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*Iranian Journal
of
Language Teaching Research*
ORIGINAL ARTICLE



Urmia University

Exploring the Relationship between Classroom Social Climate, Emotion Regulation Strategies and Written Corrective Feedback Engagement among Iranian EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) engagement, classroom social climate, and students' emotion regulation strategies across various proficiency levels is an under-explored area of research. In response to this gap, the present mixed-methods study examined the status of WCF engagement among a convenience sample of 54 Iranian undergraduate EFL learners with different levels of writing experiences. The required data were collected using WCF engagement, classroom social climate and emotion regulation strategy use questionnaires and focus group interviews. The correlation analyses indicated that there was a positive moderate relationship between WCF engagement and classroom social climate and a low relationship between WCF engagement and emotion regulation strategy use. Multiple regression analysis also showed that teachers' emotional support and learners' cognitive reappraisal strategies could best predict their WCF engagement level. Furthermore, despite the fact that learners with lower writing experiences had a higher mean score in WCF engagement compared to the mid and high writing experience groups, the ANOVA results did not show statistically significant differences among these groups of learners, which highlights the complexity of learners' engagement with WCF and the effects of various individual and contextual factors than mere writing experience. Finally, the qualitative analyses of students' focus group interview data revealed factors influencing their response to WCF (e.g., clarity and specificity of feedback and students' confidence and self-efficacy), and the strategies (e.g., seeking clarification and collaboration with peers) they used to respond to the feedback offered and improve their writing performance. The results imply that writing instructors should prioritize fostering a supportive classroom environment and encourage the use of emotion regulation strategies to enhance learners' engagement with WCF.

Keywords: Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) engagement; classroom social climate; emotion regulation strategies

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: 11 Apr. 2025

Revised version received: 18 July 2025

Accepted: 1 Feb. 2026

Available online: 1 Mar. 2026

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10.30466/ijltr.2026.56109.3000

Introduction

Written corrective feedback (WCF), defined as evaluative information, corrections and comments provided on learners' linguistic performance, serves as a widely-used pedagogical intervention in language education, intended to scaffold and improve students' writing skills (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Cheng & Zhang, 2024; Mao & Lee, 2022; Waluyo & Apridayani, 2024). In actual writing classroom environments, it is typical for educators to provide WCF, and both teachers and learners generally exhibit positive attitudes towards it (Li & Vuono, 2019). In fact, this scaffolding technique has the potential to enhance students' confidence in writing and expand the instructional resources available to both teachers and students (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Cheng & Liu, 2022; Yang, et al., 2023). Research primarily conceptualizes WCF as a pedagogical tool intended to improve students' writing accuracy (Suzuki et al., 2019); however, it frequently neglects to consider learner engagement with WCF. Providing feedback alone does not automatically ensure the improvement of L2 learners' writing performance. Carless and Boud (2018) characterize corrective feedback as a dialogic, two-way process, encompassing not only the teacher's provision of feedback but also the student's interpretation and response, which, in turn, informs future feedback strategies. To fully leverage the benefits of teachers' written feedback, it is essential for students to actively engage with this process. In fact, the existing body of research has failed to adequately address whether L2 writers act as passive receivers of teacher feedback or as active participants in the learning process (Hyland, 2011; Xu & Wang, 2023).

Learner engagement with feedback—specifically how they process, utilize, and respond to this pedagogical tool—has garnered increasing scholarly interest within the domain of L2 writing (e.g., Cheng et al., 2023; Hoang & Storch, 2024; Zhang & K. Hyland, 2018). The manner in which learners respond to and engage with teacher WCF is crucial, potentially more significant than the exploration of WCF alone, as benefits can vary among students (Ferris, 2010). Teachers often provide feedback; however, students with lower engagement levels may struggle to grasp this feedback, resulting in missed learning opportunities (Chen & Liu, 2022). Ellis (2010) argues that the varying benefits learners receive from WCF can largely be explained by differences in learner engagement and other individual differences and contextual variables. Researchers have also aimed to uncover the ways in which WCF is influenced by various contextual factors such as the type and nature of writing tasks, the quality of teacher-student relationships, and assessment criteria (Mao & Lee, 2022), as well as individual elements, including writing proficiency (Lee, 2008), aptitude (Shintani & Ellis, 2015), beliefs including person-related, peer-related, teacher-related, task-related and strategy related beliefs (Han, 2017), cognitive and regulatory capacities, and social-affective readiness (Han & Xu, 2021). Totally, it is believed that learner engagement is multifaceted, dynamic, and variable across cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions (Liu, 2024).

Furthermore, research on Teacher Written Feedback (TWF) has primarily been quasi-experimental, focusing on the effectiveness of feedback in enhancing writing performance. This narrow focus on written outcomes neglects the potential learning derived from the feedback process itself, including the individual and contextual factors influencing student engagement. In addition, Wang and Xu (2024) argue that prior qualitative research on L2 students' engagement with WCF, limited to discrete cases, constrains a comprehensive understanding of learners' engagement and its related factors within the L2 writing context. Therefore, there is a need for additional research examining

learner engagement with teacher feedback across all dimensions (language, content, organization, genre and overall quality) and how various writer-related and contextual factors mediate this engagement. Recent research indicates that learner engagement with feedback varies significantly across individuals and contexts (Tian & Zhou, 2020; Zheng et al., 2023). However, existing studies often overlook the interaction between individual and contextual factors.

The "situated nature" of individual traits (Dörnyei, 2015, p. 218) has been recognized in SLA and L2 writing research, with many scholars asserting that individual characteristics do not function in isolation regarding learner engagement. Consequently, some researchers advocate for a dynamic perspective that views individual variables—such as learning motivation, styles, aptitude, and strategies—as interacting with contextual factors (Han & Gao, 2020). Within the socio-constructivist paradigm, feedback research is characterized by a focus on processes, viewing feedback activities as opportunities for shared meaning-making. It posits that effective feedback naturally fosters student self-assessment and ongoing dialogue between teachers and students, emphasizing the importance of reciprocal interactions (Winstone & Carless, 2020). Thus, understanding individual factors necessitates considering the unique characteristics of the contexts in which they exist. Adding to the existing body of literature, the present study conducted in three naturalistic writing classroom settings intended to explore the possible role of classroom social climate and learners' emotion regulation strategies in their cognitive, affective and behavioral engagement with WCF.

Classroom social climate significantly impacts the learning process, influencing students' thoughts and behaviors (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Karabchuk & Roshchina, 2023; Klem & Connell, 2004; Waluyo & Tuan, 2021). Students' perceptions of this environment affect their self-beliefs and self-regulatory strategies, subsequently shaping their engagement and achievement (Patrick et al., 2011). Given the relational-emotional nature of L2 learning, a positive classroom climate is crucial for reaching desired outcomes (Wang & Kruk, 2024). Emotional literacy, encompassing the ability to detect and manage emotions, can foster such positive relationships (Ghiasvand et al., 2024).

