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Metalinguistic knowledge of second language pre-service teachers and the quality of their written corrective feedback: What relations?

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Metalinguistic knowledge of second language pre-service teachers and the quality of their written corrective feedback: What relations?

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Résumé

Cette étude quantitative vise à 1) mesurer les connaissances métalinguistiques des futurs enseignants, 2) décrire la qualité de la rétroaction corrective écrite (RCÉ) des futurs enseignants de français langue seconde (FLS), et 3) examiner la relation entre les connaissances métalinguistiques des futurs enseignants et la qualité de leur rétroaction corrective à l'écrit.

Un groupe de 18 futurs enseignants de français langue seconde inscrit dans le programme de formation initiale des maîtres à Montréal a participé à l'étude. Les participants ont accompli 1) une tâche d'analyse de phrases pour mesurer leurs connaissances métalinguistiques, et 2) une tâche de rétroaction corrective écrite, pour évaluer la qualité de leurs pratiques rétroactives à l'écrit en termes de localisation d'erreur et d'explication métalinguistique fournie. Alors que les analyses descriptives sont effectuées pour répondre aux deux premières questions de la présente étude, des analyses de corrélation ont été réalisées pour déterminer s'il existe des relations entre les connaissances métalinguistiques des futurs enseignants et la qualité de leur rétroaction corrective à l'écrit.

Les résultats indiquent que 1) la localisation de l'erreur de la RCÉ fournie est précise, mais 2) l'explication métalinguistique l'est moins, 3) il existe une relation entre les connaissances métalinguistiques des futurs enseignants et la qualité de leur rétroaction corrective à l'écrit.

Mots-clés: rétroaction corrective écrite, connaissances métalinguistiques, français langue seconde, futurs enseignants, explication métalinguistique, localisation des erreurs, qualité de la RCÉ.

Abstract

The present quantitative study seeks to 1) measure pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge, 2) describe the quality of French as a second language (FSL) pre-service teachers' written corrective feedback (WCF), and 3) examine the relationship between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their written corrective feedback (i.e., teachers' metalinguistic awareness).

A group of 18 French as a second language pre-service teachers following the initial teacher training program in Montreal, participated in the study. Participants were assigned 1) a task of analytical abilities to measure their metalinguistic knowledge, and 2) a task of written corrective feedback provision to evaluate the quality of their written corrective feedback in terms of error location and the metalinguistic explanation provided. Descriptive analyses were undertaken to answer the first two research questions. Correlation analyses were performed to examine whether there exist any relations between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their WCF.

Among other things, results indicated that 1) while the error location of WCF provided was precise, 2) the metalinguistic explanation provided by the participants was not accurate, 3) there is a relationship between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of written corrective feedback.

Keywords: written corrective feedback, metalinguistic knowledge, French as a second language, pre-service teachers, metalinguistic explanation, error location, quality of WCF.

Table of contents

List of tables

List of figures

List of abbreviations

ESL: English as a second language

FSL: French as a second language

L1: first language

L2: second language

ME: metalinguistic explanations

MEES: Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement Supérieur

MLAT: modern language aptitude test

SLA: second language acquisition

WCF: written corrective feedback

To my parents, Saloua and Moufid

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"Don't let the hard days win."— Sarah J. Maas.

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Introduction

Learning to write in the second language is challenging for second language (L2) learners (Barkaoui, 2007), let alone learning to write accurately. Accuracy in L2 writing is a major concern for learners and teachers alike (Ferris, 1999; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). The Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sports (MELS) (2007) explains that when the learner reaches an advanced level in the target language, he[1] becomes aware of the importance of accuracy. One way to promote accuracy in L2 writing is through providing written corrective feedback (Ferris, 2005a). Written corrective feedback (WCF), nonetheless, should be relevant and accurate in order to be effective. The relevance and accuracy of written corrective feedback may depend on teachers' metalinguistic knowledge. In other words, teachers need to have the required metalinguistic knowledge that enables them to identify and to correct learners' errors. Teachers' metalinguistic knowledge is a nascent concept compared to written corrective feedback. While written corrective feedback is addressed by different researchers like Lee (2004, 2008) and Gunette and Lyster (2013), research on teachers' metalinguistic knowledge is considered limited and rarely addressed (Martineau, 2007; Morris, 2003).

Different studies have been conducted to better understand teachers' perspectives on written corrective feedback and to investigate teachers' feedback practices (Ammar, Daigle, & Lefrançois, 2016; Bouhlal & Ammar, 2017; Furneaux, Paran & Fairfax, 2007; Guenette and Lyster, 2013; Lee, 2004, 2008). Research on metalinguistic knowledge, however, basically seeks to measure teachers' metalinguistic knowledge (Martineau, 2007; Morris, 2003). Scarce research has tried to investigate whether a relationship exists between written corrective feedback practices and teachers' metalinguistic knowledge. Hence the relevance of conducting studies to answer this important research question. Indeed, researchers are increasingly stressing the importance and the need to conduct studies that explore the relationship between teachers' language proficiency and

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[1]In the proposed study the masculine is used without any discrimination to refer to both "he" and "she" and "his" and "her" for the sole purpose of simplification.

the quality of their teaching practices within second language (L2) teaching contexts (Chambless, 2012; Van Canh & Renandya, 2017).

Along those lines, the present study sets out to examine the relationship between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their written corrective feedback (WCF) in a French as a second language (FSL) context, in Quebec.

The research problem outlining the socio-practical and the scientific contexts of the present study is introduced in Chapter One where the social, theoretical and empirical relevance of the proposed study are presented. The conceptual framework, in which theoretical and empirical research are further developed, is presented in Chapter Two. First, the two key concepts: written corrective feedback and teachers' metalinguistic knowledge are reviewed. Second, a detailed overview of the empirical research addressing both key concepts is provided. Presenting the relevant empirical research sets the ground for the specific objectives of the study. An overview of the methodological approach that was followed in the present study is provided in Chapter Three. The aim of this chapter is to provide the necessary information about the study, namely its context and its participants. Following that, data collection tools that were used are presented along with the procedure of how these tools were used to meet the specific goals of the research, followed by the data analyses. Results are presented in Chapter Four and are followed by a discussion of the obtained results, their pedagogical implications, as well as the limitations of the study in Chapter Five.

Chapter 1: Research problem

The purpose of the first chapter is to situate the proposed study in its socio-practical and scientific contexts. This chapter includes three sections. In the first one, information about the importance of writing in the socio-professional and educational domains and the significance of written corrective feedback (WCF) within the different educational government programs in Quebec is provided. In the second section, the different theoretical perspectives on written corrective feedback (WCF) are presented along with the empirical research conducted on teachers' feedback practices. The empirical findings pave the way for the third section which includes the general objective of the present study.

1.1 Socio-practical context

Quebec's Ministry of Education and Higher Education, through the different educational government programs of second language teaching (L2), underlines the significance of writing as a fundamental skill to be acquired and developed by learners, starting from the primary and secondary cycles. Indeed, the importance of writing can be manifested in both the socio-professional and the educational domains.

Within the socio-professional domain, writing is considered as a crucial aspect that facilitates learners' cultural integration within society (MEES, 2014). The acquisition of this competence enables the learner to defend his rights and "communicate his vision of the world" (MELS, 2007, p. 26, free translation). It also facilitates seeking employment. Learners who can write are considered to have more privileges than those who cannot because their chances of getting hired are higher (Lee, 2004). In fact, when seeking employment, people need to know how to write a curriculum vitae or motivation letters in order to apply for a job (MELS, 2007). Some work-related tasks can require writing emails, reports or even translating or transcribing.

Within the educational domain, writing is considered a transversal skill that influences the learning of other subjects such as science, history or mathematics. According to the *Programme de base et enrichi français langue seconde* (2007), writing is considered one of the three central

3

competencies that should be developed by learners. In order to meet the programs' requirements, the learner needs to be able to read and interact in FSL and be able to produce different texts in the target language. In Quebec's different educational programs, writing is represented as important because it stimulates the learner's mind to think and that's how the learner develops new ideas, expands his imagination and engages in critical thinking about the message he wants to convey to the reader and how he can convey it correctly. According to a report about teachers' relation to writing, writing is perceived as an essential lever for academic success for secondary learners. As a matter of fact, it is considered to be "at the heart of most teaching and learning activities" (Blaser, Beaucher, Dezutter, Saussez, & Bouhon, 2011, p. 3; free translation). Being one of the pillars of academic success, writing ought to be a fully developed and mastered skill.

Within the same programs of second language learning (L2), such as *le programme de base et enrichi français langue seconde au secondaire* (2007) and *le programme de base et enrichi anglais langue seconde* (2007), the importance of accuracy in writing is highlighted. Accuracy, in the context of the proposed study, refers to producing the target language by respecting the linguistic norms of the written target language. The official program states that "when he interacts or reads or produces a text in French, the student implements the integrated approach that allows him to practice and develop his skills as well as his general and linguistic knowledge" (MELS, 2007, p. 59, free translation).

Developing this linguistic competence in writing seems to be essential. In fact, accuracy holds a double importance: namely an academic importance and an acquisitional one. With regards to academic significance, it is judicious to mention that language accuracy constitutes an important part of the final score of the ministerial writing test. In fact, almost half (45%) of the written production mark goes to language accuracy (MEES, 2018). As for the acquisitional importance of accuracy, it suggests that the learner should develop the linguistic skills that allow him to prove that he is, indeed, making progress with the acquisition of the target language (Manchón, 2011). In both aspects, academic and acquisitional, the teacher holds an essential role in promoting the learners' language accuracy.

To promote his language accuracy in L2 writing, the learner needs to focus on the linguistic aspects of writing, in other words, the learner has to focus on form. Focusing on form can be,

among other things, learner initiated, or teacher initiated. It can be learner initiated through collaborative writing, for example, where learners help each other with writing and producing more accurate texts (Ammar & Hassan, 2018; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2007). It can also be teacher initiated, for instance, through written corrective feedback (WCF). Even though learners can ameliorate each other's grammatical accuracy, the current study focuses on what teachers can do to improve this competence, more precisely, on the written corrective feedback (WCF) they provide. Written corrective feedback (WCF) is defined as "feedback given by the teacher on a student paper with the aim of improving grammatical accuracy (including spelling, capitalization, and punctuation) as well as written feedback on idiomatic usage (such as word order and word choice)" (Ducken, 2014, p. 17). Since the main emphasis of this study is linguistic accuracy, the feedback targeted is only related to linguistic errors. For instance, when a student commits errors in a written-production or on an exam in the target language, the teacher can provide written corrective feedback on these errors to promote the acquisition of the correct forms. WCF is academically important: this importance is stressed in the *Programme de base et enrichi français langue seconde* (MELS, 2007) which states that WCF helps the learner adjust and improve the writing competence and manage to know his forces and work on overcoming his weaknesses (MELS, 2007).

Since teachers are the main providers of WCF, they should be able to provide a well-targeted feedback for their learners. Doing so may depend on teachers' linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge. To avoid confusion, it is judicious to start by distinguishing these two inextricably related concepts. Simply put, linguistic knowledge is what one knows *of* the language while metalinguistic knowledge concerns what one knows *about* the language (Andrews, 2003; Bialystok, 2001). Linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge both determine teachers' language competencies. Their importance is acknowledged in the competency framework for teachers. The Ministry of Education in Quebec (MEQ) indicates in the official reference document for teacher training in the field of vocational education in Quebec (2002) that there exist two central competencies which refer to the basic knowledge a teacher must possess. The first competency stipulates that a teacher has "to act as a professional inheritor, critic and interpreter of knowledge or culture when teaching students"(p. 63), and in the second competency, a teacher has to know how to "communicate clearly in the language of instruction, both orally and in writing, using

correct grammar, in various contexts related to teaching" (p. 127). By the same token, it is necessary for teachers to have an advanced level of linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge because having such knowledge is what enables them to respond appropriately to learners' questions (Martineau, 2007). This same advanced linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge may determine the quality of their teaching practices in general and of WCF in particular.

Nevertheless, if teachers lack the basic knowledge they ought to possess, they might risk inducing learners into error (Ammar et al., 2016; Truscott, 1996). The importance of having such knowledge is stressed by the governments that took the necessary measures to make sure future teachers possess the required language competencies. In fact, several formulas exist to test linguistic competencies through different educational systems around the world. In the United Kingdom, for example, future teachers have to pass the Professional Skills Tests (PST) and in the US, they have to succeed the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages Test (ACTFL). In Quebec, future teachers sit for exams designed to measure their proficiency in the second language. The test designed for French as a Second Language pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education programs is the *Test de Certification en Français Écrit pour l'Enseignement* (TECFÉE). This test seeks to evaluate the language proficiency expected from students who pursue initial teacher training. It is composed of two parts: one part examines these students' metalinguistic knowledge, and the other part investigates if they can apply this knowledge in different contexts, such as in producing texts.

To sum up, the importance of writing has been emphasized by the MEES who stresses the necessity of acquiring and developing this skill because it is an important means to achieve both academic and professional success. The government programs of second language learning targeting FSL emphasize the importance of developing accuracy in writing. Indeed, trying to write accurately eventually promotes second language acquisition (SLA) (Manchón, 2011; Swain, 1995). Among other things, accuracy can be promoted by written corrective feedback which may depend on teachers' linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge. These conclusions are echoed in theoretical and empirical research pertaining to written corrective feedback and teachers' linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge.

1.2 Scientific context

Second language acquisition (SLA) research indicates that one way to acquire the target language can be through producing it (e.g., Swain, 1985). This perspective encourages the engagement of students in output activities like writing which is a competence that has been conceptualized according to two main strands (Manchón, 2011). The first one, the learning to write perspective, is mainly interested in developing the writing process. The second strand of research focuses on writing as a means to learn the language. This perspective considers writing as a tool that helps learners acquire the language and thus, values the end product of the writing process. This perspective will be adopted in the present study since L2 writing has generally been viewed in literature within the first perspective (Williams, 2012).

According to Manchón (2001), writing a language not only promotes mastery of the L2 writing process but also promotes language learning. This is especially the case when teachers provide corrective feedback (Williams, 2012). Depending on the feedback techniques the teacher uses, WCF can provide clues that help learners understand the nature of their error and consecutively understand the language. Swain (1985) argues that learners need to produce the target language if they want "to succeed in conveying their intended message" (Swain, 1985, p. 249) and acquire the language. Based on Swain's output hypothesis, learners should be "pushed in their output" (Swain, 1985, p. 249). Swain talks about four functions of output: developing automaticity, the noticing function, the hypothesis-testing function, and the metalinguistic function. However, starting from 1995, she only preserves the three functions relevant to accuracy.

Producing language, according to Swain (1995), promotes noticing. When the learner produces the target language, he might notice that what he is capable of producing does not express the meaning he intends to communicate. Therefore, the learner realizes the hole between what he wants to produce and what he is actually able to convey. Consequently, he becomes aware of the gaps in his "interlanguage". With regards to the second function of the output, Swain (1995) argues that when producing the target language, the learner formulates hypotheses about how the target language functions, and then he tests them out. As he learns more about language rules, the learner attempts to figure out the right forms thanks to the teacher's CF which enables him to correct incorrect hypotheses about the way the target language functions. The third function is the

metalinguistic function. Swain (1995) points out that while the learner reflects upon his target language usage, his output "serves a metalinguistic function" allowing him to "control and internalize linguistic knowledge" (p. 126), in other words, the set of rules he knows about the language. Simply put, the learner becomes linguistically aware of the target language use.

While necessary, producing the target language is not enough. In his noticing hypothesis, Schmidt (2001, 2012) argues that for L2 learning to take place, teachers need to draw learners' attention to the linguistic dimensions of the target language. In fact, according to him, there exist two forms of noticing. The first one is to consciously notice the form within the input. In other words, in order to learn the form, the learner has to pay attention to it in the input he is exposed to (Schmidt, 2001). The second form is "noticing the gap" (Schmidt, 2012, p. 30). This form implies that the learner has to be consciously aware of the gap between his output (the form produced by the learner) and the norm in the target language. Among other things, noticing the gap can be promoted by corrective feedback (Schmidt, 2012). Corrective feedback has been at the center of an ever-growing body of research, especially in light of research findings indicating that learners expect their teachers to correct their errors (Ferris, 1999; Schulz, 1996). In fact, Schulz reports that learners feel "cheated" if teachers do not provide the WCF that enables them to improve their L2 writing.

