teachers give feedback with the help of clues, hints, or underlining.

Response:

Section B – Usefulness of Feedback Types

The following sentences contain the same error, but the teacher has given a different type of feedback for each one. Circle the number that best describes how useful the feedback is:

1 = Not useful at all 2 = Not useful 3 = Doesn't matter 4 = Quite useful 5 = Very useful

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Since I arrived in Victoria, I am very lonely. | | | | | |
| 2. Since, I arrived in Victoria, I am very lonely. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Since, I arrived in Victoria, I am very lonely. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Since I arrived in Lahore, I am very lonely. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Since I arrived in Victoria, I am very lonely. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6. Since I arrived in Victoria, I am very lonely. 1 2 3 4 5

Section C – Preferred Feedback Techniques

Circle the number that shows how useful you find each type of feedback.

1 = Not useful at all 2 = Not useful 3 = Doesn't matter 4 = Quite useful 5 = Very useful

7. **Clues or directions** – The Teacher gives hints or directions on how to fix an error.
1 2 3 4 5
8. **Error identification** – Teacher points out where the error occurs, but does not correct it.
1 2 3 4 5
9. **Teacher correction** – Teacher corrects the error directly.
1 2 3 4 5
10. **Commentary** – The Teacher gives comments about the error but does not correct it.
1 2 3 4 5
11. **No feedback** – Teacher does not provide any feedback on the error.
1 2 3 4 5
12. **Reformulation** – Teacher rewrites the whole sentence or paragraph.
1 2 3 4 5

APPENDIX B – Teacher Interview Questions

Q1. Do you think it is important to give feedback on errors that students make in their writing?

Q2. Do you give feedback on all students' errors, or do you select some of them and only give feedback on those selected errors? Can you explain the reason why you chose selective or comprehensive feedback?

Q3. Which approach/technique do you prefer when giving feedback on student errors:

- Giving the correct answers (GAS), or
 - Prompting students to correct their own errors (PAS)?
- Please explain your preference.
-

Q4. What type of errors do you tend to focus on in your feedback, and why?

Q5. What type of errors do you think teachers should focus on in their feedback?

Q6. Which type of feedback do you usually use when giving feedback on writing? Why do you use it?

Q7. Which type of feedback do you think is more beneficial for improving students' writing? Please explain why.

Q8. Do you ask your students about their preferences regarding how much and which type of corrective feedback should be given? Please explain why or why not.