Emotion regulation, involving the recognition, understanding, and management of emotions (Von Scheve, 2012), is integral to self-regulated learning, influencing the valence, duration, and intensity of learners' emotions (Boekaerts, 2011). This regulation promotes positive emotions and reduces negative ones, ultimately supporting academic achievement and well-being (Pekrun, 2006). Considering this framework, the interplay between classroom social climate, emotion regulation, L2 writing, and feedback warrants investigation, particularly regarding its potential influence on Iranian EFL learners' engagement with WCF. A supportive classroom environment, coupled with effective emotion regulation strategies, may enhance learners' receptiveness to feedback and, consequently, improve their L2 writing skills.

Furthermore, the study sought to investigate whether students' levels of engagement with written corrective feedback might differ according to their prior academic writing experience, as defined by the amount and quality of writing instruction they had received and the variety of writing tasks they had undertaken during their academic careers. Additionally, the students were interviewed to identify the factors influencing their engagement with and responses to the WCF received on different aspects of their written texts. This study is significant as it seeks to identify the learner and

contextual variables affecting engagement, aiming to illustrate the interconnected relationship between these variables.

Literature Review

Learners' engagement with corrective feedback

In educational psychology, student engagement is considered an encompassing term that signifies the degree to which students participate in and dedicate themselves to their learning (Deci & Ryan, 2000). This construct is multidimensional, incorporating behavioral, cognitive, and affective dimensions that are interrelated and mutually support each other in students' academic endeavors (Fredricks et al., 2004). Behavioral engagement encompasses students' appropriate conduct in the classroom and their active participation in learning tasks and activities. Cognitive engagement is characterized by the degree to which students utilize their cognitive and metacognitive processes during learning. Affective engagement pertains to students' emotional and attitudinal responses to their classroom learning experiences. Engaged students exhibit different levels of participation and persistence in learning, invest effort in tasks and activities, and display varying degrees of interest, motivation, and enjoyment in their studies (Fredricks et al., 2004; Derakhshan et al., 2022). These students generally demonstrate greater resilience and adopt more flexible learning strategies and behaviors, which in turn contribute to more favorable learning results (Liu et al., 2023; Zhong & Zhan, 2024).

In recent years, there has been an increase in research on L2 learner engagement (see Hiver, et al., 2021 for a review), particularly concerning corrective feedback. Building on the framework established by Fredricks et al. (2004), Ellis (2010) made important contributions to our understanding of learner engagement with corrective feedback by defining it as students' reactions to feedback and analyzing it across three interrelated dimensions: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. Within this multidimensional framework, engagement with feedback refers to how learners receive, perceive, interpret, and apply the feedback they receive (van der Kleij, 2020). Subsequent studies have further examined the three dimensions of engagement by identifying specific sub-categories (Zheng et al., 2023). Affective engagement encompasses the emotional responses of learners, including their receptiveness to teacher feedback and their enjoyment in engaging with it. Additionally, it involves their evaluative judgments, such as admiration or criticism, as well as their expressions of appreciation, which encompass value, interest, praise, and gratitude (Zheng & Yu, 2018). Behavioral engagement involves the actions taken during the revision process, such as deletion or substitution, along with the strategies employed for revision like consulting the teacher or using dictionaries to respond to feedback. Cognitive engagement includes several elements: noticing (recognition of WCF), understanding (diagnosis of identified errors), meta-cognitive operations (strategies to manage mental processes), and cognitive operations (skills to respond to WCF) (Wang & Xu, 2024).

Empirical studies on learner engagement with teachers' written corrective feedback (LETWCF) have predominantly employed qualitative methodologies, focusing on the influence of factors such as feedback characteristics and error types, learners' beliefs and emotions, and their language

proficiency on learners' engagement with teachers' WCF (Han & Hyland, 2015; Wang & Xu, 2024; Zhang & Hyland, 2018). To evaluate the level of engagement, these studies have generally employed a three-stage process that includes collecting and coding learners' main drafts, teacher's WCF, and students' revised texts, often accompanied by interview transcriptions and oral recordings (Zheng & Yu, 2018). Han and Hyland (2015) ascribed variations in learners' engagement with written WCF to their beliefs and experiences regarding WCF and L2 writing, their L2 learning objectives, and the contextual interactions within which WCF was received and processed. Han (2019), adopting an ecological framework, posited that students' learning and engagement with WCF is contingent upon their capacity and willingness to recognize and utilize the resources that context—spanning from the textual to the broader sociocultural levels—offers and their ability in identifying and acting on the embedded learning opportunities WCF provides. Han and Yu (2019) also considered learners' motivation, beliefs and metalinguistic knowledge as the main determinants of their engagement with WCF. Tsao et al. (2021) revealed that learners' engagement with WCF is mediated by their attitude, aptitude, motivation and anxiety levels. Cheng and Liu (2022) also found that EFL learners' cognitive, affective and behavioral engagement with corrective feedback is mediated by their language proficiency and nature of feedback (i.e., local vs. global). Shen and Chong (2023), in a qualitative research synthesis study, confirmed "dynamic, contextualized and individualized nature of learner engagement with written corrective feedback" (p. 276) and pointed to the scarcity of research on learners' engagement with WCF.

Furthermore, the findings have demonstrated the complexity of learners' engagement with CF indicating both between-subject and within-subject differences. In fact, while most learners are willing to receive WCF, they exhibit varying degrees of affective engagement (Hyland, 2003; Zhang & Hyland, 2018). Some learners experience positive emotions, whereas others may feel discouraged or frustrated (Tian & Zhou, 2020; Zheng & Yu, 2018). Learners with high engagement generally outperformed those with moderate engagement (Zhang & Hyland, 2018), and students receiving greater scaffolding in engagement displayed increased error correction and L2 uptake (Nguyen, 2021). Regarding within-subject differences in learner engagement, research indicates that students display varying levels of engagement across the three dimensions: affective, behavioral, and cognitive. For instance, low-proficiency students have a positive attitude towards teachers' WCF, signifying their high affective engagement, but exhibited limited capacities for cognitive and behavior engagement (Zheng & Yu, 2018). Cheng et al. (2023) noted that students showed greater variability in their affective and behavioral engagement compared to their cognitive engagement. This variability arises because they face few challenges in understanding and processing teacher feedback. Nonetheless, Wang and Xu (2024) assert that earlier qualitative studies on LETWCF, conducted from the perspective of isolated cases, hinder our broader understanding of LETWCF among L2 writing students and its related factors within the L2 writing context. This suggests that a broader examination of LETWCF is necessary to enhance our comprehension of its impact on L2 writing students and how it relates to their overall engagement. Accordingly, the present study, adopting a mixed-method design, examined the possible role of a contextual variable (i.e., classroom social climate) and an affective construct (i.e., learners' emotion regulation in writing) in Iranian EFL learners' engagement with WCF.