Despite claims about the necessity of WCF, Truscott (1996), nonetheless, questions teachers' knowledge and ability to provide it. He stresses that for teachers to be able to detect errors and provide the appropriate feedback, they should possess advanced knowledge of the target linguistic system. In the same line as Truscott (1996), Chambless (2012) argues that many pre-service teachers admit resorting to the learners' L1 in class due to the lack of their proficiency level in the target language they are teaching. He asserts that according to national level organizations, pre-service teachers should be proficient enough to teach the target language and be able to provide the appropriate input for learners, drawing attention to how teachers' lacking metalinguistic knowledge can influence their performance. By the same token, Van Canh and Renandya (2017) state that since teachers are the main providers of input, they should possess advanced knowledge in the target language. Teachers with a low proficiency level, however, might find it difficult to correct learners' errors. Always within the same perspective, Andrews (1997) argues for the

importance of examining teachers' metalinguistic knowledge to understand their effects on teachers' ability to explain the formal properties of the language. In a subsequent study, Andrews (1999b) sustains that competent L2 teachers should not only have a profound "knowledge about language" (p. 161) but also know how to use this knowledge in order to ensure effective teaching. If this is the case, then teachers' performance with respect to feedback depends on the knowledge they possess, mainly linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge (Andrews, 2003). Interest in both CF and teachers' metalinguistic knowledge has been evident not only in theoretical accounts but also in empirical research (Ammar et al., 2016; Andrews, 1997; Bouhlal & Ammar 2017; Furnaux et al., 2007; Guenette and Lyster, 2013; Lee, 2004, 2008; Martineau, 2007; Morris, 2003).

Existing empirical research has either looked at CF practices or teachers' metalinguistic knowledge without necessarily looking at the relationship between them. It should be noted, first, that the bulk of empirical research on teachers' CF practices is mostly conducted in the English-language context outside Quebec. Moreover, the majority of studies (Ammar et al., 2016; Furneaux et al., 2007; Lee, 2004, 2008) are targeting mainly in-service teachers and not pre-service teachers. The first study that focused on pre-service teachers in Quebec is Guénette and Lyster's (2013), and yet it examines ESL instructors. Within the francophone context, the only two studies that include FSL teachers in Quebec are those of Ammar et al. (2016) and Bouhlal and Ammar (2017). Since the study of Ammar et al. (2016) focuses mainly on in-service teachers, the only study that is targeting pre-service teachers, among others, in Quebec is that of Bouhlal and Ammar (2017).

Concerning the findings of Ammar et al. (2016), the researchers found that in Quebec FSL teachers prioritize indirect WCF. Through this feedback category, teachers prompt learners with a variety of techniques that push them to self-correct. For example, teachers may provide clues or explanations that can help learners recognize the error and try to correct it. That is why it is important to know how to give an accurate metalinguistic clue when indirect CF is provided. This finding is also confirmed by a study by Bouhlal and Ammar (2017) in which the researchers found that the technique pre- and in-service teachers use the most is the indirect WCF technique. Unlike the previous empirical evidence on WCF, this study examines the quality of WCF in terms of error location and the accuracy of the metalinguistic explanation provided. It is not within the scope of

the study, however, to explore teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and how it might relate to their WCF practices. This gap in research highlights the relevance of the present study.

The limitations found in WCF empirical research, which the present study attempts to overcome, are also present in the research on teachers' metalinguistic knowledge. However, compared to the first part pertaining to feedback, which is further explored in the present study, investigating the domain of teacher metalinguistic knowledge remains relatively unexplored in second language studies.

To the best of our knowledge, very few studies address teachers' metalinguistic knowledge, especially in the FSL context in Quebec (Martineau, 2007). Both Morris (2003) and Andrews (1997) focused on the ESL context. Only Andrews (1997) tries to establish links between metalinguistic knowledge and second language teaching. Although embryonic, the reported results highlight the importance of further pursuing this research line to better understand the link between WCF and teachers' metalinguistic knowledge.

To sum up, what emerges from the socio-practical and the scientific contexts is that L2 writing is important, and so is the development of accuracy as it contributes, by and large, to the learner's academic success. Indeed, it has been argued that learners' accuracy can be improved thanks to the teacher's WCF. Consequently, WCF can promote the acquisition of the target language. It is argued that for teachers to be able to produce CF they have to possess the necessary metalinguistic knowledge that enables them to detect and diagnose learners' errors, so as to help them in their acquisitional process. The empirical studies either focus on describing teachers' WCF practices (Ammar et al., 2016; Bouhlal & Ammar 2017; Furnaux et al., 2007; Guenette and Lyster, 2013; Lee, 2004, 2008) or on measuring their metalinguistic knowledge (Andrews, 1997; Martineau, 2007; Morris, 2003). Moreover, limited are the studies that have targeted pre-service teachers' WCF practices or pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge in the Quebec context. To the best of our knowledge, there is no research that seeks to examine the relationship between these two axes of research in the same context.

1.3 General research objective

The present study aims to fill a gap in the research, namely in the second language training program and in the literature on WCF practices. The existing gap is identified by a few researchers like Chambless (2012) and Van Canh and Renandya (2017). These researchers stress the necessity of conducting studies that investigate the relationship that may exist between second language teachers' language competencies and the quality of their teaching practices. Feedback practices, without doubt, are considered as integral parts of these teaching practices. The importance accorded to such studies underscores the relevance of the present study.

Against this backdrop, the general objective of the current study is to examine the relationship between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their written corrective feedback in the context of French as a second language in Quebec.

Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework

Key concepts and empirical research related to pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their written corrective feedback will be set forth in this chapter. The two key constructs of the study, teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and written corrective feedback, will be explained within their theoretical and empirical frameworks. This chapter is divided into two major parts. The first section is devoted to *written corrective feedback*; its definition, its techniques, and the theoretical and empirical evidence related to it. The second section deals with *teachers' metalinguistic knowledge*; its definition, and its theoretical and empirical research. After this empirical overview of both constructs, the research findings will set forth the specific objectives of the present study.

2.1 Corrective feedback

Although the different existing terminologies that refer to feedback are sometimes used interchangeably, only the term "corrective feedback" is used in the present study to refer to the act of providing feedback on learners' errors. This act, however, can be referred to by using different terms like negative feedback and error correction, for example. The difference between these terms is explained in the coming section along with the reasons that justify the retained terminology. After doing the terminological overview of corrective feedback (CF), the techniques and the empirical research related to this area of L2 teaching are provided.

2.1.1 Terminological overview

Various terms exist to refer to teachers' reactions to learners' errors. These terms vary according to whether they are generic or specific and according to the researchers' disciplinary orientation (Lyster & Ranta, 1997). Some of the terms that could refer to CF are *negative evidence*, *negative feedback*, *error correction* and *corrective feedback*.

Linguists (e.g., Carroll, 2001) usually use the term negative evidence to refer to what is not acceptable in the language. In other words, to refer to forms and utterances that do not exist in the learned language. Negative evidence can be direct or indirect. When it is direct, it corresponds to corrective feedback. For example, when the learner writes "*J'ai allé à l'école,*" the teacher can

react by guiding him towards the right form. He can explain that in order to conjugate the verb *"aller"* (to go) in the past, one should use the auxiliary *"être."* Indirect negative evidence, on the other hand, refers to the absence of certain forms in the input. In other words, the mere fact of not hearing certain forms in the input the learner is exposed to helps him understand that they are not possible in the target language. For instance, not hearing "*J'ai allé à l'école*" in the input indirectly informs the learner that the form is not possible in the target language. Negative evidence is considered a generic concept because it includes both direct (corrective feedback) and indirect negative evidence; therefore, CF constitutes only a part of it. For this reason, the term negative evidence will not be used in this study.

The term *negative feedback* is usually used by psychologists (e.g., Leeman, 2007), and it seeks to convey that there is something wrong within the learner's utterance. The word "negative" may have pejorative connotations. For these reasons, this term will be excluded.

Second language acquisition researchers tend to use the term *error correction* (e.g., Schulz, 1996) to refer to the act of correcting an error by providing feedback. This term implies that the learner automatically corrects the error based on the teacher's reaction. However, this is not always the case, because there is always a possibility that the learner would repeat the same error even after receiving his teacher's annotation. On this account, this concept will also be discarded.

The term *corrective feedback* is usually utilized in the domain of second language acquisition. Chaudron (1977) defines it as "any reaction of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of the learner's utterance" (p. 31). This term will be preserved in the present study because it neither contains pejorative connotations nor does it imply that errors are systematically eliminated after teachers' reactions to learners' inaccurate renditions.

2.1.2 Written corrective feedback techniques

Written corrective feedback can be either direct or indirect. Direct WCF, which can also be referred to as input providing, refers to the techniques that teachers use in order to provide learners with the correct form. When using direct WCF to correct a learner's written production, the teacher may give the correct form or cross out the irrelevant one. For instance, when the learner

writes "*Il **a** allé au cinéma,*" the teacher can correct him by crossing off the incorrect form only to provide him with the correct one. For further clarification, example 1 can be taken into consideration.

Example 1:

Learner : *Il **a** allé au cinéma*

Teacher: *Il ~~a~~ allé au cinéma.*
         est

Indirect WCF, which is output prompting, refers to the techniques through which teachers push learners to self-correct. As Lee (2004) puts it, indirect WCF refers to "providing feedback on student errors without giving the correct forms or structures" (p. 286). To do so, the teacher can opt for different techniques like underlining, circling or coding the error. For example, when the learner writes "*Il **a** allé au cinéma,*" the teacher can correct him by underlining it, as indicated in example 2.

Example 2:

Learner : *Il **a** allé au cinéma*

Teacher: Il <u>**a**</u> allé au cinéma.

Direct WCF and indirect WCF may be accompanied by metalinguistic explanations. These explanations can help the learner understand the nature of his error. For example, the teacher can underline the error and add a metalinguistic explanation to guide the learner to the correct form. This can be further clarified in example 3 in which the teacher encourages the learner to reconsider which auxiliary he should use with the verb "*aller.*"

Example 3:

Learner : *Il **a** allé au cinéma*

Teacher: *Il <u>**a**</u> allé au cinéma*
         (aux. être ou avoir?)

As explained in the first chapter, WCF is believed to promote L2 acquisition (Williams, 2012) which gives rise to the following question: which feedback techniques promote what kind of acquisition?

There are two types of acquisition: acquiring new forms and mastering partially acquired forms. From this perspective, it can be argued that direct WCF promotes the acquisition of new forms, and indirect WCF improves the mastery of partially acquired forms. Indeed, according to Lee (2008) and to Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2008), direct WCF is used to help learners acquire the new forms they were not already exposed to. That is to say, if the learner has not learned the correct form yet, the teacher cannot expect him to figure out the correct answer and be able to self-correct on his own. Indirect WCF, on the other hand, is used when teachers want to enhance the learner's control over partially- acquired forms which will guide him to find the right answer. In effect, if the learner has already come across the form flagged by the teacher's WCF, he might as well be able to recognize his error and correct it thanks to the teacher's prompting feedback. WCF, be it direct or indirect, needs to meet certain conditions in order to be effective. These conditions are exposed in the coming section.

Efficient feedback

Research (Gass & Varonis, 1994; Schmidt, 1983, 1990) indicates that feedback can only be efficient under two conditions: locating the error and understanding its nature. Pinker (1989) calls this "blame assignment" (p. 12). Locating the error means that the learner, thanks to the WCF provided, should be able to detect and identify the error, and know which part of the utterance is erroneous. Understanding the nature of the error, however, indicates that the learner ought to realize why the written utterance was considered wrong. On that account, WCF should better help the learner locate the error, and enable him to understand the nature of this error based on the information provided in the feedback. These two conditions qualify the quality of the feedback. In order for WCF to be more relevant and useful, it should be precise. The location of the error is considered precise when the teacher targets the exact part in the word that contains the error. For instance, the learner uses the word "independent" in a sentence, but instead of writing it with an "e" at the end (independent), he spells it with an "a" as in "independant." If the teacher underlines the part that contains the error; in this case the letter "a" in "she became independ<u>a</u>nt," then the

location of the error is considered precise. If he underlines the whole word as in the example "she became **independant,**" then the error location is considered partially precise. Locating the error is correct, but it is vague. In fact, the same word can contain more than one error. For example, the learner can write "ind**i**pend**a**nt" instead of "independent." If the teacher does not indicate the exact location of every targeted error, his WCF might be less helpful to the learner. With regards to understanding the nature of the error, signaling the error should ideally be accompanied by accurate information that serves to comprehend its nature, in other words, a metalinguistic explanation. This explanation not only helps the learner realize the reason behind the error he made, but also guides him towards the correct answer. For example, if the learner writes "*J'ai allé au cinéma,*" the teacher can correct him by underlining the error and explaining that the learner chose the wrong auxiliary (see example 1). This encourages the learner to think about the correct auxiliary to use with the verb "*aller.*"

Example 1 :

Learner : *J'**ai** allé au cinéma*

Teacher: *J'**ai** allé au cinéma*

(mauvais choix de l'auxiliaire)

Theoretical claims about the role of WCF in L2 learning and the requirements that have to be met for WCF to be effective led to an ever-growing body of empirical research. Studies pertaining to the general research objective of the present research project are reviewed in the following section.

2.1.3 Empirical research about teachers' written corrective feedback

So far, descriptive research on WCF is chiefly conducted to describe teachers' feedback practices (Ammar et al., 2016; Furneaux et al., 2007; Guenette and Lyster, 2013; Lee, 2004, 2008). Before providing a thorough description of empirical studies on WCF practices, it is judicious to note that the targeted studies on WCF have several elements in common, chief among which is the general objective of the studies that consists of examining and understanding teachers' WCF practices.

In a study by Lee (2004), for instance, ESL writing teachers' WCF practices are explored from the teachers' and their students' perspectives. The participants are 206 ESL teachers and 350 students from Hong Kong. In order to uncover teachers' perspectives and practices with regards to WCF, a teacher survey, which includes a questionnaire and follow-up telephone interviews, is administered. For the purposes of the current study, only data pertaining to teachers' feedback practices are reported. A task of providing WCF in which teachers are asked to correct a student's essay is also administered to examine teachers' written corrective feedback practices. All 206 teachers completed the questionnaire, 19 of them participated in the follow-up telephone interviews for further elaboration. After completing the questionnaires, 58 teachers are given the task of providing WCF which consists of marking the same student's essay using their usual error correction practices. By the end of the task, teachers are asked questions relevant to their WCF methods to better understand their feedback practices. Results show that 60% of teachers' feedback is direct and only about half of the corrected errors are accurate. In addition, 40% of the annotations done by the teachers who corrected errors comprehensively (i.e., who marked all errors) are unnecessary and incorrect, because the feedback either changes the intended meaning of the text or targets already correct forms and makes them incorrect. Apart from informing us about the teachers' techniques of choice, these results are indicative of teachers' lacking ability to provide correct feedback to their learners and questions their mastery of grammar. Some of the findings in this study are substantiated by an ulterior study by Lee (2008).

In a later study, Lee (2008) examines 26 ESL secondary teachers' WCF on 174 essays written by learners in Hong Kong. To meet the research objective, two data collection tools are administered. The first one, a task of providing feedback on their learners' essays, is administered in order to understand how teachers naturally provide WCF. The second one, a questionnaire, is completed to see how teachers respond to students' errors. The findings of this study indicate that similarly to Lee (2004), direct WCF is the preferred technique. In fact, in 71.5% of the cases, teachers provide the correct form. In addition, teachers' feedback focuses on form (grammar and vocabulary) in 94.1% of the cases. Lee (2008) also reports that although the local education authority recommends teachers to avoid using direct corrective feedback excessively, and to mark errors selectively, all teachers indicate that they mainly use direct WCF and the way they mark errors is comprehensive (i.e., marking all errors).

Within the same perspective, Furneaux et al. (2007) investigate 110 secondary teachers' feedback practices, however in an English as foreign language context, in five different countries. In order to explore these WCF practices, they use a strategy similar to Lee's (2004). A background questionnaire and a student's essay, given to teachers to annotate, are provided by the researchers. Teachers are asked to mark a student's essay as if they were marking one of their students' texts. The researchers identify six teacher roles which are:(1) the initiator, who provides alerts like circling or giving an explanation without correcting the error, (2) the supporter, who praises the use of some language aspects in the text, (3) the advisor, who offers advice to help the student ameliorate certain areas, (4) the suggester, who provides alternatives, (5) the provider, who provides the correct form and (6) the mutator who alters the text and modifies its meaning. Since the suggester and the mutator provide the correct form, it means that they provide direct feedback like the provider. The final results show that the majority (51%) of errors are corrected by providers of the correct form, and 61.5 % of the feedback is direct WCF. Indirect WCF, provided by initiators, accounts for only 37% of total feedback.

The findings of Furneaux et al. (2007) are not very distinct from those of Gunette and Lyster (2013) who, unlike the former researchers who conducted their studies outside Quebec with in-service teachers, investigate the feedback strategies of 15 ESL pre-service teachers, who are also tutors, in Quebec. In fact, in their study, they aim at exploring these tutors' emerging WCF techniques in reaction to their tutees' errors. Similarly to Lee (2008), a task of providing WCF is administered to the 15 participants in which they are asked to correct different texts of their 52 tutees. Participants need to correct an average of 15 texts. In order to meet the objectives of the study, the pre-service teachers have to write a journal in which they document their reflections and sit for semi-structured interviews to further elaborate on these reflections and set forth the challenges of providing WCF. The findings of this research corroborate the results of the previously examined empirical studies (Furneaux et al., 2007; Lee, 2004, 2008). In fact, 71% of the errors are corrected by using direct WCF. This overuse of the direct technique, as opposed to the other techniques, is explained by the fact that tutors have difficulties identifying some errors, knowing what errors to correct, and providing an accessible explanation to the tutees. Having such difficulties with reacting to errors might be a reflection of their limited metalinguistic knowledge.