Classroom social climate (CSC)

Research has shown that engagement is highly dynamic and context-dependent exhibiting varying degrees of ecological influence (Christenson et al., 2012). Drawing on social-cognitive theory, the learning environment can influence students' motivation, which in turn impacts their level of engagement (Zhong & Zhan, 2024). Because academic engagement is highly context- and situation-specific, this construct is strongly shaped by the classroom environment (Cleary et al., 2012), which encompasses a psychological setting, including teachers' behaviors, peer relationships, and learning tasks (Peng, 2019). In an ideal EFL classroom, teachers offer both instructional and emotional support by selecting appropriate tasks, while peers contribute by assisting with learning and providing feedback and encouragement (Hoi, 2022). These environmental factors significantly affect the extent to which students engage in classroom activities (Dincer et al., 2019). Nonetheless, our understanding of the relationship between classroom social climate (CSC), which is context-dependent, in relation to Iranian EFL students' engagement in academic tasks has remained speculative.

Research on the dimensions of CSC has recognized four interrelated constructs: (1) teacher academic support, which represents students' perceptions of the teacher's investment in their learning; (2) teacher emotional support, reflecting students' views on the teacher's concern for their well-being; (3) classroom mutual respect, where students are encouraged to appreciate each other's feelings; and (4) task-related interaction, where students perceive that the teacher promotes interactions among them during class (Patrick et al., 2007). The foundation of these dimensions of classroom social climate lies in the notion that students' perceptions of emotional support from their teacher, feelings of personal value and opportunity to engage with peers, and recognition of their teacher's commitment to their learning are crucial antecedents for students' effort, engagement, and academic achievement (Joe et al., 2017).

The idea that each classroom possesses a distinctive psychological atmosphere which impacts both cognitive processes and student behavior has been recognized in educational theory for a century (Greeno, 2015). This phenomenon is particularly significant for L2 learning, where learner characteristics and development are shaped by various temporal and situational factors (e.g., Batstone, 2010; Larsen-Freeman, 2015; van Lier, 2004). By integrating diverse situative and individual constructs, researchers can examine learning and development in relation to context, illuminating how individuals adopt practices in specific contexts based on their ongoing participation in social practices (Nolen et al., 2015). The social-ecological features of the EFL classroom, referred to as classroom climate, emerge from the emotions of both teachers and students, influenced by their respective behaviors. Teacher behaviors encompass communication methods, classroom management, engagement with student perspectives, and the provision of support, whereas student behaviors include active participation, collaboration, and competition (Brandmiller et al., 2020; Garrett, 2008). In other words, interpersonal relationships, communication modes, and group processes within the classroom contribute to its social climate (Dörnyei & Murphey, 2003). The term "classroom climate" is linked to positive psychology, characterized as a "positive climate" that fosters enjoyment, connectedness, and enthusiasm in classroom interactions (Reyes et al., 2012) and encourages "emotion-based, democratic, friendly, interactive, and situated approaches to L2 education" (Lou & Derakhshan, 2024, p. 2). The

development of this positive climate stems from teachers' warm and supportive behaviors, which foster language development and enhance engagement in academic tasks (Qiu, 2022).

An increasing body of evidence indicates that the social climate of the classroom significantly influences the learning process, as well as the thoughts and behaviors of individuals within the classroom group (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Joe et al., 2017; Klem & Connell, 2004). Numerous beneficial outcomes can be attained within a nurturing classroom environment, which denotes the general ambiance or emotional atmosphere of the classroom (Barr, 2016; Pishghadam et al., 2021). Research indicates that a positive classroom climate can enhance student motivation, self-efficacy, concentration, engagement, task performance, achievement, attitude, enthusiasm, willingness to communicate and well-being (e.g., Elahi Shirvan & Taherian, 2020; Joe et al., 2017; Khajavy et al., 2018; Lim & Fraser, 2018; Zheng & Feng, 2023).

In classrooms with a positive social climate, students are more inclined to invest effort, employ self-regulated learning strategies, and seek assistance (Alzubaidi et al., 2016). At an individual level, students' perceptions of the classroom social environment affect their self-beliefs, which are linked to the application of adaptive self-regulatory strategies which, in turn, influence their engagement and academic achievement (Derakhshan & Fathi, 2024; Patrick et al., 2007). Classrooms characterized by a positive climate can enhance students' engagement and motivation for learning, thereby improving academic performance (Wang et al., 2021). Furthermore, while engagement has traditionally focused on cognitive and emotional aspects, recent explorations highlight its inherently social dimensions in EFL educational contexts (Joe et al., 2017; Wentzel, 2012). For example, Zhong and Zhan (2024) found that teacher support, task orientation and student cohesion, as dimensions of classroom environment could significantly influence Chinese EFL learners' engagement with academic writing. The present study also intends to check whether classroom social climate can influence EFL learners' engagement with written corrective feedback or not, since it is believed that teachers who offer informative feedback on students' learning progress in a supportive environment can modify learners' attitudes and mindsets, can enhance their motivation and self-efficacy beliefs and can contribute to their academic engagement, progress and achievement. Empirical studies have also confirmed that classroom psychological environment and teachers' support can directly influence EFL learners' feedback-seeking behavior (FSB) in L2 writing (Luan & Quan, 2025; Zhang, 2024; Zhang & Jiang, 2025), but, to the best of our knowledge, the relationship between CSC and EFL learners' engagement with WCF has not been well-investigated.

Emotion regulation strategy

A substantial body of research over the past decade demonstrates that learning English as a second or foreign language is deeply emotional and socially situated (Bensalem et al., 2024; Derakhshan & Noughabi, 2024; Derakhshan et al., 2024; Lin & Wang, 2024; Mercer, 2020; Wang et al., 2023; Xu et al., 2024). Learners' emotional experiences play a salient role in classroom engagement and learning, both as an independent factor and in conjunction with other variables (Dweck, 2006). Among the language skills, L2 writing presents significant pedagogical challenges due to the prevalence of negative affect and anxiety among learners (Zarrinabadi & Rahimi, 2022). These affective barriers can impede classroom participation and confidence. Consequently, research

should focus on identifying strategies to cultivate positive emotions in L2 writers, as these emotions are associated with increased engagement, motivation, and writing proficiency (Uzun, 2022).

Emotion regulation, a key construct in positive psychology, can enhance the effectiveness of both L2 learners and instructors' performance in classroom (Greenier et al., 2021). Defined as the intrinsic and extrinsic processes by which individuals modify, control, or evaluate their emotions to achieve specific goals (Wang et al., 2021), emotion regulation encompasses cognitive, behavioral, and psychological strategies used to manage emotional expression and experience (Zhang et al., 2020). Emotion regulation is how people manage their feelings. It involves choosing specific emotional responses to achieve various goals in different situations (Fan & Wang, 2022; Gross, 1998; Wang & Ye, 2021). Effective L2 students and teachers utilize emotion regulation strategies, such as up-regulating positive emotions to foster enjoyable learning environments and skillfully manage educational tasks (Greenier et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2020). Successful instruction, student achievement, and positive student-teacher relationships facilitate the regulation of both positive and negative emotions (Teng & Zhang, 2016), enabling teachers to address challenges effectively (Ghanizadeh & Moafian, 2010).

Emotion regulation strategies (ERS) can be defined as those emotion regulation processes that are, at least in part, consciously employed and oriented toward specific goals (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020). They are conceptualized as "attempts to influence which emotions one has, when one has them, and how one experiences or expresses these emotions" (Gross, 2015, pp. 4–5). In second language (L2) research, emotion regulation is often conceptualized using Gross's (1998, 2015) process model, which highlights cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression as key dimensions. Cognitive reappraisal, an antecedent-focused strategy (Lazarus & Alfert, 1964), involves modifying one's interpretation of a situation to lessen its potential negative emotional impact. Conversely, expressive suppression, a response-focused strategy, entails modulating emotional expression after the emotion has already arisen. Research suggests that cognitive reappraisal is correlated with increased positive and decreased negative affect, while expressive suppression is associated with greater negative affect and reduced positive affect (Sorić et al., 2013).

Existing L2 research links emotion regulation to factors such as self-efficacy, academic performance, group climate, willingness to communicate, educational resilience, engagement and well-being, perceived value of learning, burnout reduction, and reflection (Bakhtiar et al., 2018; Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2021; Bing et al., 2022; Dewaele & Dewaele, 2020; Fathi & Derakhshan, 2019; Ghanizadeh & Royaei, 2015; Greenier et al., 2021; Pekrun & Linnenbrink-Garcia, 2014), highlighting the need for further research on the impact of up-regulating positive and down-regulating negative emotions on L2 student achievement (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2024; Wang et al., 2021). Studies have also investigated the role of emotional regulation in online collaborative writing (Zhang et al., 2021), L2 speaking tasks (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2024), willingness to communicate (MacIntyre & Wang, 2021) and the processing of teacher feedback (Haga & Reinders, 2021). Nevertheless, while conceptual understanding of emotion has advanced, research on emotion regulation, particularly in relation to specific instructional approaches such as the students' engagement with WCF, remains scarce and deserves more research attention (Liu, 2024).

Within the domain of WCF research, L2 learners' affective responses are acknowledged as a critical component of their engagement with WCF (Ellis, 2010). These emotional responses are significant due to their interaction with the cognitive and behavioral facets of engagement, influencing learners' comprehension of WCF, revision strategies, and other L2 learning approaches (Ellis, 2010; Han & Hyland, 2015; Zheng & Yu, 2018). For example, Rowe (2017) asserts, a learner's or writer's "willingness to engage with feedback is determined in part by its emotional impact" (p. 159). Han and Hyland (2019) demonstrated the complexity of EFL students' emotional reactions to WCF, revealing that students experienced diverse emotions with varying foci, valence, and activation levels, which fluctuated throughout the revision process, despite initial reports of emotional neutrality. Sato (2022) found that L2 doctoral students experienced a range of positive and negative emotions arising from academic challenges, scholarly life, and social interactions, and employed emotional regulation strategies such as suppression and reappraisal to resolve the challenges. Zhang and Jiang (2025) also indicated that EFL learners' personal emotional factors such as their writing anxiety and confusion by consuming cognitive resources can negatively influence their proactive behavior towards WCF.

Previous research has established that the emotions triggered by WCF play a crucial role, as they interact with the cognitive and behavioral aspects of engagement. This includes learners' perceptions of WCF, their revision practices, and other related strategies for L2 writing and learning (Han & Hyland, 2015, 2019; Zheng & Yu, 2018), thus necessitating the adoption of effective emotion regulation strategies to counter the effects of these debilitating factors. In the same vein, Geng and Yu (2024), using the critical incident technique and retrospective interviews, identified four main categories of emotion-regulation strategies (i.e. cognitive change, task-related regulation, attention deployment and co-regulation) comprising 13 specific strategies employed by doctoral students to manage and calm their emotions during feedback sessions.

Overall, research indicates that the psychological impact of WCF is variable and contingent on individual learners' emotional responses and contextual variables. In fact, learners are not passive recipients of emotional experiences; rather, they actively engage with their emotions and leverage their capacity to modify sociocultural contexts (Wang & Lee, 2021) and employ self-regulation strategies to achieve personal objectives (Geng & Yu, 2024; Mahfoodh, 2017; Sato, 2022). In the same vein, the present study intends to study the interplay among classroom social climate, emotion regulation strategy use and Iranian EFL learners' engagement with WCF in writing courses by answering the following questions:

1. Are there any statistically significant correlations between classroom social climate, emotion regulation strategy use and written corrective feedback (WCF) engagement among Iranian EFL learners?
2. Which aspects of classroom social climate (namely, emotional and academic support and mutual respect) and emotion regulation strategies (namely, cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression) can best predict Iranian EFL learners' engagement with WCF?
3. Are there any statistically significant differences among students with different levels of academic writing experiences in their engagement with WCF?

4. What are the students' views regarding the factors influencing their engagement with WCF and the strategies they use to respond to teachers' feedback?

Method

Participants and setting

A convenience sample of 54 undergraduate TEFL students (15 males, 39 females) from a state university in southern Iran participated in the study. The students were all enrolled in courses taught by the instructor-researcher. The students were native speakers of Persian with ages ranging from 19 to 24. The language proficiency level of these students, as assessed by administering Oxford Placement Test in a concurrent study in the department, ranged from intermediate to advanced, reflecting the typical diversity of language proficiency levels in most of the Iranian EFL classes (Riazi & Rahimi, 2005). These students were from three writing classes in the university: 19 students from an advanced writing course; 17 students from an essay writing course and 18 students from writing technical passages in ELT course, which according to the quantity and quality of the training they received in writing and the types of the tasks they accomplished were categorized as low, mid and high experience writing groups, respectively.

The students in the advanced writing course, which aimed at establishing the knowledge of paragraph writing and competence in responding to real-life contextualized tasks, received instruction on different techniques of support (e.g., exemplification, details and explanation) and methods of paragraph development (such as description, process, facts and statistics, comparison and contrast, and cause and effect). The students in the essay writing course, based on the curriculum guidelines, were taught how to engage in integrated tasks and write expository, argumentative and problem-solution essays and practiced writing academic assignments like writing summaries and reports. The students in the research paper course (technically known as writing technical passages in ELT) benefited from instruction on the principles and conventions of writing different sections of a research paper from title to conclusion.

It should be noted that the study was conducted within natural university classroom settings, and all writing tasks were administered as part of the existing course requirements, thereby avoiding any external impositions on the students. In fact, each session was dedicated to teaching the aforementioned modes of writing and aspects of specific genres, presentation of exemplary models and task accomplishment, which at times continued to the following sessions as well. Before taking part in the study, students received a clear explanation of what the research involved, including its purpose, what they would be asked to do, and how their data would be used. They were free to participate voluntarily and were reminded that they could stop at any time without any negative consequences. To protect their privacy, all responses were kept confidential, and no identifying information was collected. We took every precaution to ensure their safety, comfort, and anonymity throughout the study, following recognized ethical research practices.

Instruments

Oxford Placement Test: To assess the participants' proficiency levels, the results of the Oxford Placement Test (2001), developed collaboratively by Oxford University Press and the University of Cambridge Local Examination Syndicate, were utilized. This test had previously been administered in conjunction with an ongoing study within the department. The test comprises two sections, totaling 60 items that evaluate vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension through cloze passages. The first section consists of forty multiple-choice questions that all students are required to answer. The second section is designed for more proficient students and features the same format; however, in the context of the present study, all participants were instructed to respond to every item. The allotted time for completing the test was 30 minutes. The internal consistency reliability of the test, estimated via Cronbach's alpha, was computed to be .86, indicating a satisfactory level of reliability for the purposes of this research.