Research that sets out to describe WCF practices is scarce, especially in Quebec. Even less research exists within the francophone context. The large-scale study by Ammar at al. (2016) follows a comparative approach when describing French as a first language and FSL teachers' WCF practices in correcting their students' written productions. Data are collected from 26 French teachers, in different contexts (French as a first language, FSL, elementary, secondary or adult French), and 300 of their learners. Like Gunette and Lyster (2013) and Lee (2008), Ammar et al. (2016) examine how teachers use WCF to correct their learners' texts. They also interview teachers to understand 1) the frequency with which teachers provide feedback on students' writing, 2) the extent to which teacher feedback is followed by student revision and especially 3) the difficulties teachers face when reacting to their students' writing. Among other things, teachers were asked to identify errors that are the easiest to flag by feedback and errors that are the most difficult in terms of feedback provision. Ammar et al. (2016) report that indirect WCF seems to be the most adopted technique with primary (71.7%) and secondary (69.7%) learners. However, patterns of WCF techniques vary according to error type. In fact, when correcting syntax, which teachers qualify as the error type with which they have the most difficulties in terms of WCF provision, teachers still use indirect feedback, but they also resort to direct feedback quite often. Interestingly enough, these findings show that there is a discrepancy between the results found in the previous research conducted in ESL and English as a foreign language contexts and those carried out in French as a first language and FSL contexts. What is also interesting is that the indirect WCF provided by teachers is found to be incorrect (unnecessary) or imprecise in 22.5% and 23% of cases both in French as a first language and in FSL contexts respectively. While this study yields significant results, it reports findings on the quality of the WCF only in terms of code accuracy because coding turned out to be the indirect technique of choice especially in L1 and *accueil* contexts without taking into account the precision of error location (the second important criterion that facilitates blame assignment as explained earlier).

To fill this research gap, Bouhlal and Ammar (2017) sought to analyze the WCF practices of 64 French as a first language and FSL pre- and in-service teachers and investigate the adequacy of their WCF in terms of error location and the precision of metalinguistic information provided. This study, conducted in a French-language teaching context in Quebec, is of great relevance to the present study. They compare 20 French as a first language and 18 FSL pre-service teachers to

14 French as a first language and 12 FSL in-service teachers. The participants are given a task of providing WCF in which they are asked to annotate an essay produced by an FSL learner according to their usual practices. Researchers analyze the WCF pertaining only to the common errors that five independent experts identify in the text. Feedback related to other errors is not analyzed. This procedure is followed to ensure the comparability of WCF across participants. In other words, the obligatory contexts in which WCF is expected is the same for all participants. The total number of errors preserved in the text used is 46. In the context of their study, the metalinguistic explanation is either precise or imprecise. It is considered imprecise when the teacher provides an explanation that is correct but does not guide the learner directly to find the right answer. For example, the learner writes "*Il a allé à l'université.*" The teacher may correct him by underlining the error "*a*" and writing "*verbe*" under it. Such an explanation is correct because the learner can understand that the underlined word is erroneous. However, he would not necessarily know how to correct the error because the teacher's explanation is vague and imprecise. The learner, in this case, might think that the teacher's feedback refers to an error in the tense of the verb and not the choice of auxiliary. A metalinguistic explanation is, however, considered precise when the teacher provides the necessary information that would guide the learner towards correcting his error on his own. For example, the teacher would write "*choix de l'auxiliaire*" instead of "*verbe.*" In this case, the learner would understand that the teacher refers to an error in the choice of auxiliary.

Findings indicate again that overall pre-service and in-service teachers resort to indirect WCF more than any other technique for, basically, all contexts (with the exception of French as a first language pre-service teachers, who use the direct WCF technique almost as much) and regardless of error type. The location of errors varies across teaching contexts and WCF types, but in total, error location is 70% of the time precise. The feedback provided by the participants also varies across teaching contexts, but the metalinguistic explanations it contains lacks the precision that helps the learner identify the erroneous part and understand the nature of his error to be able to correct it. The percentage of imprecise metalinguistic explanation ranges from 62% to 100%; meanwhile, the percentage of precise metalinguistic explanation ranges from 0% to 16%. Participants' inability to provide such precise clues or explanations makes one question the participants' metalinguistic knowledge and their ability to provide appropriate metalinguistic explanations.

In light of the empirical evidence presented, research on teachers' WCF practices seem to share some similarities in addition to their general objectives. Initially, in this group of studies on WCF, the researchers use the same methods and tools for data collection in order to understand and analyze teachers' feedback practices. In some studies, the participating teachers are provided with different texts written by their own learners (Ammar et al., 2016; Guenette and Lyster, 2013; Lee, 2008), while others have their participants correct one learner's text according to their regular practices (Bouhlal & Ammar, 2017; Furneaux et al., 2007; Lee, 2004). In order to examine the quality of pre-service teachers' WCF, a task of feedback provision is relevant to the present study. Along with the error correction task, some researchers conduct interviews to better understand teachers' feedback choices as well as what impinged on their WCF practices (Guenette and Lyster, 2013; Lee, 2004, 2008).

Within the contexts of ESL and English as a foreign language, research has been mostly carried out outside Quebec (Furneaux et al., 2007; Lee, 2004, 2008). Only Guenette and Lyster (2013) conducted their study in Quebec. Yet, as far as the francophone context is concerned, both Ammar et al. (2016) and Bouhlal and Ammar (2017) conducted their research in Quebec. The scarcity of empirical research in the French language context in Quebec is what justifies the relevance of the present study.

The empirical overview shows that the vast majority of research on written corrective feedback is conducted with in-service teachers (Ammar et al., 2016; Furneaux et al., 2007; Lee, 2004, 2008). Only Guenette and Lyster (2013) and Bouhlal and Ammar (2017) carried out their research with pre-service teachers in Quebec, hence the importance of pursuing further research with this same population. Apart from the lack of research conducted with pre-service teachers, the variables related to these teachers can be more controlled compared to those related to in-service teachers, because the participants sit for certain courses which make them eligible to provide the required feedback.

Second language writing research literature on WCF has been mostly conducted in an English language environment and scarcely in a francophone context. Researchers like Lee (2004, 2008), Furneaux et al. (2007) and Guenette and Lyster (2013) studied WCF in ESL and/ or English as a foreign language, while only Ammar et al. (2016) and Bouhlal and Ammar (2017) have

conducted their work in a French language context: French as a first language and FSL. Indeed, studies conducted in both contexts – French and English – have several elements in common; however, what is interesting is the salient difference between their findings. The overall results show that all studies in ESL and English as a foreign language found that the most used technique is direct WCF (Furneaux et al., 2007; Guenette and Lyster, 2013; Lee, 2004, 2008). However, in French as a first language and FSL contexts, the technique of preference is the indirect WCF (Ammar et al., 2016; Bouhlal & Ammar, 2017).

As far as the consulted studies are concerned, empirical research basically focuses on understanding and analyzing teachers' WCF practices. Nevertheless, scant attention is paid to pre-service teachers and to the quality of their WCF practices. Indeed, only the study by Bouhlal and Ammar (2017) seeks to investigate the quality of WCF in terms of error location and the precision of the metalinguistic explanation. Though, it is not within the scope of their study to link the quality of WCF with pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge, the latter being the second key concept of the present study.

2.2 Metalinguistic knowledge

The term "Metalinguistic knowledge" is composed of two distinct constructs namely "metalinguistic" and "knowledge." A terminological overview of the individual constructs "metalinguistic," "knowledge" as well as their combination "metalinguistic knowledge" will be presented. In the current study, the perspective that will be taken into account in describing metalinguistic knowledge is teachers' perspective. In this section, the term metalinguistic knowledge is going to be differentiated from other terms such as "linguistic knowledge," "linguistic awareness" and "metalinguistic awareness" and the term "knowledge" will be distinguished from "awareness." Empirical research about teachers' metalinguistic knowledge will be reviewed after the terminological overview.

2.2.1 Terminological overview

Metalinguistic knowledge can be perceived from two standpoints: the learner's perspective and the teacher's perspective. The terms pertaining to learners' views are knowledge, ability, and

awareness (Bialystok, 2001). The terms describing teachers' views are knowledge and awareness (Andrews, 1999).

Before defining metalinguistic knowledge, it is judicious to start defining its components: knowledge and metalinguistic. According to Brien (1998), knowledge can be referred to as "the representations which are recognized as true (Le Ny, 1989) or even the 'justified beliefs' as Bruner calls them (1996)" (p. 55, free translation). Knowledge, grammatical knowledge more specifically, comprises different types: declarative and procedural, implicit and explicit. Several researchers (Anderson, 1993; Brien, 1998; DeKeyser, 1998) agree that declarative knowledge can be described or reported. It is, indeed, factual. In fact, this type of knowledge expresses knowing something about the language: it describes a fact in the language like knowing its general rules for instance. In other words, declarative knowledge refers to the knowledge of the individual (Brien, 1998). For example, one knows the rule in the French language that says "*quand deux verbes se suivent, le deuxième se met à l'infinitif.*"

Procedural knowledge is different from declarative knowledge in the sense that it is "achieved by engaging in the target behavior or procedure." However, it is achieved "while leaning on declarative crutches" (DeKeyser, 1998, p. 49). That is to say, one would keep in mind the needed rules of the target language while producing utterances in this language. Procedural knowledge is manifested in the behavior, that is to say, it refers to the know-how of the individual (e.g., Knowing how to conjugate a verb in the right tense and form). However, this knowledge partially relies on declarative knowledge but it can also depend on intuitive knowledge, particularly implicit knowledge.

According to Ellis (2009), implicit knowledge is procedural, intuitive and tacit. It is unconscious in terms of process and product. In other words, it is both learned and performed intuitively. For example, in French, with verbs conjugated in the past tense, more specifically in the "*passé compose,*" learners should behave according to what Ellis calls a "condition-action rule" (p. 11). In other words, if the action has been done in the past and was already completed at the time of the speech, or before that, it is necessary to add an auxiliary "*être*" or "*avoir,*" depending on the verb, followed by the past participle of the verb. The auxiliary has to be conjugated in the

present tense. The learner does it intuitively without resorting to the grammar rule and possibly without being able to explain the reason.

Explicit knowledge, on the contrary, is declarative and is constituted of facts about the second language. Unlike implicit knowledge, it is conscious in terms of process and product. Indeed, it is accessible by a controlled treatment as explained by Ellis who argues that "it exists as declarative facts that can only be accessed through the application of attentional processes" (Ellis, 2009, p. 12). For example, in French, there is a rule that says if the past participle is conjugated with the auxiliary "*avoir*", then it does not follow the subject verb agreement rule as in "***elle a mangé une pomme***" (She ate an apple) except when the direct object is placed before the verb.

The second concept comprised in the construct of interest is metalinguistic which is of two types. The first type of metalinguistic is based on using grammatical terminology. For instance, in the example "**she** ate an apple," the learner can refer to "she" as the subject of the sentence. The second type is based on the conscious manipulation of the objects of the language. In other words, it addresses the relationship between different elements in the sentence. It is different from the first type in the sense that it does not include grammatical terminology. Within the same example, the learner can refer to "she" by saying that she is the one who ate the apple without using any metalanguage.

Metalinguistic, in the SLA literature, can be used to qualify different terms. Bialystok (2001), for instance, presents three terms that she associates to metalinguistic while considering the learner's perspective, namely "metalinguistic knowledge," "metalinguistic ability" and "metalinguistic awareness."

Initially, metalinguistic knowledge, also referred to as "knowledge about language" (Bialystock, 2001, p. 123), does not only concern the simple knowledge of grammar, but goes beyond that to include the explicit depiction of the abstract features of the linguistic structure. According to Bialystock (2001), this metalinguistic knowledge has to incorporate at least "the abstract structure of language that organizes sets of linguistic rules" (2001, p. 123). This can refer to the word order of a particular language. For example, in English and in French likewise, the canonical structure of a sentence obeys the word order: subject, verb, and object. Bialystok (2001)

maintains that one possesses knowledge of the language in its most broad sense if one possesses metalinguistic knowledge.

The second concept defined by Bialystock (2001) is metalinguistic ability. To avoid confusion, this term refers to describing the ability to use one's metalinguistic knowledge, not the ability to use the language itself. Metalinguistic ability is related to linguistic ability. Indeed, it derivates from it as it operates according to the same principles of development and use of linguistic ability. However, it is considered distinct, to a certain extent, and autonomous from it. In fact, as opposed to the latter, metalinguistic ability is not responsible for the ordinary use of the language, for example, like listening and speaking in order to communicate (Bialystok, 2001).

The third concept Bialystock (2001) uses is metalinguistic awareness. She maintains that awareness needs attention, and metalinguistic awareness is synchronized with the time of mental processing. This means that when one is using the metalinguistic knowledge of the language, one is being attentive. Therefore, metalinguistic awareness can be perceived as attention and mental processing combined together. Metalinguistic awareness lasts for a certain period of time, namely when cognitive control is exerted, and attention is directed towards given "mental representations" (p. 126).

In order to draw a distinction and understand the relation between these concepts which are associated with the learner's perspective, it is important to take into account that metalinguistic knowledge refers to what is known about the language, while the term metalinguistic ability describes the capability of using this knowledge. While both these concepts remain at the level of input, metalinguistic awareness is termed after the ability to mentally treat this knowledge and explain it.

Metalinguistic knowledge and metalinguistic awareness are also used by Andrews (1999b) in order to describe teachers' knowledge. Before explaining both the relationship and the difference between these two concepts, it is important to distinguish between linguistic knowledge and linguistic awareness. According to him, linguistic knowledge refers to what is known of the language while linguistic awareness describes the ability to implement that knowledge in teaching (Andrews, 1999b).

With regards to the distinction between metalinguistic knowledge and metalinguistic awareness, Andrews (1999b) maintains that teachers' metalinguistic knowledge is attributed to possessing knowledge about the language. However, teacher's metalinguistic awareness refers to "the use made of such knowledge" (p. 163) in order to teach. Competent L2 teachers should not only possess metalinguistic knowledge to be able to use it to communicate, but they should also analyze what they know about the language and try to implement this knowledge in the teaching context to render the input more accessible and efficient for students (Andrews, 1999b), from this use of the language comes the term "metalinguistic awareness."

Metalinguistic awareness is essential, and its importance is highlighted in the model provided by Andrews (1999b, p. 166) which indicates that the output provided for learners can either be filtered or unfiltered (see Figure 1). In fact, it is through teachers' metalinguistic awareness that the different language forms (language contained in materials, language produced by other learners and language produced) become filtered. Since the language produced by learners is the most relevant to the present study, it is interesting to note that the metalinguistic awareness is what allows teachers to filter the language produced by the learner and react to it, for instance provide corrective feedback when errors are detected. From this model, it can be anticipated that a teacher who has a more developed linguistic awareness will be able to detect errors in the input and provide learners with feedback that helps them understand their incorrect renditions.
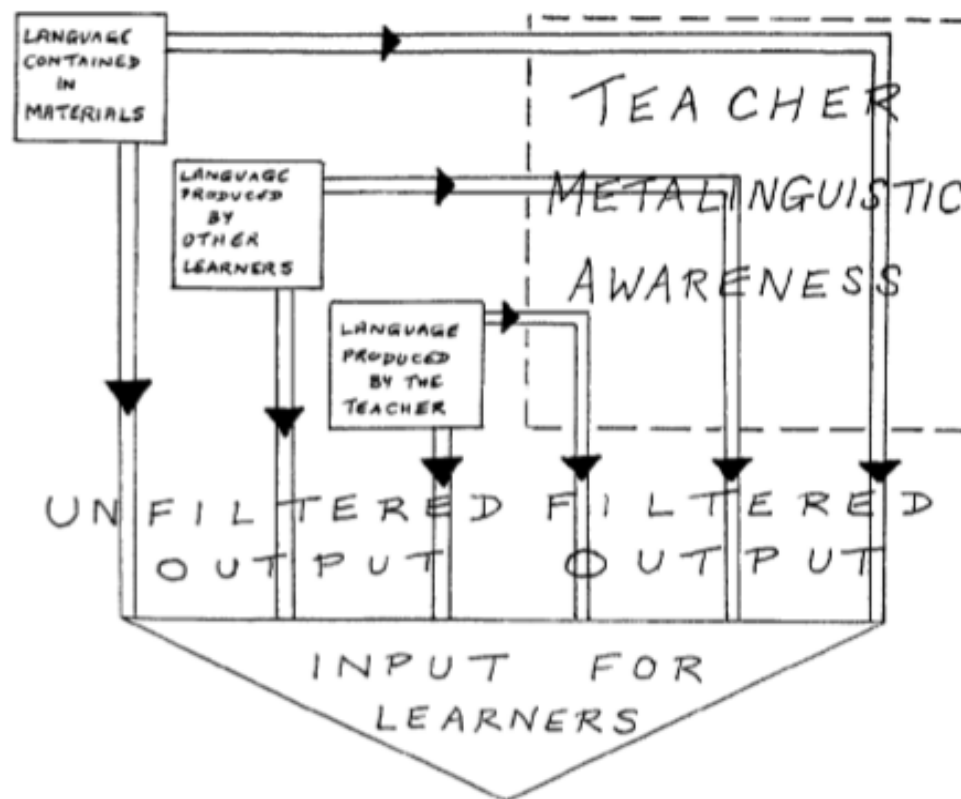
Figure 1. The role of teachers' metalinguistic awareness in filtering output for learners. Retrieved from Andrews, 1999b, p. 166.