Learner engagement with the teacher written corrective feedback scale (LETWCFS): LETWCFS developed by Wang and Xu (2024) was used to assess EFL learners' level of engagement with WCF. The scale had a total of 18 items using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) measuring three aspects of engagement each comprising 6 items: cognitive, affective and behavioral engagements. Wang and Xu (2024) employed exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to validate the proposed three-factor model. Furthermore, they evaluated the internal consistency, test-retest reliability, and convergent and discriminant validity of both the overall scale and its subscales. The findings indicate that the LETWCFS constitutes a reliable and valid tool for assessing second language learners' engagement with teacher-provided written corrective feedback within the context of English as a Foreign Language writing. After two writing instructors in the department established the content validity of the instrument and confirmed the clarity of the items in their original format for the intended students, the participants were asked to reflect on their experiences receiving various types of WCF from their instructor in each writing course and to objectively evaluate the extent of their cognitive, affective, and behavioral engagement. The reliability index for this scale measured by Cronbach's alpha was .90, which made it suitable to be used in the present study. In addition, the internal consistency reliability, as measured by Cronbach's alpha, was found to be satisfactory for each subscale examined. Specifically, the affective engagement subscale exhibited an α of 0.83, the cognitive engagement subscale an α of 0.79, and the behavioral engagement subscale an α of 0.84.

Emotion regulation questionnaire (ERQ): Gross and John's (2003) scale was used to measure the extent of learners' emotion regulation. This scale had 10 seven-point Likert scale items measuring two aspects of students' willingness to regulate their emotions: cognitive reappraisal (6 items) and expressive suppression (4 items). Previous studies have indicated excellent internal validity and reliability indexes for this two-factor model (e.g., Preece et al. 2019; Shafiee Rad & Jafarpour, 2022). Nevertheless, after two writing experts reviewed the instrument to assess its validity and quality, they found some of the items to be linguistically complex, which could hinder students' understanding of the intended points. So their suggested modifications were applied in the original instrument and then it was implemented. In addition, the overall reliability value for the questionnaire was .68 as measured by Cronbach's alpha. The subscales had the following reliability

values: cognitive reappraisal with .72 Cronbach's alpha and expressive suppression with .78 Cronbach's alpha.

Classroom social climate (CSC) measure: The scale adapted from Patrick et al. (2011) was used to measure students' perceptions of different aspects of classroom social climate. This scale had a total of 9 five-point Likert scale items assessing students' perceptions of the three dimensions of classroom climate in the writing courses they were taking: 3 items for Teachers' Academic Support, 4 items for Teachers' Emotional Support and 2 items for Classroom Mutual Respect. The appropriateness of treating the subscales as distinct latent variables was questioned by Joe et al. (2017), who established the validity of this measure. Consequently, each of the three subscales was aggregated and utilized as a unified indicator of classroom social climate. In the present study, two writing experts also confirmed the validity of the instrument and ensured the ease of the items for the students' understanding. The overall reliability value for this scale was .93 Cronbach's alpha and the following indexes for the three subscales: Teacher Academic Support $\alpha = 0.78$; Teacher Emotional Support, $\alpha=0.90$; Classroom Mutual Respect, $\alpha=0.93$.

Focus-group interviews: Five volunteer students from each class (i.e., a total of 15 students) participated in a focus group interview session arranged by the instructor-researcher (at the end of the spring semester of 2023-2024 academic year) to solicit their views on the factors influencing their engagement with their instructor's feedback and the actions they performed to respond to the instructor's feedback. The interview started with the following general questions designed based on Xu and Wang's (2023) interview questions intended to elicit students' opinions on their feedback-seeking behavior in writing and then based on the students' responses, some further follow-up questions were raised to add depth to the data:

Can you describe your general experience with receiving written feedback in your writing courses?

What are your first reactions and feelings while receiving feedback from your instructor?

What aspects of the feedback do you find most helpful or useful? Why? Can you give specific examples?

When you receive feedback, what steps do you usually take to understand it?

Can you describe a time when you successfully used teacher feedback to improve your writing? What did you do specifically?

What strategies do you use to motivate yourself to work on the feedback, especially if it's challenging or discouraging?

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in Persian to facilitate students' reflection, expression of their concerns and issues encountered while receiving feedback during the semester. Using the above open-ended questions, the discussion covered students' initial reactions to feedback, specific actions taken to understand and use feedback, and strategies they used to be more profitably engaged with the WCF provided. Follow-up questions and probes were used dynamically during the interviews to clarify responses and explore emerging themes further. It is worth-

mentioning that the interview session lasted until the time that students offered no new insights on the issues raised.

Procedures of Data Collection and Analysis

The present study adopted a mixed-methods research design to investigate the factors influencing a group of Iranian EFL learners' engagement with WCF in three naturalistic writing courses in a TEFL department at a State University in the south of Iran. In each session of the three writing courses, the students benefited from instruction on different aspects of writing and depending on the nature of the lesson were required to write a paragraph, an essay or part of a research paper (either in class time or outside of the class) and submit it to their instructor. These assignments were collected, commented and returned to the students for further reflection in the subsequent weeks. The students were required to inspect their commented papers and ask their questions regarding the feedback received. It is worth mentioning that the feedback provided targeted linguistic, content and organizational aspects of the written texts and the students were required to revise the parts of the passages indicated as problematic needing minor correction or even rewriting some parts of the texts. A point worth-mentioning is that the instruction the students received in the three courses followed the principles of the process-genre approach targeting the conventions of each text type and assisting the learners in the planning, execution and monitoring stages of writing.

As for the data collection session, after the students were orally informed about the objectives of the study, they were given a Google Form link of the afore-mentioned scales. They had 20 minutes to respond to the scales and were free to ask any questions during this process to resolve their possible misunderstanding and problems. These numerical data were entered into SPSS (version 23) software and were analyzed using correlation, multiple regression and ANOVA techniques. Regarding the focus group interview session, the students' responses to the semi-structured questions were transcribed and thematically analyzed to identify the issues influencing their engagement and responses to the written corrective feedback received on different aspects of their writing. A hybrid analytical approach was employed, integrating both inductive and deductive methods, to analyze the data and come up with the findings. The inductive approach facilitated the development of categories derived from participants' accounts, while the deductive approach allowed for the identification of categories based on the existing literature. Ultimately, the key segments of the transcribed data were highlighted and organized according to the assigned themes. It is worth-mentioning that the qualitative data were collected and analyzed by the instructor-researcher of the present study and in order to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings, procedures and techniques such as thorough reflection and contemplation on the interview data, thick description of the findings and member checking with participants were adopted.

Results

The first research question examined the possible correlations among the main variables of the study. As the results in Table 1 indicate, there were positive moderate correlation between WCF engagement and classroom social climate ($r=.33$ at 0.05 level) and a weaker, yet statistically

significant, correlation between WCF engagement and emotion regulation ($r=.21$ at 0.05 level). These finding mean that students might seek and become more engaged in feedback when the classroom social climate is supportive and students are able to manage their emotional responses while receiving critical comments and suggestions.

Table 1
Correlation Coefficients for the Variables of the Study

Variables	Mean	SD	WCF engagement	Classroom Climate	Emotion regulation
WCF engagement	72.55	8.55	1	.335*	.210
Classroom Climate	40.35	5.53	.335*	1	.003
Emotion regulation	34.55	4.97	.210	.003	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The second research question examined which aspects of classroom social climate (namely, teachers' academic and emotional support and classroom mutual respect) and emotion regulation (namely, cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression) can best predict the WCF engagement among Iranian EFL learners. As the results in Table 2 indicate, teachers' emotional support ($B=1.368$, $Beta=.484$, $t=2.353$, $p=.02<.05$) and cognitive reappraisal ($B=.774$, $Beta=.329$, $t=2.662$, $p=.01<.05$) could significantly account for the WCF engagement behavior of the learners. This finding means that emotional support from teachers fosters a trusting and supportive learning environment, reducing anxiety levels and encouraging students to actively engage with WCF. Cognitive reappraisal also enables learners to reframe their negative thoughts about receiving feedback into a more positive or constructive perspective towards WCF leading to increased engagement with the feedback process.

Table 2
Coefficients of Multiple Regressions

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig	Tolerance	VIF
(Constant)	34.32	11.823		2.903	.006		
Emotional support	1.368	.582	.484	2.353	.023	.353	2.835
Academic support	-1.552	.920	-.374	-1.686	.098	.303	3.298
Mutual respect	2.061	1.286	.252	1.603	.116	.603	1.658
Cognitive reappraisal	.774	.291	.329	2.662	.011	.980	1.021
Expressive suppression	-.067	.304	-.027	-.220	.827	.978	1.022

a. Dependent Variable: Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) Engagement

The third research question intended to examine whether there are any statistically significant differences among learners with different levels of academic writing experiences in their engagement with WCF or not (see Tables 3 and 4). The results of descriptive statistics indicated that low experienced writing group ($M=75.15$, $SD=8.42$) had a higher mean score in their

engagement with WCF compared to the moderately-experienced ($M=70.52$, $SD=8.83$) and highly-experienced ($M=71.72$, $SD=8.18$) learners. This pattern may imply that novice writers are more receptive to WCF as they potentially have a greater need for feedback while developing their writing skills. They also make more errors and are more dependent on their instructors to improve their writing self-confidence.

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics for Learners with Different Experiences Engagement with WCF

Groups	Number	Mean	Standard deviation
Low (Advanced writing class)	19	75.15	8.42
Mid (Essay writing class)	17	70.52	8.83
High (Writing technical passages in ELT class)	18	71.72	8.18
Total	54	72.55	8.55

However, the results of ANOVA table indicated that there were not statistically significant differences ($F=1.467$, $Sig=.240 \geq .05$) among the learners in different writing classes in terms of their engagement with WCF. In practical terms, this implies that the differences in engagement with WCF observed among these groups might result from random fluctuations rather than being a true effect of writing experience. In fact, due to the complexities involved in CF processing and engagement, various individual and contextual might play a role in this process.

Table 4
ANOVA Results

	Sum of Squares	df	F	Sig.
Between Groups	210.961	2	1.467	.240
Within Groups	3666.373	51		
Total	3877.333	53		

The final research question qualitatively analyzed the students' reflections and ideas raised in the focus group interview session regarding the factors influencing their engagement with WCF and the strategies they have used to respond to their instructor's WCF. After analyzing the students' responses to the focus group interview questions the following themes emerged (Table 5). In fact, as it was stated in the method section, a hybrid inductive and deductive approach was adopted in analyzing the qualitative data. Besides the ideas expressed in the data collection session, the instructor-researchers' own insights derived from his several years of experience in teaching writing and his studies of the pertinent literature were used to refine the extracted themes and elucidate the findings.

Table 5
Factors Influencing Learners' Engagement and Response to WCF

Themes	Sub-themes
Factors influencing WCF engagement	Clarity and specificity of feedback
	Relevance and applicability of feedback
	Supportive and non-judgmental feedback
	Language proficiency and writing competence
	Students' confidence and self-efficacy
	Accessibility of teachers
Strategies for responding to feedback	Seeking clarification
	Using internet and checking grammar resources and dictionaries
	Collaboration with peers
	Emotion regulation

Factors influencing WCF engagement

Clarity and specificity of feedback: The students said that they valued feedback that directly addressed specific areas for improvement, was easy to understand and provided concrete guidance and suggestions for resolving problematic areas and improving writing; otherwise, general and vague comments could be demotivating and unproductive for students.

Maryam: *I expect the instructor's feedback point the specific mistakes I have made and show me how to correct them.*

Relevance and applicability of feedback: The students mentioned that they benefited from feedback that targeted their specific needs and was adjusted to their levels and goals for writing the assignment. It should not be too detailed and confusing for the students to apply.

Hamid: *The feedback provided on the text should be related to the specific part of the paper that I am writing and must help me improve the quality of my performance in writing.*

It is worth-mentioning that if the students do not understand the feedback, they ignore and disregard it or only do surface-level corrections without paying attention or making changes in the content or organizations of the ideas especially in writing longer and more complex passages that demand supplying specific moves in different sections of an essay or a research paper.

Supportive and non-judgmental feedback: Students expected the feedback to be supportive and have a concern for their growth rather than being critical and judgmental that might discourage them. Feedback that is presented in an encouraging and constructive manner is more favorably received than a feedback that is highly negative and judgmental.

Zahra: *.... I don't like comments that are highly critical; we need and expect assistance.*

Positive feedback can cultivate a growth mindset among the students and can motivate students to persevere while facing writing and revising challenges.

Language proficiency and writing competence: The feedback must be presented in a language that students can easily understand. The feedback offered must also be adjusted to the writing competence level of the learners so that they would be able to apply them while revising their written drafts and observe those points while performing in subsequent writing assignments.

Ali: Sometimes teachers use complex vocabulary and grammar that we don't know what is meant..... some comments are also beyond our writing ability that we don't know what to do about them.

Fatemeh: The feedback must be balanced to our levels and teachers should not confuse us by providing technical terms.

Some students might also translate teachers' comments into Persian to understand them better. Furthermore, teachers should not confuse the students by offering excessive feedback or put them under pressure to do the revisions quickly. Teachers must also consider students' prior educational experiences and their attitudes towards receiving and utilizing WCF.

Students' confidence and self-efficacy: Some students with lower levels of self-confidence and self-efficacy beliefs in writing might get a negative feeling while receiving feedback and become less receptive and engaged with WCF; therefore, writing instructors must establish a supportive learning environment and word their comments in a way that is positive and encouraging for the learners to focus on progress rather than perfection.

Sarah: Sometimes I feel nervous when I receive the teacher's feedback because I don't know how to apply the feedback so that the teacher can be satisfied.

Accessibility of teachers: The students believed that teachers must be available to provide them with further clarification, examples and explanations about the comments offered.