The proposed study seeks to explore the relationship between teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and their WCF practices. The relationship between the two indicates the extent to which teachers can use their metalinguistic knowledge to filter learners' output and react to it. In other words, this relationship is considered an indicator of metalinguistic awareness. If teachers do not possess metalinguistic knowledge, they indirectly will not have metalinguistic awareness.

To sum up, knowledge can be declarative or procedural, implicit or explicit. Metalinguistic knowledge is perceived from two viewpoints: learners' perspective, which includes the concepts of metalinguistic knowledge, metalinguistic capacity, and metalinguistic awareness, and teachers' perspective, which comprises metalinguistic knowledge and metalinguistic awareness. As drawn previously, the concept of metalinguistic knowledge is used to refer to knowledge about the language. Metalinguistic awareness refers to the use made of this knowledge to provide effective

27

teaching. In what follows, L2 empirical research on teachers' metalinguistic knowledge will be reviewed.

2.2.2 Empirical research about teachers' metalinguistic knowledge

Empirical research conducted on teachers' metalinguistic knowledge is scarce especially in the FSL context. Although different studies look at the latter from different angles and perspectives, findings generally indicate that pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge is lacking.

The study by Morris (2003), for example, investigates the extent of the correlation between 34 teaching English as a second language pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and their academic results in order to measure the progress of this knowledge over the period of the study (10 weeks). Some of the participants are registered in an intensive ESL teaching course, and others follow a grammar course for future ESL teachers. In order to meet the research objectives, the participants are given different assessment tasks to accomplish. A grammatical explanation task is administered so as to measure their metalinguistic knowledge. In this task, participants are asked to correct the errors in 8 sentences, each sentence containing one error, and explain each of these errors. The task is administered twice, at the beginning of the 10 weeks (pre-test) and at the end (post-test).

Findings indicate that the pre-test results obtained in the grammatical explanation task are correlated with the participants' academic grades and that pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge strongly correlates with their academic performance. Subsequently, the researcher compares the participants' pre-test results to their post-test results in order to measure the progress they made across the intensive session of study. A significant improvement from pre-test to post-test, especially those who are taking the grammar course, is reported. While incorrect answers in the grammatical explanation task account for 35% of the pre-test scores, they drop to 21% at the post-test.

Similar findings are presented in Martineau's (2007) study. Martineau (2007) examines the state of pre-service teachers' grammatical knowledge by measuring it with different tasks. His study involves 56 FSL pre-service teachers enrolled in 1st and 4th year of bachelor of FSL teaching

in Quebec. In order to evaluate the state of the participants' grammatical knowledge (their linguistic and metalinguistic knowledge), he administers four tasks. From these tasks, he seeks to investigate if there are any major differences between the results of year 1 and those of year 4 pre-service teachers' grammatical knowledge. The first task is a metalinguistic description task which is administered to examine the participants' ability to accurately describe the underlined item in different sentences. More specifically, participants are asked to provide the relevant information about the underlined word in each sentence. They should indicate the word class, its category, and the function of the underlined item, and add information about the tense, the mode, and the form if the item is a verb. The second, third, and fourth tasks are interrelated; in fact, the participants are given 10 statements in which they have to first, indicate if there is a grammatical error or not (error location), second, correct the error if it exists and, third, provide the appropriate explanation to learners.

Findings indicate that, generally, pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge is lacking, even though the participants do well in some tasks. Compared to the results of the error location task (96%) and the error correction task (92%), which are successful, the error explanation task results (20%) are considered very poor. With regards to the metalinguistic description task, three types of calculation were used in analyzing the results. The global calculation which considers that the answer is correct even if only half of the answer is provided. For example, identifying the class of the word without having specified the sort. The minimal calculation where the answer does not have to be complete, and it is enough to indicate the most important element of the description. The last type of calculation is the strict calculation which requires a correct and complete description. Results show that, generally, the results of year 1 were slightly higher than those of year 4. The general result for both classes using the minimal calculation is 60.61%, while the result using the strict calculation decreases to 40%, and the result according to the global calculation accounts for 50.73%. According to Martineau (2007), participants' flawed grammatical knowledge might influence the quality of their teaching in the future. That being said, the future teachers' practical and theoretical training is to be questioned, according to the researcher, for it is not developing the linguistic and the metalinguistic knowledge of these teachers.

In light of the empirical research presented, what can be retained is that researchers who investigate teachers' metalinguistic knowledge (Martineau, 2007; Morris, 2003) work with pre-service teachers in Quebec, and only Martineau's (2007) study is conducted in the FSL context. In order to assess pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge, both researchers use the error correction task in their data collection where the participants must locate the error, correct it and explain it. Their findings indicate that the task that mainly reflects the participants' lacking metalinguistic knowledge is the task which requires explanations. Using this type of task in the present study might be relevant to attain the research objectives.

Although these two studies have sought to measure pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge, they do not explore the link between this knowledge and the participants' practices, most notably feedback practices. Hence, comes an interesting study by Andrews (1997) which tries to explore the relationship between teachers' metalinguistic awareness and their ability to explain grammar points in an ESL context in Hong Kong. Nine pre-service and five in-service teachers participate in his study (*n*=14). In order to measure the participants' metalinguistic awareness, the researcher provides two different texts for each one of them on two separate occasions. These teachers are put in a hypothetical context according to which they have to pretend to be teaching a Form 3 class of average level. They are asked to correct their hypothetical students' texts and provide grammatical explanations of what they think needs to be clarified in the texts supposedly written by the learners. In his study, Andrews (1997) observed pre- and in-service teachers' explanations of grammar points. More specifically, the participants were invited to correct the texts of the student, identify the part of the excerpt that lacks clarification, judging from the errors they find, and then provide a correction and explanation of these errors. Each participant performs the task twice, having a different extract each time. In the first performance, participants are asked to do the required task without preparing for it. The aim of this task is to test their actual metalinguistic awareness. In the second performance, however, they are allowed ten minutes to prepare for the task along with having the possibility to consult reference grammars. The two performances are compared so as to know whether there exist any remarkable differences.

Findings indicate that, generally, teachers' metalinguistic awareness is related to their ability to explain grammar points. Given a chance to prepare for the task, the accuracy of the

content positively affects teachers' performance. Despite that, Andrews (1997) reports that most of the participants, whether pre-service or in-service, provide not only unnecessary but also erroneous corrections. Some of them produce ungrammatical sentences while correcting, or suggest an incorrect use of forms, which reveals the serious weaknesses these teachers have when it comes to their performance. According to the researcher, these language weaknesses seem to be associated with the quality of their metalinguistic awareness.

While this study yields a number of tangible results, it is not within its scope to put more emphasis on teachers' written corrections. Instead, it focuses on their oral explanations to the learners. Additionally, the context of this study is not authentic: in fact, teachers are placed in a hypothetical context, where they need to pretend to be in front of learners, which could impinge on the authenticity of the findings. Finally, the fact that these texts are provided by the researcher and include errors that do not correspond to the types of errors Cantonese learners make shows that there is a problem of ecological validity. The present study attempts to overcome some of the limitations of Andrews' study (1997) along with those of the previous research presented. Therefore, FSL pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge will be examined in relation to the quality of their WCF.

In light of the empirical research presented, measuring teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and awareness appears to be essential. It is equally important to examine WCF in relation to teachers' metalinguistic knowledge, hence the specific objectives of the present study.

Table 1

The Different Concepts Used in the Study

Feedback techniques	Direct	The correct form is provided to learners
	Indirect	The correct form is not provided, but the feedback pushes learners to self-correct
Error categories relevant to the study	Syntax	Errors related to tense and to placing words or phrases in the right order, etc.
	Grammatical morphology	Errors of gender and number agreement and homophony, etc.
Precision of error location	Precise error location	The exact erroneous part in the word is identified
	Partially precise error location	The word that contains the error -not the exact erroneous part in that word- is correctly identified.
	Imprecise error location	The errors are signaled in margins or the whole group of words that contains an error is underlined
Accuracy of Metalinguistic Explanation	Accurate ME	The metalinguistic explanation is relevant and exact
	Partially accurate ME	The metalinguistic explanation relevant/correct but vague
	Inaccurate ME	The metalinguistic explanation is irrelevant and wrong
Teachers' metalinguistic knowledge	Teachers' metalinguistic knowledge is what they know *about* the language (Andrews, 2003; Bialystok, 2001)	

2.3 Specific research objectives

The present study aims to fill in a gap in WCF research taking into account the conceptual and methodological elements outlined above. Following this reasoning, the specific research objectives are to:

RO1: Measure pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge.

RO2: Describe the quality of FSL pre-service teachers' corrective feedback.

RO3: Examine the relationship between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their written corrective feedback (teachers' metalinguistic awareness).

Chapter 3: Methodology

The aim of this chapter is to provide details about the methodology that was adopted to address the three research objectives. This chapter starts with the description of the context of this quantitative study, and of the participants who will take part in it. Subsequently, a description of the data collection tools, the procedure of their administration and how they are analyzed is provided.

3.1 Research Context

The present quantitative study is carried out in Montreal with pre-service teachers, and more specifically in FSL initial teacher training programs (*Le programme de formation initiale des maîtres*). As explained in chapter one, the choice of conducting the study with pre-service teachers is motivated by the scarcity of research on this teacher population. Besides, working in this research context facilitates control of important variables, like prior training, that may influence corrective feedback practices and metalinguistic knowledge. French as a second language teacher training programs are chosen because French is the official language of Quebec. Besides, there is no study, to the best of our knowledge, that sought to investigate teachers' metalinguistic knowledge in relation to their feedback practices in the FSL context in Quebec.

3.2 Participants

Eighteen pre-service FSL teachers participated in the present study. In order to control for the effects of prior training (i.e., all participants have the same training that may influence their written corrective feedback practices and metalinguistic knowledge), only students who have already followed all courses related to (1) grammar (2) teaching of reading, writing and grammar, and (3) second language teaching methods and approaches are selected. No additional selection criteria are considered. In fact, the pre-service teachers' participation is on a voluntary basis. For instance, criteria related to their GPA scores, success in their internships or to their prior teaching experience are not considered in the study. All students were enrolled in the second year of their training when the data are collected.

3.3 Data collection tools

Scarce SLA research addressed pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge. Martineau (2007), who works with FSL pre-service teachers, argues that pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge can be measured with an analytical abilities task that he calls a metalinguistic description task. This task is used to test the participants' ability to identify, among other things, the word-class and the function of words in different sentences. In accordance with his research, the task that is administered in the present study to measure FSL pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge is the analytical abilities task (see Appendix 2), which is described in the coming sections.

3.3.1 Analytical abilities task

The analytical abilities task used in this study is based on the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT), namely the fourth section entitled "Words in Sentences." MLAT contains five different sections each of which targets a specific language aptitude competency. The fourth part measures awareness and understanding of grammatical structure.

The analytical abilities task used in the present study is an adaptation of MLAT that was validated by Melki (in progress) in French and by Bouhlal (2019) in English. As explained by Bouhlal (2019), an adaptation of this test is deemed necessary because in MLAT participants are asked to analyze words, which contradicts regular practices of grammar teaching, at least French language teaching, in which groups of words like noun phrases and verb phrases as opposed to words are used as units of teaching and analysis. Besides, in MLAT, form and function are mixed in the same test which can be misleading for learners. For instance, in example 1, participants have to identify the word in the second sentence that plays the same role as the capitalized word in the key sentence. According to this example, the word that should be selected is *children* because it has the same function as the capitalized word (i.e., subject). However, one can also choose the words jeans and park since they are of the same word class as the noun John (i.e., noun phrase).

Example 1:

<div style="border:1px solid black; padding:10px;">

Sample: <u>**JOHN**</u> took a long walk in the woods.

<u>Children</u> in blue <u>jeans</u> were <u>singing</u> and <u>dancing</u> in the <u>park</u>.
  A   B   C   D   E

You would select "**A**." because the key sentence is about "John" and the second sentence is about "children."

</div>

Consequently, Melki's adaptation of MLAT contains two different sections: the first of which relates to the function of parts of speech and the second one to their nature. In this task, participants are provided with a key sentence that contains a bolded and capitalized group of words (e.g., "*the kid*" in example 2) and are asked to identify the word or group of words that have the same function. In the second section of the task, students are also provided with a key sentence containing a bolded and capitalized word or group of words (e.g., "*fast*" in example 3) and are asked to identify the word or group of words that is of the same nature (i.e., word class) in the second sentence. In order to better gauge their metalinguistic knowledge, participants are also asked to explain their choices. In order to validate the content of her adapted task, Melki administered it to 100 secondary school FSL learners, mostly in grades 3, 4 and 5. Students who participated in the validation of the task are mostly enrolled in French immersion for their elementary education and in enriched French in their secondary school. In other words, they represent students with the highest number of hours of French instruction that Anglophone school boards can accumulate. They, consequently, may represent the students with the highest French proficiency in this learning context. By consequence, it can be presumed that future FSL teachers should at least be able to perform the same metalinguistic task as the students who participated in the validation.

Example 2 : The analytical abilities task (Function)

Task: In the following sentences, identify which word or group of words has the same function as the word or group of words that is **BOLDED AND CAPITALIZED** in the numbered key sentence. The functions examined in this test are *adverbials, direct objects, indirect objects, subjects, subject complements* and *verbs*.

E.g. Jack gave **THE KID** a candy.

<u>Elisa</u> <u>offered</u> <u>the flowers</u> to <u>her mother</u>.

A   B   C   D

Answer: The correct answer is **D**. The kid and her mother are **indirect objects**.

Example 3: The analytical abilities task (Word Class)

Task: In the following sentences, identify which word belongs to the same family/is of the same nature as the word that is **BOLDED AND CAPITALIZED** in the numbered key sentence. The word classes examined in this test are *adjectives, adverbs, coordinators, determiners, nouns, prepositions, pronouns* and *verbs*.

E.g. Stop driving so **FAST**!

<u>We</u> <u>hardly</u> <u>know</u> that <u>crazy</u> neighbor.

A   B   C   D

Answer: The correct answer is **B**. Fast and hardly are **adverbs**.

Apart from measuring metalinguistic knowledge, a WCF provision task is administered to measure feedback practices.

3.3.2 Feedback task

According to previous research on WCF practices, in order to investigate teachers' feedback practices, participants can be given a student's text to which they are asked to provide

feedback (Bouhlal & Ammar, 2017; Furneaux et al., 2007; Lee, 2004). Consequently, in the present study, a text of an FSL learner (see Appendix 3) enrolled in his 4th year of secondary school in the enriched French program (français enrichi) is administered to participants. The learner's text that is chosen for the data collection is produced in the context of a text-reconstruction task (i.e., reconstructing a text that the teacher reads aloud to the class). Opting for this kind of writing task is explained by the fact that it makes the learner pay more attention to the language he is producing. In fact, compared to other types of writing tasks, like open writing in which learners have to generate all the content, in the text reconstruction task, the content is already provided (i.e., the text is read by the teacher). Provision of content supposedly frees the learners' attention from focusing on content generation allowing them to focus on the language itself. Given that written corrective feedback about language form is the focus of the present study, it was deemed important to work on a text that was produced in a context where learners' attention was directed to language. The text-reconstruction task goes as follows. The teacher reads the text three times (see Appendix 4). The first time allows learners to understand the general idea of the text. The second time, the teacher reads the same text, learners are asked to take the necessary notes that should allow them to reconstruct the text, and the third time they validate the notes they took and add details if needed. They are finally asked to reconstruct the text based on the notes they took while making sure to use a word bank that was provided by the researcher. The text used in the present study is entitled "The story of a Syrian refugee's survival."

The text used in the feedback task is chosen from a pool of 28 texts students wrote in the same conditions in relation to the same text, that is "The story of a Syrian refugee's survival." First, only texts that contained at least 350 words are retained. This measure is taken because participants are explicitly instructed to do so. Texts that contained very few errors are excluded and so are those in which errors are mostly lexical (i.e., spelling and vocabulary). Based on these criteria, 20 texts were excluded. The text that contained a somehow balanced distribution of errors between syntax and grammatical morphology is retained, because these are the most frequent error categories in L2 learners' written production (Ammar et al., 2016). Participants are asked to provide written feedback to the same reconstructed text (i.e., the text written by one student). They are given the necessary time they need to do so.

3.4 Procedure

The data collection took place at the end of the winter term during which all participants were following a grammar teaching course in which written corrective feedback is a major subject. Care is taken to administer the analytical abilities task at the beginning of the course and the feedback task after WCF content is covered. The researcher is given access to all the teaching material the lecturer used when talking about WCF. An analysis of the provided material indicates that participants are encouraged to vary WCF techniques and to resort, preferably, to indirect WCF. They are also told not to correct all errors and that a selective approach may be more effective. They are encouraged to provide metalinguistic clues to help the leaners understand their errors when deemed necessary.