Mohammad: In cases I don't know the meaning and reason of the feedback offered, I need to refer to our instructor for further explanations and examples of how I can respond to feedback and correct the mistakes.

Strategies for responding to feedback

Seeking clarification: Most of the participants emphasized the teachers' accessibility to ask their questions in case they cannot fully understand the feedback. The supportive environment provided can help students freely express their concerns and expectations from the teacher.

Fatemeh: If I don't know the meaning and purpose of a certain comment, I refer to our instructor for further guidance.

Students who take this proactive approach and feel responsible for their learning must be granted time to ask their questions in class, send emails or attend office hours to ask for further clarification.

Using internet and checking grammar resources and dictionaries: In order to properly respond to teachers' feedback and correctly make the revisions, the students refer to online resources and printed grammar books and dictionaries to check proper grammar and vocabulary usage.

Maryam: *Online resources and books are highly useful to consult while correcting the mistakes.*

Collaboration with peers: Some students asserted that sometimes they themselves sought assistance from their peers or other classmates referred to them (that is, build a collaborative environment) to gain different perspectives, understand the intentions of a specific comment and decide how to respond to the feedback offered.

Fatemeh: *We sometimes collaborate with our friends and help each other in applying teachers' comments.*

Emotion regulation: Since the feedback provided might be emotionally-loaded and some students might consider them personally, the students believed that they used positive self-talk and thought that even these criticisms were for their own benefits and were intended to inform them of the problematic areas in their written tasks and to improve their writing.

Maryam: *Teachers' feedback showed their care for us. Despite having a lot of responsibilities and workloads, they have invested their time to provide us with feedback.*

On the whole, the students had a positive attitude towards teachers' corrective feedback and considered it as a valuable resource intended to improve their writing.

Ali: *I highly value our instructor's feedback ... We should really appreciate our teachers even for the negative comments because they are helping us improve*

Discussion

The present study examined the role of individual and contextual factors in the WCF engagement of Iranian EFL learners. The results of correlations analyses indicated that there was a moderate positive relationship between Iranian EFL learners' WCF engagement and classroom social climate and a weaker relationship between their WCF engagement and emotion regulation strategies, which suggests that a supportive classroom atmosphere can enhance the students' receptiveness to feedback and their ability to navigate their emotional responses. This association further corroborates the findings of previous studies on the relationship between WCF and CSC (Luan & Quan, 2025; Zhang, 2024; Zhang & Jiang, 2025). In the same vein, the research demonstrates that the classroom's social climate significantly affects the learning process and the attitudes and behaviors of its members (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Joe et al., 2017; Klem & Connell, 2004). Classroom social climate can also significantly contribute to students' engagement and language proficiency development (Karabchuk & Roshchina, 2023; Waluyo & Tuan, 2021). A positive classroom environment, characterized by a supportive emotional atmosphere, can lead to favorable learning outcomes and attitudes (Khajavy et al., 2018; Lim & Fraser, 2018; Pishghadam et al., 2021; Zheng & Feng, 2023). Positive student-teacher relationships and democratic teaching styles can

improve the levels of students' motivation and engagement, thus reinforcing the correlation with feedback engagement and constructive involvement (Wang & Derakhshan, 2023; Zheng et al., 2020). Waluyo and Apridayani (2024) also demonstrate that corrective feedback in higher education markedly improves students' writing skills, highlighting the necessity of ongoing support and guidance throughout the writing process.

Emotion regulation can also lead to a healthier classroom climate, enables learners to manage emotional challenges and facilitates constructive feedback processing which are essential for academic achievement (Bielak & Mystkowska-Wiertelak, 2020; Han & Xu, 2019; Liu, 2024; Wang & Wang, 2024). Papi et al. (2020) assert that L2 writers are emotionally engaged rather than merely processing information. They contend that the high cognitive demands of writing in a foreign language evoke emotional responses. Li et al. (2024) further argue that L2 writers utilize their emotional and motivational resources, particularly positive emotions, to enhance cognitive activities, maintain interest and effort, and focus on key linguistic aspects. They note that emotionally engaged L2 writers are more likely to embrace cognitive challenges and exhibit motivated behaviors such as thorough planning and regular monitoring, ultimately improving writing performance. Similarly, Mahfoodh (2017), along with Shafiee Rad and Jafarpour (2023), identified a range of distinct emotional responses among students receiving feedback, encompassing feelings such as happiness, satisfaction, surprise, disappointment, dissatisfaction, and frustration. Consequently, students must be equipped with strategies to regulate their emotions while engaged in the writing tasks and when receiving and responding to teachers' corrective feedback.

The results of multiple regression analysis also indicated that teachers' emotional support and cognitive reappraisal could best predict the WCF engagement of the learners. Emotional support plays a vital role in alleviating anxiety and fostering a positive learning environment, thereby enhancing students' engagement in feedback processes (Tran et al., 2024). As a vital component of the classroom environment, teacher support plays a crucial role in fostering students' motivation and engagement (Reeve, 2012). According to self-determination theory, such support helps satisfy students' needs for autonomy and competence, which subsequently boosts their level of engagement (Gutiérrez & Tomas, 2019; Tao et al., 2022; Zhong & Zhan, 2024).

Furthermore, a supportive classroom climate has been associated with enhanced academic performance and well-being, as it contributes to students feeling valued and understood (Sulla et al., 2023). Cognitive reappraisal allows learners to convert negative perceptions of feedback into constructive insights, thereby promoting a more engaged learning approach (Gross, 2015; Lazarus & Alfert, 1964). This strategy is consistent with research emphasizing the significance of emotional regulation in academic environments, where positive emotional states can improve engagement and resilience. In fact, students who utilize cognitive reappraisal are more adept at managing critical feedback, as they perceive it as an opportunity for growth rather than viewing it as a personal attack.

Furthermore, despite the higher mean score of less-experienced student writers in their engagement with WCF compared to the learners with mid and high writing experiences, the differences among these groups did not reach a statistically significant value. In fact, this finding confirms the idea that while low-experience learners recognized the importance of teachers' WCF, indicating their higher

levels of affective engagement; they have limited repertoire of behavioral and cognitive strategies to engage with and respond to the feedback (Zheng & Yu, 2018). This finding corroborates the complexities surrounding learner engagement with WCF noted in the literature, as classroom dynamics and learners' individual differences like their motivation and preferred learning styles, their preferences and beliefs towards WCF and their self-regulatory capacities and strategy use can more significantly influence their engagement than mere writing experience (Liu, 2024; Zheng et al., 2023). The higher mean score of less experienced student writers can be attributed to their tendency to produce more grammatical and structural errors, resulting in a greater reliance on instructors and feedback mechanisms to address existing knowledge gaps (Hyland, 2003). This dependence may account for their increased engagement scores, as these students may actively solicit feedback to improve their learning outcomes and enhance their confidence. Prior research has highlighted the complexity of learners' engagement with corrective feedback, revealing both between-subject and within-subject variations. While the majority of learners are receptive to WCF, their levels of affective engagement differ (Hyland, 2003; Tian & Zhou, 2020; Zhang & Hyland, 2018). Some learners experience positive emotions, while others may encounter feelings of discouragement or frustration (Zheng & Yu, 2018).

The qualitative analyses of the students' focus-group interview responses indicated that the students' engagement with WCF is influenced by factors such as clarity and specificity of feedback, relevance and applicability of feedback, its supportive and non-judgmental nature, characteristics of learners like their language proficiency, writing competence, confidence and self-efficacy beliefs and the accessibility of teachers for clarifying and refining the feedback. Contextualized research has consistently highlighted the complex and multifaceted dynamics of learner engagement with WCF, which is affected by a range of learner-specific and contextual factors (Ferris et al., 2013; Zhang & Hyland, 2018; Zheng & Yu, 2018). Previous empirical studies have primarily identified that factors such as learners' beliefs, emotions, types of errors, characteristics of feedback, and language proficiency significantly influence engagement with teachers' WCF (Cheng & Liu, 2022; Han & Hyland, 2015; Tian & Zhou, 2020; Wang & Xu, 2024; Zhang & Hyland, 2018). Han and Yu (2019) identified learners' motivation, beliefs, and metalinguistic knowledge as key factors influencing their engagement with WCF.

Students' demand for clear, specific feedback aligns with literature indicating its importance for successful learning outcomes (Ene & Yao, 2021; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Specific feedback is more actionable and aids students in identifying necessary improvements. Conversely, vague feedback can create confusion and demotivate students by leaving them uncertain about their next steps (Ferris, 2006). The necessity for feedback tailored to students' needs and specific writing tasks is supported by Bitchener and Knoch (2008), who contend that relevant feedback enhances students' ability to apply corrections effectively. Feedback should be concise and directly applicable, avoiding overwhelming detail. Constructive feedback promotes a growth mindset, facilitating receptiveness to criticism and resilience in writing tasks (Dweck, 2006). Clarity in feedback language is essential, as complex terminology may alienate students from the process (Hyland, 2003). Instructors should communicate feedback that aligns with students' proficiency levels. Differences in language proficiency also influence students' engagement with feedback, as greater proficiency is often associated with improved use of WCF (Cheng & Liu, 2022; Trabelsi, 2019). Additionally, aligning with Bandura's (1997) concepts of self-efficacy, students with lower confidence may

struggle to engage with feedback, underscoring the importance of a supportive environment (Tsao, 2021; Yang & Zhang, 2023). Accessibility to instructors for clarification on feedback is also crucial (Carless & Boud, 2018); approachable teachers encourage student questions, enhancing understanding and feedback application.

The learners also mentioned that they had used strategies like asking for clarification, resorting to resources such as internet, dictionaries, grammar and writing books and techniques like collaboration with peers and managing their emotions to respond to their instructor's WCF. Seeking clarification is a proactive strategy whereby students request further explanations on feedback to ensure comprehension (Ferris, 2006; Liu, 2023). Studies have shown that such clarification requests can lead to improved learning outcomes by fostering dialogue between students and teachers (Zhang & Hyland, 2018). The strategy of using resources entails students seeking additional materials, such as grammar guides or online platforms, to deepen their understanding of feedback (Murray & Hughes, 2008). Research supports that learners who utilize supplementary resources are more capable of effectively integrating feedback into their work (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Moser, 2020). Another strategy is peer collaboration as it involves students discussing feedback and collaborating to implement it in their writing (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2006). Research demonstrates that collaborative learning environments enhance students' capacity to address feedback, as peers provide diverse perspectives and support (Patrick et al., 2007; Wang et al., 2021). The students also referred to the use of emotion regulation strategies to respond to the feedback provided; this strategy involves managing feelings associated with receiving feedback, which can significantly affect how students perceive and respond to it (Gross, 2015). Students' use of positive self-talk and emotion regulation strategies reflects Gross's (2015) findings on their beneficial effects on learning outcomes. When feedback is perceived as supportive rather than critical, students are more likely to utilize it constructively. Overall, students maintain a positive attitude toward WCF, recognizing it as a valuable tool for improving their writing skills. Research indicates that active engagement with teachers enhances understanding and application of feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Therefore, EFL learners must be equipped with strategies to effectively engage and respond to the WCF.

Conclusion and Implications

The present inquiry investigated the interplay of classroom social climate, emotion regulation and WCF engagement among Iranian EFL learners. The statistical analyses revealed moderate positive correlations among these constructs. In addition, teachers' emotional support and cognitive reappraisal had the highest potential to account for the WCF engagement of EFL learners. Factors influencing the learners' engagement with WCF and the strategies they use in order to respond to the feedback provided were also identified. Overall, learner engagement is understood to be multifaceted, dynamic, and varies across cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions (Liu, 2024). The studies have also shown that how learners engage with feedback differs greatly among individuals and across different contexts (Tian & Zhou, 2020; Zheng et al., 2023).

For the implications of the findings, teachers ought to prioritize the establishment of a positive classroom environment facilitating open dialogue and providing regular check-ins and personalized

feedback; they should actively work to integrate emotional intelligence training to enhance students' engagement with feedback. The implementation of social-emotional learning programs can additionally improve peer relationships and overall classroom dynamics. Integrating strategies to enhance students' emotional regulation can be advantageous. This may include teaching mindfulness and self-reflection exercises that enable students to reframe negative thoughts about feedback, thereby improving their emotional resilience and openness to corrective input. Such strategies can facilitate a more constructive approach to processing feedback. Writing instructors should consider differentiating and tailoring their feedback strategies according to their students' writing experience and needs. Offering scaffolded support for less experienced writers while promoting greater independence for those with more advanced skills could lead to improved overall outcomes.

Instructors should prioritize delivering direct and well-structured feedback that directly targets specific areas for improvement. This feedback can be enhanced by providing clear examples and practical revision suggestions, using accessible language to avoid confusion stemming from jargon or complex terminology. Tailoring feedback to meet individual student needs—including their proficiency levels, learning goals, and specific writing tasks—is essential for promoting understanding and application. Furthermore, educators should encourage student inquiries regarding feedback by creating opportunities for questions, such as during office hours or follow-up discussions, which can lead to a deeper understanding of how to effectively utilize feedback. Lastly, promoting collaborative activities that foster peer interactions can establish a supportive community of practice, enabling students to assist one another in responding to feedback. Learners must also be receptive to their instructors' feedback and empower themselves with cognitive and affective mechanisms to be fully engaged and take advantage of the learning opportunities provided in the dynamics of EFL writing classes.

As for limitations of the study it can be stated that the use of convenient sampling, small sample size and use of self-report data can limit the generalizability of the findings. In addition, the short duration and retrospective nature of the focus-group interview session and students' unresponsiveness might have deprived us from reaching valuable insights regarding the factors influencing their engagement with WCF that we might have reached in individualized and real time interview sessions. Consequently, future research must use more robust data collection techniques to solicit learners' opinions on the factors influencing their engagement with corrective feedback in writing and even speaking classes. Finally, the roles of other contextual and personality-related factors must be investigated in terms of how they can influence the learners' response to and engagement with corrective feedback.

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