Data collection tools are not administered on the same day to avoid participant exhaustion as recommended by Morris (2003). After participants signed the consent form (see Appendix 1), the analytical abilities task was administered. No time limits are set to perform the task. Participants are given all the time they need to do the task without pressure.

As for the feedback task, participants are given the selected FSL learner's text and are asked to react to the learner's errors based on their own perceptions as to how feedback should be provided. At no time were they told to use any specific WCF techniques or to react to all errors.

3.5 Data analyses

The different analyses that were undertaken are presented in relation to each research objective.

RO1: Measure pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge.

To address the first research objective pertaining to teachers' metalinguistic knowledge, the analytical abilities test with its two subtests, namely word class and word function, is analyzed as follows. For each item in the word class subtest, which includes 14 items, participants receive one point for correctly identifying the word or group of words that is of the same nature as the one underlined in the key sentence and one point for explaining their answer. In total, participants can obtain 28 points for the word class subtest. The same scoring method is used for the word function part which includes 18 items and in which students can get a maximum score of 36 points. The

combination of scores in these two subtests gives a total score of 64 points for the analytical abilities task. To ensure the reliability of the scoring method, all data are scored with another researcher (inter-rater reliability analyses). No discrepancies are obtained.

RO2: Describe the quality of FSL pre-service teachers' corrective feedback.

The second research objective pertains to the quality of pre-service teachers' WCF, but before describing the quality of feedback in terms of precision of error location and accuracy of the provided metalinguistic explanations, it is deemed necessary to shed light on the nature of the provided WCF. Therefore, the participants' WCF is analyzed in terms of frequency of occurrence (the percentage of errors targeted by CF) in general and by error category more specifically, and in terms of type of WCF technique used (direct or indirect) in general and by error category. However, given that participants did not provide feedback to the same number of errors, it is necessary to establish a common yardstick by which participants' WCF practices could be compared. In other words, it seems necessary to identify the errors participants should provide feedback to and to analyze feedback provision to this same number of errors for all participants.

In order to determine the number of errors that would serve as the units of analysis to determine the nature of the provided WCF, the text used in the feedback task is given to three experts (three Ph.D. students with a background in linguistics or teaching French as a second language) who are instructed to identify all morphosyntactic errors. A comparison of their answers allowed us to identify the errors that they agreed on. A total number of 47 errors, eighteen of which are grammatical morphology errors and 29 are syntax errors, that are commonly identified by the three experts are retained and used to analyze the participants' WCF practices. In other words, only feedback that is provided to these 47 errors is analyzed. Instances in which participants do not provide feedback to any of these same errors are coded as zero feedback. Similarly, feedback that is provided to errors other than the 47 target errors is not   analyzed. This measure allows for frequency of occurrence of WCF to be calculated out of the same total number of errors for all participants.

In order to evaluate the quality of the provided WCF, analyses are performed only on the errors that received feedback. In total, 566 errors are analyzed to determine the precision of error

location and the accuracy of metalinguistic explanations. This choice is made to correct for the fact that participants do not provide feedback to the same number of errors, because the course they are taking at the time of data collection encouraged them to adopt a selective approach. Data indicate that while some participants provide feedback to 98% of errors, others do so 34% of the time. The quality of WCF is examined in terms of the precision of error location and the accuracy of the metalinguistic explanation when it is provided. Unlike analyses conducted to describe the nature of CF where the frequency of CF provision is calculated out of a fixed total number of errors (i.e., 47 errors identified by the three experts), analyses pertaining to the quality of feedback only target instances in which feedback is provided. It seems counter intuitive to evaluate CF quality when participants do not provide feedback.

In terms of error location, participants could obtain a maximum score of three. "Zero" is obtained when the error is not identified. "Imprecise" error location refers to instances when the presence of errors is signaled in margins or when the participant underlines the whole group of words that contains an error. This is the case when the learner underlines the noun group "*une agence syrien*" to signal the agreement error in the adjective "*syrien.*" For "imprecise" error location, participants get one point. "Partially precise" error location refers to instances when the word that contains the error was correctly identified as in "*elle est **fatigué**.*" Error location in this example is judged as being partially precise because it does not allow the participants to identify the erroneous part in a reliable way because the participant may think that the error is located in any part of the underlined word. Two points are assigned to these instances of imprecise error location. Error location is considered "precise" when the participants identify the exact erroneous part in the word. They can do so by underlining the end of "*fatigué*" to clearly indicate to the learner where the problem lies. Three points are allotted to such "precise" error location.

A maximum score of three is also used to analyze the accuracy of the provided metalinguistic explanations. Metalinguistic explanations include, among other things, metalinguistic clues (e.g., number agreement), general codes (e.g., *S* for syntax), more specific codes (e.g., *AAdj*, for adjective agreement). Absent metalinguistic explanations obtain zero points. Irrelevant and wrong metalinguistic explanations, for instance, indicating that there is a lexical error when it is a syntactic one, are considered "inaccurate" and obtain one point. Relevant but

vague metalinguistic explanations are considered "partially accurate," like indicating that there is a morphological or grammatical error under the erroneous word in "*elle est fatigué*." Although correct, such an explanation does not help the learner understand the nature of his error because there are different sub-categories of grammatical and morphological errors (e.g., agreement with the noun phrase). Therefore, it is considered partially accurate. A score of two points is obtained in this case. Always within the same example, if the participant indicates the presence of an agreement problem in the past participle, the provided metalinguistic information is deemed accurate and he obtains a score of three points.

To ensure the reliability of analyses pertaining to the precision of error location and to the accuracy of metalinguistic explanations, two graduate students who are familiar with the corrective feedback literature are asked to code four texts independently. An inter-rater reliability of 92% is obtained. Most of the disagreements that emerged from the analyses are easily resolved. When it comes to error location, there is a debate about coding crossed-out errors as "zero" or "precise." However, since crossing out the error means that it is recognized as an error and not discarded, error location is deemed "precise." Underlined phrases which contain more than one error but only one code are finally coded like errors that are only underlined without having a metalinguistic explanation and thus coded as "zero." As far as the discrepancies related to the metalinguistic explanation are concerned, they are mainly related to unclearly written codes like unrecognizing the code written by the participant, agreement on coding some errors (e.g., coding "*AAdj*" as accurate or partially accurate), and giving the same codes if the same way of providing the metalinguistic explanation is used. For example, if "*AAdj*" is coded as accurate, "*AV*" should also be considered accurate and not partially accurate.

Data for this task are analyzed using excel. Six types of descriptive analyses are undertaken to measure the quality of pre-service teacher's WCF. Two of these analyses target the precision of error location and four of them target the accuracy of the metalinguistic explanation. In terms of error location, the average of error location is calculated first, regardless of error category (i.e., syntax and grammatical morphology). Then, the general average of error location per error category is calculated to see if there are any differences between identifying syntactic errors and grammatical morphology errors. As for the accuracy of metalinguistic explanations, the average

of accuracy of the metalinguistic explanation in general, regardless of error category, is calculated first. Second, the average of accuracy in the indirect technique is calculated because most participants (72%) provided metalinguistic explanations only when they corrected errors indirectly. Besides, even the 28% of participants who corrected some of the errors directly (i.e., by providing the correct form), did not provide a metalinguistic explanation to all these errors. Third, the general average of accuracy of the metalinguistic explanation per error category (i.e., syntax and grammatical morphology) is calculated to see if there are any differences between providing metalinguistic explanations on syntactic errors and grammatical morphology errors. Finally, the average of accuracy in the indirect technique is calculated per error category (i.e., syntax and grammatical morphology).

RO3: Examine the relationship between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their written corrective feedback (teachers' metalinguistic awareness).

To examine the third research objective which concerns the relationship between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their WCF (i.e., teachers' metalinguistic awareness), correlation analyses between teachers' metalinguistic knowledge, their error location and the accuracy of their metalinguistic explanations are undertaken to determine the relationship between each dimension of WCF quality and participants' metalinguistic knowledge.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of statistical analyses undertaken to meet the objectives of the study. This chapter is divided into three sections, each of which tackles one research objective. Concerning the results of the first objective, descriptive analyses that are undertaken, using Excel, to measure teachers' metalinguistic knowledge are presented. As for the findings pertaining to the second objective, descriptive and statistical analyses that are carried out using SPSS software version 25 to evaluate the nature of WCF as well as its quality in terms of error location and the accuracy of metalinguistic explanation are provided. Concerning the third research objective, results of the Pearson correlation analyses, which are conducted to examine whether there are any significant relationships between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the feedback they provided, are presented.

4.1 Pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge

With regards to the first research objective addressed in the study, which seeks to measure pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge, the test of analytical abilities administered to the participants is corrected and its results are analyzed using excel. The test which includes two subtests, namely word class and word function, is scored out of 64. As explained in chapter 3, participants could obtain a maximum score of 28 and 36 in the word class subtest and the word function subtest respectively. As Table 2 shows, scores of the three measures of central tendency (i.e., mean, median, and mode) are quite distinct, indicating that the distribution is not normal. In fact, more than half of the participants (67%) got more than the mean score and 22% of them obtained perfect scores, which explains why the mode corresponds to the perfect score. These results indicate that there is a ceiling effect, considering that the mode is 64, which explains why

the value of kurtosis is 4, and why the distribution is skewed. It is worthy to note that there is a difference of 24 points between the maximum and minimum scores (i.e., the range), indicating some differences in the participants' metalinguistic knowledge despite the high scores that were obtained.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of the Analytical Abilities Test Scores

	N	Mean	Median	Mode	Max	Min	SD	Range
Analytical abilities test	18	58,28	60	64	64	40	6,047	24

The distribution of scores in both the word class and word function subtests (i.e., the total score on the analytical abilities task) is larger and less homogenous compared to their distribution in each subtest. A closer look at the two data subtests (see Figure 1) shows that participants' success rate in these subtests are elevated and that their scores in word class are higher and more homogenous than those of function. In fact, the mean score in the word class subtest is 27 out of 28, while the mean score in the word function is 32 out of 36. It is worthy to note that the function subtest includes 18 items and the word class subtest includes 14 items. These results explain the ceiling effect since both subtest scores are very close to the perfect score. The boxplot (see Figure 1) indicates the presence of a participant who underperformed in the word function subtest and by consequence appears as an outlier in the data pertaining to the general score.

45
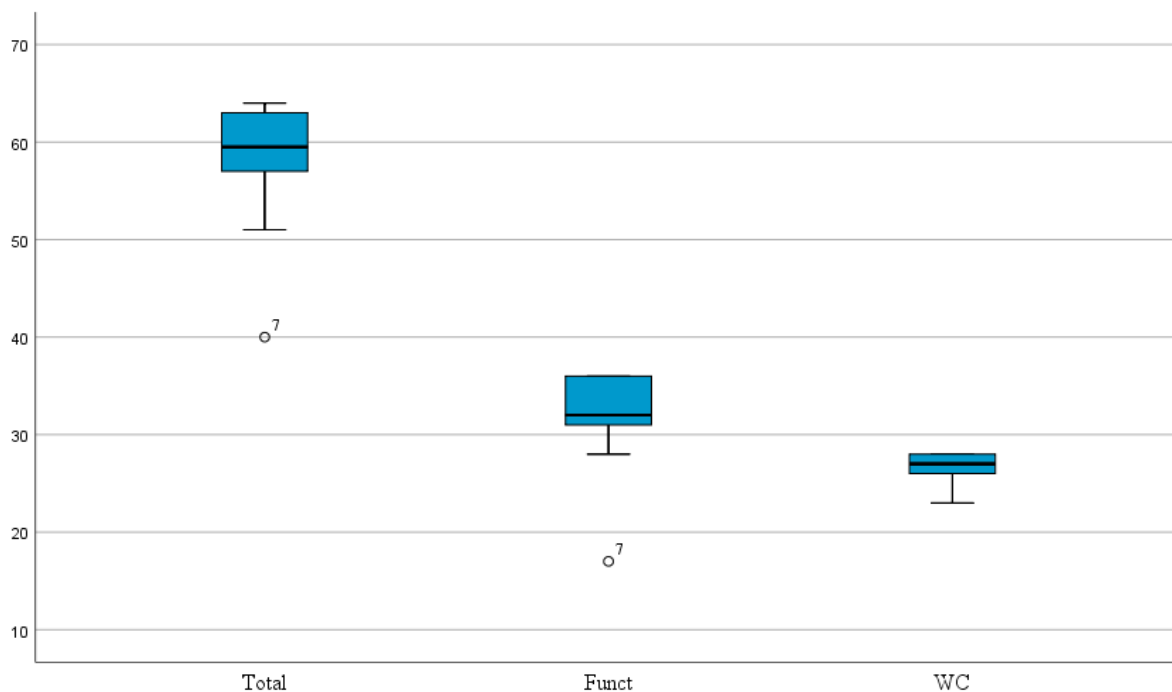
Figure 2. Analytical abilities overall test results

First main finding: learners obtained highly elevated mean scores on the analytical abilities task, indicating the presence of a ceiling effect. This is especially the case for the word nature subtest.

4.2 The quality of pre-service teachers' WCF

To address the second research objective pertaining to the quality of FSL pre-service teachers' written corrective feedback, descriptive and statistical analyses are performed on the WCF participants provided in reaction to the written text. As explained in the methodology section, the quality of WCF is analyzed along three dimensions, namely WCF choices, precision of error location, and precision of the provided metalinguistic explanation. This section reports the results

of participants' feedback practices, the results of error location precision and the findings pertaining to the accuracy of metalinguistic explanations.

4.2.1 Analysis of WCF techniques and error categories

To understand participants' WCF choices, feedback is analyzed according to the techniques used (i.e., direct and indirect) in general, and by error category (i.e., syntax and grammatical morphology). As explained in Chapter 3, only feedback pertaining to the 47 errors on which the three experts agreed on was analyzed, giving a total number of 846 errors (47 errors X 18 participants). Of this big total number, 522 errors are syntactic and the remaining 325 are grammatical morphology.

Analyses indicate that out of the 846 errors only 566 received corrective feedback. Feedback was provided in reaction to 361 and 205 syntactic and grammatical morphology errors respectively. Put differently, participants provided feedback to 67% of the errors. These findings are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics of Feedback Provision

Total number of errors to target			Total number of targeted errors		
Total *N*	Syntax	Grammatical morphology	Total N	Syntax	Grammatical morphology
846	522	325	566 (67%)	361	205

When feedback is provided, it is indirect 78% of the time and direct 22% of the time (see Figure 3).
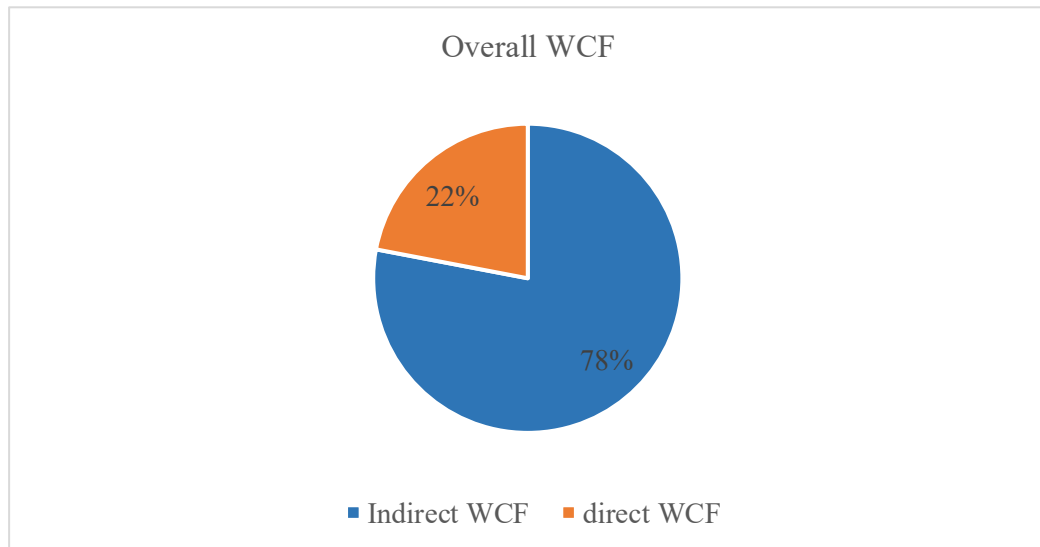
Figure 3. Overall occurrence of direct and indirect feedback

Analyses of WCF techniques per error category indicate that feedback is provided in reaction to syntactic errors 69% of the time and to grammatical morphology errors 63% of the time. Syntactic errors are more targeted than grammatical morphology errors probably because they represent 61.7% of the total errors (361 syntax errors compared to 205 grammatical morphology errors), so the chances of targeting them are bigger. WCF targeting syntax was 74% of the time indirect and 26% direct (see Figure 4). Meanwhile, WCF provided in reaction to errors in grammatical morphology was 86% of the time indirect and 14% direct (see Figure 5).
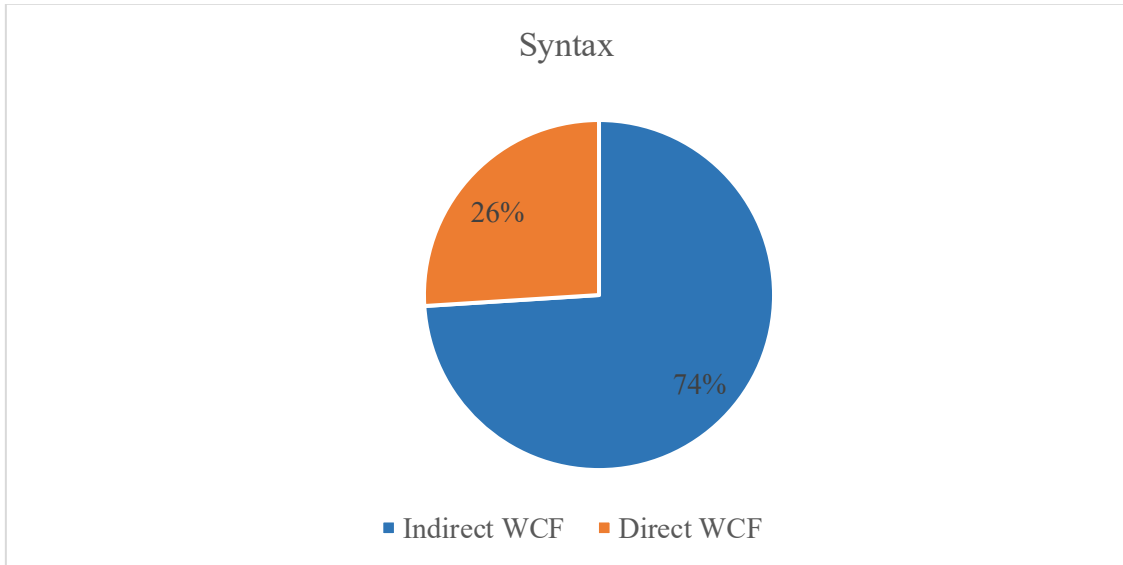
Figure 4. The use of WCF techniques in syntax
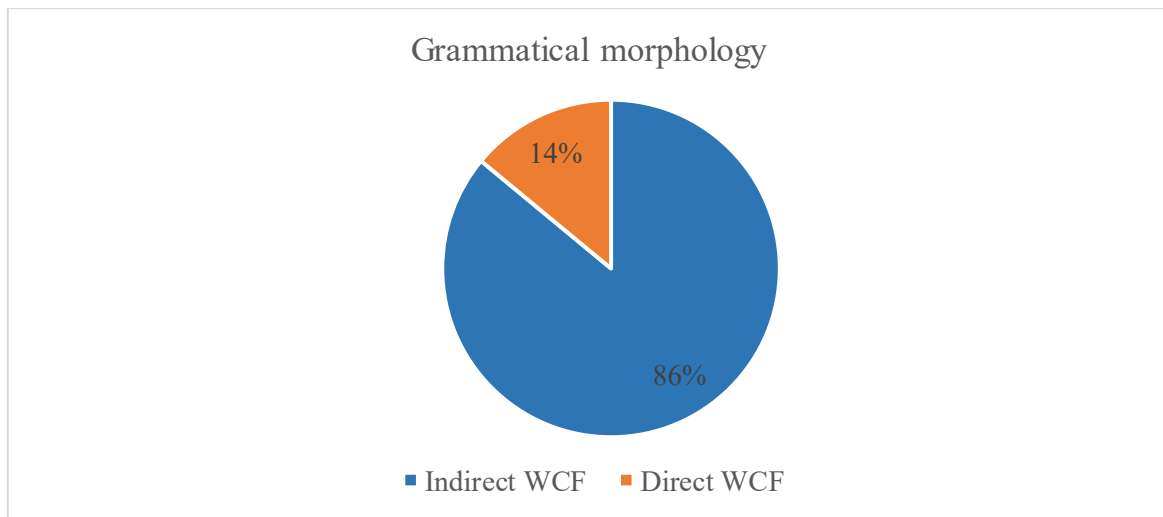
Figure 5. The use of WCF techniques in grammatical morphology

> **Second main finding**: It appears that indirect feedback is the technique of choice of the participating pre-service teachers and that its use varies across error categories with grammatical morphology receiving the most indirect written corrective feedback.

4.2.2 Precision of error location

One way to describe the quality of pre-service teachers' WCF is to calculate the average precision of error location in general. Findings indicate that participants are very precise when signaling the presence of an error. An overall average score of 2.52 out of 3 is obtained. More specifically, the average score of error location in syntax is 2.55 and in grammatical morphology is 2.63, indicating that participants were slightly more precise when targeting grammatical morphology than syntax. Analyses of the percentages of overall error location precision indicate that participants precisely locate errors in the text 68% of the time (see Table 4). To investigate the differences between the precision of feedback per error categories, instances of error location provision across syntactic and grammatical morphology errors are analyzed. It is worthy to note that out of the total 566 errors that are analyzed to evaluate feedback precision, 361 are syntactic and 205 are grammatical morphology. Results indicate that, overall, the feedback targeting grammatical morphology and syntax precisely indicate the location of the error 72% and 66% of the time respectively. Furthermore, rates of precision vary across WCF techniques as well. Direct feedback is much more precise than indirect feedback in both error types. The obtained results about the precision of error location are presented in Table 5 and illustrated by Figure 6.

Table 4

Descriptive Statistics of Error Location Instances in General

	Unidentified error location	Imprecise error location	Partially precise error location	Precise error location
In general	1%	8%	23%	68%

Table 5

Descriptive Statistics of Error Location Instances per Error Category

Feedback type	Unidentified error location		Imprecise error location		Partially precise error location		Precise error location	
	Syntax	GM	Syntax	GM	Syntax	GM	Syntax	GM
In general	1%	0%	9%	6%	24%	22%	66%	72%
Direct	1%	0%	2%	0%	16%	4%	81%	96%
Indirect	1%	0%	11%	7%	26%	25%	62%	68%
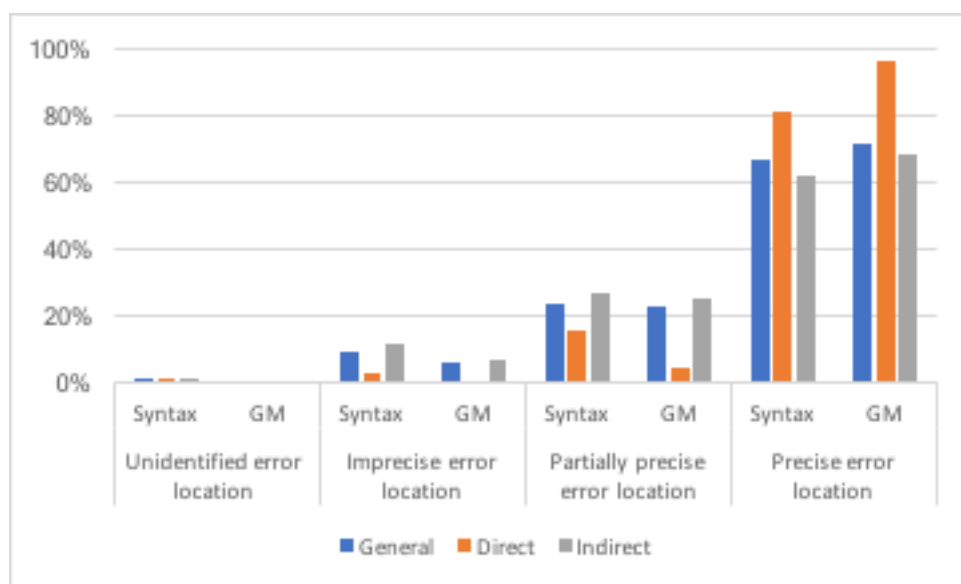
Figure 6. Precision of error location

> **Third main finding**: In terms of precision, analyses indicate that participants were precise when indicating error location. Precision was especially high when feedback was direct. Grammatical morphology obtained the highest precision average scores in general and across feedback techniques.

4.2.3 Accuracy of metalinguistic explanation

Another way to evaluate the quality of participants' feedback is by analyzing the accuracy of the metalinguistic explanations provided in general and with indirect techniques in particular, because they are the most predominant and because participants provide explanations mostly when they resort to indirect WCF. When analyzing the instances of metalinguistic explanations, results indicate that metalinguistic explanations are present 74% of the time. Metalinguistic explanations are absent mainly when direct feedback is provided, because when using direct WCF, participants do not provide as many explanations as when they provide indirect WCF (see Table 6). When metalinguistic explanations are provided (i.e., 74% of the time), they are 31% of the time inaccurate, 40% of the time partially accurate, and 29% of the time accurate. In other words, only one third of the provided metalinguistic explanations are fully accurate. To determine how accuracy of metalinguistic explanations (ME) vary across error types, two analyses are undertaken. First, average accuracy per error type is calculated in general (i.e., by combining both corrective feedback techniques) and by one corrective feedback technique, namely indirect feedback. This choice is based on the fact that direct feedback was rarely accompanied by metalinguistic explanations (14% in the case of syntax and 0% in the case of grammatical morphology). Second, percentages of occurrence per each of the four categories used to evaluate accuracy, namely absent

ME, inaccurate ME, partially accurate ME and accurate ME in general and by corrective feedback technique, are calculated.

Results obtained from analyses of average accuracy per error type are presented in Table 6. Descriptive statistics in Table 6 indicate that, overall, the general accuracy is below the mean (less than 1.5 out of 3). In fact, the average of metalinguistic explanations accuracy provided by both direct and indirect techniques is 1.44 out of 3. Lack of accuracy is even more evident with syntax in which participants obtain an average accuracy score of 1.37, which is not the case of grammatical morphology where an average accuracy score of 1.53 is obtained. This implies that, overall, participants have more ease providing accurate metalinguistic explanations when reacting to morphology errors than it is the case with syntactic ones. This difference of accuracy across error types disappears when feedback is indirect. In fact, there is an increase of accuracy in both error categories when indirect feedback is used and there are no differences in terms of average accuracy across grammatical morphology and syntax.

Table 6

Comparison of Accuracy Averages per Error Category

| | Average of accuracy | | |
	Grammatical morphology	Syntax	GM and Syntax
General	1,53	1,37	1,44
Indirect	1,59	1,58	1,58

To further understand the nuances of the obtained results, boxplots are used. Figure 7 shows that the distribution of overall accuracy averages is larger than the distribution of accuracy averages in the indirect technique. Averages appear to be higher and the performance seems more

homogenous in the overall accuracy in the indirect technique boxplot than that of both techniques combined. When it comes to the difference of averages within error categories, it seems that accuracy averages are higher and more homogenous in the grammatical morphology category than it is the case in syntax. Moreover, there are more participants who have atypical performances in this category (i.e., grammatical morphology). In general, there are two participants who over performed (participants 5 and 10) and three participants who underperformed (participants 11, 14 and 16). It should be mentioned that atypical performances will be taken into account in the correlation analyses of the relations between participants' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their WCF.
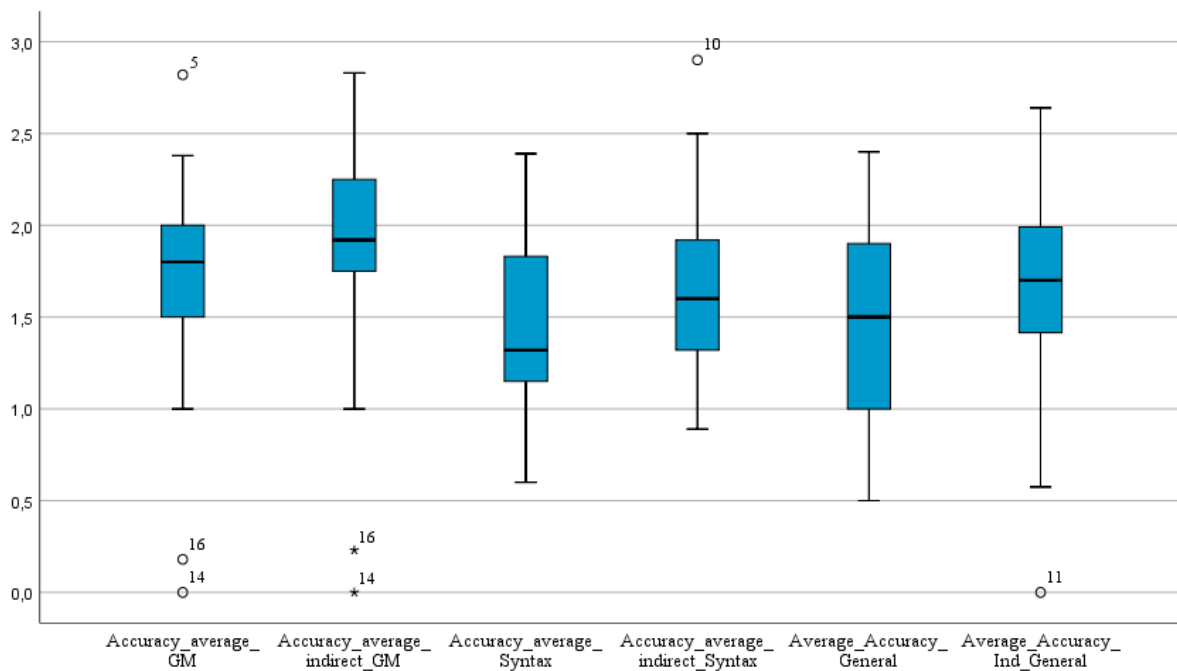
Figure 7. Differences of accuracy averages per error category in general and in the indirect technique

Fourth main finding: Overall, metalinguistic explanations lack accuracy. In general, the average of ME accuracy is below the mean, especially for syntax. However, when indirect feedback is provided, accuracy increases and the difference in accuracy averages across error categories disappears.

Results obtained from the second level of analysis uncover different patterns of variance across error categories (see Table 7). If we limit analysis to one category of analysis, namely accurate metalinguistic explanations, results do not reveal a big variance across error types. In fact, overall feedback findings indicate that although participants are more accurate in providing metalinguistic explanations to grammatical morphology (25%), they are not remarkably less accurate when reacting to syntax (19%). In other words, Participants' metalinguistic explanations were overall equally accurate across the two-target error categories. A close look at the other categories of analysis, namely inaccurate explanations and partially accurate explanations, shows interesting patterns as to the variance across error categories. In fact, analysis of inaccurate explanations provides indirect evidence as to difficulties participants have in providing metalinguistic explanations to different error categories. In fact, 30% of their overall metalinguistic explanations provided in reaction to syntax are inaccurate in comparison to 10% with grammatical morphology. A similar pattern applies to partially accurate explanations. This inability to provide accurate explanations becomes even more evident when indirect feedback is used. When participants resort to indirect feedback, their metalinguistic explanations provided on syntax errors are mostly inaccurate or partially accurate, while in grammatical morphology, explanations are mainly partially accurate or accurate. In other words, metalinguistic explanations provided on

grammatical morphology errors are more accurate than the explanations provided on syntax errors. These results indicate the presence of a three-way interaction (i.e., an interaction between feedback technique X, error category X, and the accuracy of metalinguistic explanations) and underline the difficulties pre-service teachers have with providing the necessary explanations, especially to syntax errors.

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics of Metalinguistic Explanations Instances per Error Category

	Absent ME		Inaccurate ME		Partially accurate ME		Accurate ME	
Feedback type	Syntax	GM	Syntax	GM	Syntax	GM	Syntax	GM
In general	27%	25%	30%	10%	24%	40%	19%	25%
Direct	86%	100%	1%	0%	9%	0%	4%	0%
Indirect	8%	15%	40%	11%	28%	45%	24%	29%

Note. Percentages refer to the percentage of ME instances per each error category independently.

Fifth main finding: In terms of accuracy, analyses of ME implicitly indicate that participants have difficulties providing accurate ME, especially to syntax errors. These difficulties are highlighted when the indirect technique is used, which shows that participants lack the skills of providing the necessary explanations.

4.2.4 Relations between teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their feedback

To determine whether there is a relationship between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of the WCF they provided, Pearson correlation analyses are undertaken (see Table 8). Before analyses took place, the group of participants was divided into two subgroups based on the final scores they got in the analytical abilities test. The median is used as the measure of central tendency instead of the mean to divide the group of participants because descriptive analyses indicate that the distribution is skewed; the mean is 58.28, the median is 60, and the mode is 64. Given that the median lies between the mean and the mode, it is consequently retained as

the criterion for assigning students to subgroups (i.e., lower analytical abilities and higher analytical abilities). Hence, participants whose scores are less than 60 points (n=9) were put in group number 1, and those who got a score of 60 points or more (n=9) were put in group number 2.

Two correlation analyses are performed using Pearson correlation coefficient between participants' general averages of metalinguistic explanation accuracy in the feedback provision task and their level in the analytical abilities test (i.e., groups one and two). The first correlation that includes all participants indicates that the relationship between analytical abilities and the accuracy of their metalinguistic explanations did not reach significance r (16) = .414, p =.088. However, given the small sample ($n = 18$) any outliers can affect the results. Data are trimmed (see Table 9) to exclude the participant who got the highest score in accuracy of explanation and an analytical abilities score that corresponds to the group mean score (58 out of 64).

Table 8

Pearson Correlations between Participants' Level on the Analytical Abilities Test and their Accuracy Averages

		Level in analytical abilities test	Average of accuracy in general
Level in analytical abilities test	Pearson Correlation	1	,414
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,088
	N	18	18

As results indicate in Table 9, there is a strong positive correlation between participants' general averages of accuracy and their level on the analytical abilities test: r (15) =.560, $p < .05$.

In other words, there is a strong correlation between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their written corrective feedback.

Table 9

Pearson Correlations between Participants' Level on the Analytical Abilities Test and their Accuracy Averages (one of the participants who overperformed is discarded)

		Level in analytical abilities test	Average of accuracy in general
Level in analytical abilities test	Pearson Correlation	1	,560*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,019
	N	17	17
Average of accuracy in general	Pearson Correlation	,560*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,019	
	N	17	18

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

Sixth main finding: There is a significant correlation between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their written corrective feedback.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this last chapter, the main findings of each research objective are summarized and discussed in relation to relevant existing research. Pedagogical implications are then presented along with the limitations that should guide future research addressing the same research questions.

5.1 Pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge

The first objective of the proposed study is to measure pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge. High scores are obtained, 22% of participants obtaining perfect scores (i.e., 64) indicating the presence of a ceiling effect. This finding contradicts the one reported by Martineau (2007) whose participants' success rate on a similar task was around 51%. The interpretation of this contradiction is twofold. The discrepancy in the results can be attributed to the difference in the data collection tools used in each study. As explained in Chapter Three, the analytical abilities task used in the present study consists of identifying the part in the second sentence that is of the same nature or has the same function as an underlined part of the key sentence. Participants are also asked to indicate the nature or the function of the target sentence part. Martineau's task goes further requiring participants, in addition to providing the word class and function, to provide further details such as the mode, tense, and form of the verb. These additional requirements might have evaluated a deeper level of metalinguistic knowledge that the task used in the present study did not get to. Furthermore, Martineau (2007) has used an additional task, namely the error correction task, which may further explain the difference between the result patterns that emerged from both studies. In fact, this same task has been used by Morris (2003) and it has shown, as it was the case in Martineau, that teachers' metalinguistic knowledge was not as high as it is the case in the present study. Based on the differences between the findings reported in the current study, on the one hand, and Morris and Martineau's findings, on the other hand, one cannot help questioning the analytical abilities task used in the present study to measure participants' metalinguistic knowledge. However, despite the plausibility of this first interpretation, one cannot exclude the probability that the high scores in the analytical abilities task obtained in the present study do indeed reflect the participants' actual metalinguistic knowledge. If that is the case, one can expect this elevated knowledge to transpire in the precision and accuracy of the participants written feedback. In other words, if we assume that metalinguistic knowledge enables teachers to

filter students' output in such a way that allows them to react to it correctly and appropriately, then our participants should be able to locate students' errors with precision and provide accurate metalinguistic explanations when they decide to do so. Only findings pertaining to the second research question, addressed in the coming section, can empirically validate this claim.

5.2 Pre-service teachers' feedback practices

The second research objective concerns the quality of FSL pre-service teachers' written corrective feedback in terms of the precision of error location and the accuracy of the metalinguistic explanation provided. Overall, the analyses of participants' feedback on an FSL learner's text show that the indirect technique is the technique of choice. Participants used it 78% of the time to flag errors. The use of this WCF category is especially prevalent with grammatical morphology errors. The obtained results echo findings reported by Ammar et al. (2016) and Bouhlal and Ammar (2017) whose participants, both pre-service and in-service teachers, resort mainly to indirect techniques and this, regardless of teaching context. This widens the gap that already exists between findings reported in the FSL context and the ESL context in which direct feedback is more predominant (Furnaux et al., 2007; Guenette & Lyster, 2013; Lee, 2004, 2008). While the participants' reliance on indirect feedback in the present study can be attributed to a multitude of factors, one particular explanation seems the most plausible. Simply put, participants' choice of techniques can be explained by the training they receive and more specifically by the content of the course during which the data are collected. As explained in the third chapter, because indirect feedback pushes learners to process their own errors and to revisit their own hypotheses about the target language, leaving traces in the memory that should eventually facilitate the eventual retrieval of correct forms, participants have been explicitly and repetitively encouraged by the course instructor to use it. The instructor mainly relied on FSL research findings to illustrate this claim. Among other things, she presented interview data from Ammar et al. (2016) in which learners explicitly say that direct feedback does not help them understand the nature of their errors and that they prefer WCF techniques that give them clues as to the nature of their errors, allowing them to self-correct.

As far as the quality of WCF in terms of error location is concerned, findings indicate that participants precisely locate errors in the text 68% of the time. Once more, these results corroborate

61

Bouhlal and Ammar's (2017) research findings according to which error location is precise 70% of the time. In the present study, precision of location is high especially when feedback is direct because when providing the correct form, participants either cross out or add the necessary information. By doing so, they clearly indicate the locus of the error. This is especially the case with grammatical morphology errors. This first finding pertaining to one indicator of the quality of feedback, namely the precise location of the error, can be attributed to the participants' elevated metalinguistic knowledge, as argued in the first section of the present chapter. However, for this interpretation to hold true, it is important to look at the findings pattern that emerged from the analyses pertaining to the accuracy of metalinguistic explanations.

Results relating to the accuracy of the metalinguistic explanations provided indicate that, in general, metalinguistic explanations lack accuracy. When metalinguistic explanations are provided, they are accurate and partially accurate 29% and 40% of the time respectively. The obtained accuracy low rate results corroborate those of Bouhlal and Ammar (2017), even though they appear to be much higher. It is worthy to note that the highest percentage of accurate metalinguistic explanations reported by Bouhlal and Ammar is 16%. Based on the present study's findings, pre-service teachers' ability to provide accurate metalinguistic explanation is to be questioned. Such feedback might not guide the learner to understand the nature of his errors or find the right answer. More importantly, given that 31% of explanations are inaccurate (i.e., namely incorrect), it can be assumed that there is a 31% chance that pre-service teachers induce their learners into error. Similar findings are obtained by Lee (2004) who reports that 40% of comprehensively corrected errors are unnecessary and incorrect.

Rates of participants inaccurate explanations vary across error types. In fact, inaccurate metalinguistic explanations provided on syntax errors in the present study are higher (30%) than those provided in reaction to grammatical morphology errors (10%). These findings bear witness to the difficulties teachers expressed in relation to feedback provision to syntax (Ammar et al. 2016).

Participants' limited ability to provide accurate metalinguistic explanations in general and in relation to syntax more specifically is normally attributed to the lack of training in relation to the linguistic properties of the target language, French as a second language in the case of the

current study. This argument can be hardly entertained because an analysis of the number of courses dealing with the language itself, that are scheduled as prerequisites to the course during which data collection is undertaken, indicates the presence of a minimum of three to four courses. In fact, before their fourth term during which data are collected, all pre-service teachers are supposed to take one syntax course and two grammar courses during which they get to analyze word class and function and to understand the intricacies of the French linguistic system. Those who fail the entrance test are supposed to take a third grammar course. One might expect that with all these courses, students should be able to have the necessary metalinguistic knowledge that enables them to provide accurate metalinguistic explanations. As reported, findings indicate that participants' metalinguistic knowledge, measured by the analytical abilities task, is elevated. However, the high metalinguistic knowledge scores do not seem to enable students to provide accurate explanations, questioning, therefore, the appropriateness of the analytical abilities task. The obtained findings can also be indicative of the efficacy, or lack thereof, of the grammar and syntax courses students have the chance to follow. While we cannot question the content of these courses, we cannot help wondering about the extent to which the teaching methods used in these courses allow participants to use the learnt knowledge to better teach in context. In other words, the knowledge that results from the prerequisite courses may equip learners with rules they can teach in lecture form but not in context, as is the case with feedback provision. While plausible, this hypothesis needs to be empirically validated.

5.3 Relations between teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their feedback

The third research objective examines the nature of the relationship between teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their feedback by correlating the results of the analytical abilities test and the general averages of accuracy in the feedback provision task. After trimming the data by eliminating the apparent outlier, results indicate that metalinguistic knowledge positively correlates with feedback accuracy. In other words, participants who obtained higher metalinguistic knowledge scores are those who were the most accurate when they provide metalinguistic explanations. This finding supports Andrew's claims (1999, 2001) according to which metalinguistic knowledge acts as a bridge between learners' output and the quality of the

teaching, or of the WCF in the case of the present study, pre-service teachers provide. These findings need to be interpreted with caution because of the limited number of participants. The small *N* weakens the generalizability of the findings and indicates the need to further pursue this research question. Notwithstanding this major methodological flaw, the findings indicate the important role teachers' metalinguistic knowledge eventually plays. Hence, it seems warranted to conduct research that helps uncover teaching methods teacher trainers should adopt so that future teachers develop the necessary metalinguistic knowledge, on the one hand, and use their knowledge to teach more effectively.

5.4 Pedagogical implications

When asked to analyze word class and word function in a decontextualized task, participants give the impression that they possess the necessary metalinguistic knowledge that should enable them to provide accurate feedback. However, when required to provide feedback to a students' text, these same participants are unable to provide accurate metalinguistic explanations in general and more specifically in reaction to syntactic errors. These results indicate the importance of including linguistic courses in teacher training programs. Nevertheless, developing the necessary metalinguistic knowledge that teachers can use to respond to all learners' needs may not solely depend on the mere inclusion of these courses. It is important to adopt the teaching methods that allow future teachers to manipulate different forms of student output, oral and written, so that the manage to transfer the acquired knowledge to practice. Otherwise, their ability to use their metalinguistic knowledge may be very limited, limiting therefore the efficacy of their teaching.

Syntax seems to pose serious challenges to future teachers who participated in this study and to French teachers in general (Ammar et al., 2016; Bouhlal & Ammar, 2017). This partly explains why Ferris (2006) categorized syntax errors as untreatable errors. However, any linguist would argue that syntax is rule-governed and should be treatable and teachable in the same way grammatical morphology is. The findings of the present study reveal the extent to which pre-service FSL teachers need to be taught how syntax works and especially how it should be taught to FSL learners. Including teacher training content that allows future FSL teachers to fully

understand the rules underlying the French syntax and, most importantly, to use them to teach language, should be the concern of any FSL teacher training curriculum developer.

5.5 Summary, limitations of the study and future research

The current study is an attempt to fill an empirical void in the L2 WCF literature. Unlike previous studies which either looked at feedback practices, or teachers' metalinguistic knowledge, this research project combines both interests to examine the relationship between pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of their written corrective feedback. In order to attend to the specific objectives of the proposed study, an analytical abilities task, and a WCF provision task are administered. Both descriptive and correlation analyses are undertaken to describe teachers' metalinguistic knowledge and WCF practices and to determine the relationship between them.

Findings indicate that pre-service teachers who participate in the current study seem 1) to have advanced metalinguistic knowledge, 2) to resort to indirect feedback to react to their students' errors, 3) to be precise in locating errors, and 4) to provide precise metalinguistic less than one third of the time. Furthermore, results pertaining to the relationship between participants' WCF feedback practices and their metalinguistic knowledge indicate the presence of a positive correlation. Despite the importance of the reported findings and the contributions they make to a rarely addressed research concern, the obtained results should be interpreted with caution because of different methodological limitations that should guide future research.

First, the sample of the present study ($n = 18$) limits the generalizability of the obtained findings. In fact, the present study shows the problems the reliance on a small number of participants poses. As explained in the results chapter, two correlation analyses are undertaken, one with all participants and one after eliminating one outlier. Correlation analyses were significant only when the data are trimmed, indicating therefore the fragility of the reported correlation. The relationship between metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of feedback cannot be ascertained without conducting future research that includes bigger sample sizes and that does so in different contexts and with different target languages. French grammar is known to be complex and so is English Grammar (DeKeyser, 2010). Their complexity may necessitate a

certain threshold of metalinguistic knowledge that may not be required to teach less ambiguous languages. Consequently, the relationship between metalinguistic knowledge and the quality of WCF may not exist when looked at with less ambiguous and complex languages.

The analytical abilities task that is used to measure pre-service teachers' metalinguistic knowledge is another flaw that should be overcome by future research. The ceiling effect is the best evidence to this effect. The administered task may have failed to tap all levels and manifestations of metalinguistic knowledge, which partly explains the contradiction with Martineau (2007) and Morris (2003) reported findings. Apart from using the metalinguistic abilities task, future research should include other data collection tools like decontextualized, and most importantly, contextualized grammaticality judgment tasks in which participants are required to identify errors in isolated sentences or texts respectively and explain the forms that are deemed ungrammatical. Asking learners to provide explanations is not only more demanding than identifying errors in a text, but it also corresponds to the nature of analysis teachers need to do to provide feedback. Including this kind of task may uncover more interesting relationship patterns.

One last methodological limitation future research should make up for is the use of one single text to evaluate teachers' WCF. While practical in the sense that it allows to control for number and nature of errors, using a text whose author is unknown to the participants to gauge their WCF practices is ecologically less valid than asking them to correct the text of their own student or tutee. This methodological choice deprives them of the necessary knowledge that is supposed to guide their choice of feedback techniques, namely about the student's proficiency level, the forms he has already been exposed to, and the ones he has not encountered yet. Consequently, their written corrective feedback might not reflect their actual competencies in providing feedback. If they got to have more than one text written by their learners, different findings could have emerged.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Consent form

Formulaire d'information et de consentement

« Metalinguistic knowledge of second language pre-service teachers and the quality of their written corrective feedback: What relations? »

Chercheur étudiant :	Sirine Benmessaoud, étudiante en maitrise, Département de didactique, Université de Montréal
Directrice de recherche :	Ahlem Ammar, professeure titulaire, Département de Didactique, Faculté des sciences de l'Éducation, Université de Montréal

Vous êtes invité à participer à un projet de recherche. Avant d'accepter, veuillez prendre le temps de lire ce document présentant les conditions de participation au projet. N'hésitez pas à poser toutes les questions que vous jugerez utiles à la personne qui vous présente ce document.

A) RENSEIGNEMENTS AUX PARTICIPANTS

1. Objectifs de la recherche

Ce projet de recherche vise à 1) Mesurer les connaissances métalinguistiques des enseignants de français et d'anglais langues secondes en formation, 2) décrire la qualité de la rétroaction corrective de ces mêmes enseignants et 3) Examiner la relation entre les connaissances métalinguistiques des enseignants et la qualité de leur rétroaction corrective à l'écrit. Les résultats de la recherche seront utilisés dans le cadre du mémoire de la chercheuse principale.

2. Participation à la recherche

Votre participation à cette étude consiste à effectuer quatre tâches qui se produiront lors de deux rencontres avec chaque groupe (anglais langue seconde ou français langue seconde). La première rencontre aura lieu avec chacun des deux groupes afin d'accomplir un questionnaire biographique (pour mieux connaître votre profil) et d'effectuer la première tâche de rétroaction écrite qui consiste à corriger un texte d'un apprenant de L2.Dans la deuxième rencontre, vous allez faire une tâche de jugement de grammaticalité et une tâche de description métalinguistique qui consiste à identifier la nature et la fonction de groupes de mots.

3. Risques et inconvénients

À part le temps consacré à la recherche, il n'y a pas de risque particulier à participer à ce projet. Vous pouvez communiquer à tout moment avec la chercheuse au besoin.

4. Avantages et bénéfices

En participant à cette recherche, vous contribuez à l'avancement des connaissances scientifiques portant sur une question de recherche peu étudiée. Ces connaissances permettront d'améliorer les programmes de formation initiale et continue des maîtres. Les résultats de cette recherche vous seront communiqués afin de vous aider dans l'amélioration de vos pratiques.

5. Confidentialité

Aucune information permettant de vous identifier d'une façon ou d'une autre ne sera publiée. Chaque participant à la recherche se verra attribuer un code et seules la chercheuse et sa directrice pourront connaître son identité. Les données seront conservées dans un classeur verrouillé à clé de la directrice de recherche à l'Université de Montréal. Toute information personnelle sera détruite 7 ans après la fin du projet. Seules les données ne permettant pas de vous identifier seront conservées après cette période.

6. Compensation
Pour vous remercier de votre participation, une somme de 15$ vous sera remise comme compensation pour votre participation à l'étude.

7. Droit de retrait

Votre participation à ce projet est entièrement volontaire et vous pouvez à tout moment vous retirer de la recherche sur simple avis verbal et sans devoir justifier votre décision, sans conséquence pour vous. Si vous décidez de vous retirer de la recherche, veuillez communiquer avec la chercheuse au numéro de téléphone indiqué ci-dessous.

À votre demande, tous les renseignements qui vous concernent pourront aussi être détruits. Cependant, après le déclenchement du processus de publication, il sera impossible de détruire les analyses et les résultats portant sur vos données.

B) CONSENTEMENT

Déclaration du participant
- Je comprends que je peux prendre mon temps pour réfléchir avant de donner mon accord ou non à participer à la recherche.
- Je peux poser des questions à l'équipe de recherche et exiger des réponses satisfaisantes.
- Je comprends qu'en participant à ce projet de recherche, je ne renonce à aucun de mes droits ni ne dégage les chercheurs de leurs responsabilités.
- J'ai pris connaissance du présent formulaire d'information et de consentement et j'accepte de participer au projet de recherche.

Signature du participant :_____ Date : _____

Nom : _____ Prénom :_____

Courriel : _____ (si vous souhaitez obtenir les résultats de la recherche ou participer au tirage au sort)

Engagement du chercheur
J'ai expliqué au participant les conditions de participation au projet de recherche. J'ai répondu au meilleur de ma connaissance aux questions posées et je me suis assurée de la compréhension du participant. Je m'engage, avec l'équipe de recherche, à respecter ce qui a été convenu au présent formulaire d'information et de consentement.

Signature de la chercheuse :_____ Date :_____
(ou de son représentant)

Nom :_____ Prénom :_____

Pour toute préoccupation sur vos droits ou sur les responsabilités des chercheurs concernant votre participation à ce projet, vous pouvez contacter le *Comité d'éthique de la recherche en éducation et en psychologie* par courriel à l'adresse cerep@umontreal.ca ou par téléphone au 514 343-6111 poste 1896 ou encore consulter le site Webhttp://recherche.umontreal.ca/participants.

Toute plainte relative à votre participation à cette recherche peut être adressée à l'ombudsman de l'Université de Montréal en appelant au numéro de téléphone 514 343-2100 ou en communiquant par courriel à l'adresse ombudsman@umontreal.ca **(l'ombudsman accepte les appels à frais virés).**

Appendix 2: Analytical abilities task

Test de connaissances métalinguistiques

Partie 1 : Les classes grammaticales

Dans les phrases suivantes, dites quel mot appartient à la même classe grammaticale que le mot **EN GRAS ET EN MAJUSCULES** dans la phrase-témoin numérotée. Justifiez votre réponse.

Exemple :

0. **CE** paysage est splendide.
-Le professeur nous a remis nos copies d'examen.
    A   B   C   D
Réponse : **C. Tous les deux sont des déterminants.**

---

1. Il fait **VRAIMENT** beau aujourd'hui!
   - Il a tellement neigé ces derniers jours. La plupart des rues sont couvertes de neige et toutes les
           A   B   C   D
   écoles sont fermées.

   Réponse :..........

2. Son **PROJET** est ambitieux.
   - La collision cause un dysfonctionnement total ou partiel du système numérique de l'engin.
                 A   B   C   D
   Réponse : ....

3. **CETTE** pièce de théâtre me plaît beaucoup.
   - À la fin de son séjour, leur grand-mère leur a promis de passer les vacances d'hiver avec eux.
            A   B   C D
   Réponse : ....

4. Elle a hâte de finir ses études et d'**OBTENIR** son diplôme.
   - Quand elle était enfant, elle adorait dessiner et colorier. Sa passion a grandi avec elle.
                A   B   C
   Quel plaisir elle éprouve à présent en suivant ses cours de peinture!
           D
   Réponse : ....

5. Paul peut rejoindre la faculté de médecine, ses résultats sont vraiment **EXCELLENTS.**
   - Les entrepreneurs se sont engagés à réaliser les tâches qui leur sont assignées adéquatement
            A   B   C
   et dans les plus brefs délais.
           D
   Réponse : ....

6. Elle est partie **EN** Italie.

    - Après <u>maintes</u> tentatives <u>et</u> au bout d'une longue attente, Marie donnera naissance à
                  A   B

<u>des</u> jumeaux <u>dans</u> une clinique privée.
  C   D

Réponse : ....

7. Votre maison est bien entretenue, **LA NÔTRE** nécessite des travaux de réparation.

    - <u>Il</u> lui a expliqué <u>toutes</u> les démarches à suivre pour ne pas déposer <u>son</u> dossier de demande de
     A   B   C

citoyenneté <u>auprès</u> du ministère.
        D

Réponse : ....

8. Déguster un jus frais au bord de la mer **EST** un pur moment de bonheur.

    - Quand elle <u>aurait terminé</u> sa <u>révision</u>, elle irait <u>probablement</u> voir un film avec ses copains.
             A   B   C

Le scénario lui est <u>familier</u>.
         D

Réponse : ....

9. **BRUSQUEMENT,** il a décidé de reporter son voyage.

    - Le <u>département</u> des finances lui a suggéré <u>certaines</u> mesures qui peuvent améliorer les
       A   B

revenus de la société. Aujourd'hui, les <u>ayant</u> bien étudiées, il décide de les valider.
            C   D

Réponse : ....

10. Le sommet de la tour offre une vision **PANORAMIQUE** de la ville.

    - Paul est un passionné d'<u>informatique</u>. Il passe des heures <u>interminables</u> à naviguer sur
                A   B

des sites <u>Internet</u> <u>traitant</u> de développement de logiciels.
      C   D

Réponse : ....

11. Merci de laisser **LA** porte ouverte!

    -<u>Depuis</u> qu'il est à la retraite, <u>chaque</u> jour, Il se lève tôt pour aller faire de la marche avant
     A   B

de s'occuper <u>de</u> son <u>petit</u> jardin.
        C   D

Réponse : ....

12. Elle a envoyé une lettre **À** sa cousine.

   - Avant de monter dans <u>sa</u> voiture, le célèbre acteur s'est <u>vite</u> retourné <u>vers</u> ses admirateurs pour

                                     A   B   C

   <u>leur</u> faire un dernier signe de la main.
     D

Réponse : ....

13. **J**'envisage d'aller à la plage cet après-midi.

   –J'offrirai <u>ce</u> livre d'aventures à <u>ma</u> nièce et <u>mon</u> neveu. <u>Celui-ci</u> doit certainement en

                    A   B   C   D

   avoir entendu parler.

Réponse : ....

14. La tempête a entraîné la **FERMETURE** de tous les aéroports.

   -Le responsable <u>soutient</u> que, <u>désormais</u>, le <u>maintien</u> de l'ordre est une priorité <u>nationale</u>.

                                A   B   C   D

Réponse : ....

                             ****

Partie 2 : Les fonctions grammaticales

Dans les phrases suivantes, dites quel mot ou groupe de mots <u>a la même fonction</u> que le mot ou groupe de mots **EN GRAS ET EN MAJUSCULES** dans la phrase-témoin numérotée. <u>Justifiez</u> votre réponse.

Exemple :

0. Avant de partir à la retraite, **IL** a remercié tous ses collègues pour la magnifique ambiance qui régnait sur leur département.

-<u>La décision que l'entraîneur avait prise</u> a déclenché <u>une vague de critique</u> <u>dans tous les milieux sportifs</u>.

                          A   B   C   D

Réponse : A. Tous les deux ont la fonction *sujet.*

---

1. La jeune femme **A BIEN PROFITÉ DES SOLDES.**

   - <u>Pour aller à l'école</u>, <u>en hiver</u>, <u>les enfants</u> préfèrent se déplacer <u>en traîneau</u>.
                A   B   C   D

Réponse : ....

2. Il paraît **INQUIET**.
- <u>Lors de la remise des Oscars</u>, <u>la star de cinéma</u> <u>était</u> <u>surexcitée</u>.
                              A   B   C   D

Réponse : ....

3. L'état de santé de son père la préoccupe. Elle **LUI** écrit tout le temps pour avoir de ses nouvelles.
- Tous les soirs, les jeunes amis promènent <u>leurs chiens</u> <u>au parc</u>. Ce moment de détente <u>leur</u>
                                              A   B   C

permet aussi de faire <u>le bilan de leur journée</u>.
                        D

Réponse : ....

4. **SANS BRUIT**, elle remet le bijou dans son coffret.
- Paul <u>s'amuse à se cacher derrière les arbres</u> <u>pour que ses camarades se mettent à le</u>
          A   B

<u>chercher</u>. Depuis son <u>jeune</u> âge, c'était <u>son jeu préféré</u> quand il va au parc!
    C   D

Réponse : ....

5. J'apprécie beaucoup **TA COLLABORATION**.
- Gabriel Garcia Marquez <u>qui est d'origine colombienne</u> <u>a reçu le prix Nobel de littérature</u>
                              A   B

<u>en 1982</u>. Cet auteur a écrit <u>plusieurs romans</u>.
    C   D

Réponse : ....

6. Ils **SONT SORTIS DU BUREAU**.
- <u>Éprouvant des difficultés dans son nouveau travail</u>, Marie décide de demander conseil <u>à</u>
                              A

<u>son amie intime</u>. <u>Expérimentée</u>, celle-ci <u>pourra lui donner de bonnes recommandations</u>.
    B   C   D

Réponse : ....

7. **QU'ILS ARRIVENT TOUJOURS EN RETARD** dérange leur directeur.
- <u>Pour leurs vacances d'été</u>, les deux copines ont décidé de partir <u>vers un pays exotique</u>.
          A   B

Changer de paysages <u>leur</u> fera certainement beaucoup de bien.
      C   D

Réponse : ....

x

8. Vincent est devenu **UN AVOCAT RÉPUTÉ**.
- Tout au long du trajet, elle regardait <u>par la fenêtre</u> et fixait <u>vaguement</u> l'horizon. Elle
  <div align="center">A   B</div>
  semblait <u>absorbée par ses pensées et repliée sur elle-même</u>, se <u>disait le jeune employé</u>
  <div align="center">C   D</div>
  <u>qui la conduisait chez elle</u>.

Réponse : ....

9. Je me souviens **DE NOS VACANCES EN ITALIE**.
- <u>La semaine dernière</u>, <u>la mairesse</u> a envoyé <u>son nouveau programme</u> <u>aux média locaux</u>.
  <div align="center">A   B   C   D</div>

Réponse : ....

10. Son comportement **SEMBLE TRÈS ÉTRANGE**.
- Julien <u>est satisfait de sa performance</u> aux examens de fin d'année. <u>Étant donné qu'il a</u>
  <div align="center">A   B</div>
  <u>bien travaillé</u>, <u>le jeune homme</u> est certain <u>qu'il réussira</u> avec <u>d'excellents résultats</u>.
  <div align="center">C   D</div>

Réponse : ....

11. Il existe plusieurs lieux historiques **AU QUÉBEC**.
- <u>À l'unanimité</u>, les députés <u>de l'assemblée nationale</u> ont voté <u>en faveur de la nouvelle loi qui</u>
  <div align="center">A   B   C</div>
  <u>interdit le vapotage dans les lieux publics</u>. Cette nouvelle loi a donné lieu <u>à des réactions controversées</u>.
  <div align="right">D</div>

Réponse : ....

12. Après avoir lavé une pomme, il **L'**a mangée.
- Madame Gagnon voyage souvent pour participer <u>à des conférences</u>. Dans ses voyages,
  <div align="center">A</div>
  elle envoie toujours des cartes postales <u>à ses enfants</u> <u>car</u> elle sait <u>qu'ils</u> les collectionnent.
  <div align="center">B C   D</div>

Réponse : ....

13. Elle est **ÉPANOUIE**.
- Jacques, qui <u>désormais</u> offre des cours de pilotage, était <u>un pilote d'avion émérite</u>. Sa passion
  <div align="center">A   B</div>
  pour l'aviation a inspiré <u>ses petits-fils</u> qui ont suivi <u>son modèle</u>.
  <div align="center">C   D</div>

Réponse : ....

14. Est-ce que **MARIE** nous accompagne au bal de ce soir?

- Après de longues réflexions, ils ont décidé de divorcer. Tout leur entourage a commencé alors à

             A

leur poser la même question : « Vous accorderiez-vous une seconde chance pour vos enfants? ».

  B   C   D

Réponse : ....

15. Elle téléphone **AU PROPRIÉTAIRE** pour signaler un problème.

Au début, le climat nordique plongeait Sophie dans le mal-être et la déprime. Toutefois,

                            A   B

grâce aux activités qu'elle partage avec ses nouveaux amis, elle commence à apprécier son séjour.

                                    C   D

Réponse : ....

16. **DEPUIS SON JEUNE ÂGE**, il adore lire les livres de Harry Potter.

- Valérie Plante est devenue la première mairesse de Montréal, à la suite d'une campagne

            A   B   C   D

electorale féroce.

Réponse : ....

17. Je **TE** vois demain.

- À l'arrivée des fêtes, Aurélie envoie des cartes de vœux à tous ses amis.

            A   B   C   D

Réponse : ....

18. **LE NOUVEAU BUDGET FÉDÉRAL** a été annoncé hier.

- La ville de Montréal souhaite réclamer des financements pour améliorer son infrastructure.

            A   B   C   D

Réponse : ....

Appendix 3: Written corrective feedback task

Learner's text in French

L'histoire de survie d'un réfugié syrien

Ce texte narratif parle d'un réfugié syrien qui s'appelle Rachid. Il a s'éloigner de la guerre en Syrie et il a risqué sa vie pour la sécurité de sa famille. Avant, Rachid a diplomé endroit et a travailler dans la domaine humanitaire à une agence syrien. Il a devenu un refugie sans savoir et le réfugié de la Syrie et traversé au territoire de Jordanie. Lorsqu' ils on passé le Jordanie, ils se deplacer vers la Turquie. Ils ont marché des heurs affilés, puissent, ils se deplace entassé dans des vehicules trops petits. Ils ont passé des frontieres des territoires inconnues avec l'humiliation et des détensions innombrable. Les refugies ont voyagé en Europe même si c'était une aventure dangereuse. En l'obscurité total, Rachid a traversé le Mediterané avec 26 autres réfugies en bateau. Ils ont racontré de nombreuse détours pour se caché en Turquie. C'était planifié par des passeurs organisés car ils ont aidé les réfugies. Leur dernier passeur a subit dans l'eau pour regagner le rivage puis il a laissé les refugies tout seul. Personne a savait comment conduire un bateau. Le passeur a dit de navigué au lumière avant de sauter, ceci semblait impossible. De plus, le moteur du bateau s'arrêter puis les vagues frappent le bateau. Mais, dans les réfugiés syriens, il y'en a un engenieur mechanique. Tout le monde est devenu anxieux lorsque le mechanique essaye de recommencer le moteur. Après de temps, il a reussi et ils ont dirigé le bateau vers la plage. Ils on survive a traversé le mer, mais, Rachid pense seulement de sa famme enceinte. Ils étaient en amour lorqu' ils on envisionent leur future ensemble. Elle était opposé de son départ car c'est fatal, mais, c'était pour le future de son fils. Il voit toujours des enfants syriens qui travaillent au lieu d'allé a l'école. Il ne voulait pas ce future là pour son fils, donc, il a risqué sa vie pour atteindre cette objectif puis sa famme a l'accepté.

Maintenent, ils vient en Autriche ensemble avec leur fils de cinq mois, Adam. Rachid veut que Adam récevoit un éducation est avoir foi en l'avenir. Sa femme a fini ses études et elle aide des refugies installé en Europe. Rachid veut que le monde prends consience de le douleur et le desespoir lorsque les refugie quitte un territoire pour leur vie. Ils veut qu'on soutenir les refugiés de leur installation à l'étrangère, puis la sécurité des routes. Il demande de l'aide parce que ceci sont seulement des solutions temporaires.

Appendix 4: Text-reconstruction task

Consigne pour le rappel du texte « L'histoire de survie d'un réfugié syrien »

- Vous allez écouter **trois fois** un texte qui parle d'un réfugié syrien, Rachid, qui a fui la guerre en Syrie et qui a entamé un voyage dangereux vers l'Europe.
- Vous avez ensuite 45 minutes pour écrire le rappel de ce texte (un minimum de 250 mots). **Laissez une interligne double lors de votre rédaction.**
- Pour ce faire, vous allez suivre les étapes suivantes :
  1. Écoutez le texte une première fois pour comprendre le thème général;
  2. Écoutez le texte une deuxième fois pour prendre notes des éléments qui vous semblent nécessaires pour rédiger votre rappel.
  3. Écoutez le texte une dernière fois pour vous assurer d'avoir tous les éléments nécessaires;
  4. Rédigez votre rappel en utilisant au moins **40 mots** de la liste suivante. Attention : les mots sont donnés dans leurs formes brutes. Assurez-vous de les mettre dans la forme appropriée dépendamment de vos phrases.

- aide, réfugié, frontière, humiliation, détention, territoire, aventure, obscurité, bateau, voyage, soutien, désespoir, avenir, solution, paix, éducation **(10 mots au minimum)**
- humanitaire, incapable, innombrable, dangereux, total, différent, nombreux, impuissant, entassé, vieux, anxieux, chanceux, fatal, sécurisant, sûr **(10 mots au minimum)**
- s'éloigner, parcourir, traverser, subir, embarquer, conduire, menacer, s'opposer, survivre, risquer, échapper, se déplacer, soutenir, se débrouiller, soulager **(12 mots au minimum)**
- Leur, leurs, a, à, on, ont, ses, ces, c'est, s'est, là, la, l'a, ce, se, et, est **(5 mots au minimum)**
- Quelques, plusieurs, tout, chaque, aucun, chacun **(3 mots au minimum)**