



## The relationship between teachers' written feedback preferences, self-efficacy beliefs and burnout levels\*

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### Abstract

This study investigated the perceptions of EFL teachers' regarding written corrective feedback and the relationship between written corrective feedback preferences, self-efficacy beliefs and burnout levels. To investigate the effect of these contextual factors related to choices and perceptions of teachers, a mixed-methods design integrating qualitative and quantitative data collection and analyzing techniques and methods was used. A total of 36 instructors teaching English at various state universities in Turkey are involved in the study. To collect data, a semi-structured interview and three different questionnaires were used. Results demonstrated a significant correlation between written corrective feedback preferences and burnout levels of the participant teachers. They also indicated a significant correlation between written corrective feedback preferences of teachers and their self-efficacy levels. Among other results, explicit and unfocused written feedback preferences of teachers and the relationship between their preferences and their experience levels were significant.

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**Keywords:** Written corrective feedback; teacher burnout; self-efficacy beliefs

## 1. Introduction

As the interaction is believed to be very important in second language acquisition by many researchers and teachers (Doughty, 1994), feedback as a part of the interaction seems to have an important role in language acquisition. Because of its importance, interest in the research for feedback has increased in recent years and many studies were conducted on corrective feedback within the last two decades (Lee & Lyster, 2016). However, despite the expectations from the feedback to ease the language learning process in a language classroom, as some of the research results are not always clear regarding the issues such as types or forms of most appropriate feedback in different contexts and as

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some of the results are mostly controversial (Doughty, 1994), more research is required to have a better understanding about the issues regarding the effect of feedback on learner language and the ways to provide feedback to the learners more appropriately and effectively.

The type or forms of feedback can change according to different variables. For instance, feedback can be positive or negative. It can be given by using different channels such as in a written or spoken form. The timing of the feedback can also be important. An immediate or delayed feedback for oral feedback may be more desirable according to the type of the activity such as with an objective of fluency or accuracy (Li, Zhu & Ellis, 2016).

Feedback is not only provided in an oral form by the teachers. Written feedback is another important form which is used to provide information on the learners' language production. Many of the studies conducted in recent years were related to written corrective feedback. Written corrective feedback also consists of controversial issues regarding research results, theories, methodology and even terminology and eventually in classroom practice (Tsao, Tsen & Wang, 2017).

## *1.1. Literature review*

### *1.1.1. Corrective Feedback*

While the history of the research regarding oral corrective feedback dates back to 1970s with more descriptive studies initially, more recent studies are generally experimental which investigate the efficient ways of error correction (Li, Zhu & Ellis, 2016). Corrective feedback can be explained as a response to utterances which are non-targeted, and may be perceived as a negative evidence source for learners (Adams, Nuevo & Egi, 2011). Regarding oral feedback, various types may be classified according to whether they are explicit or implicit, or whether they provide input or prompt output from the learners. According to these factors, implicit feedback types are classified by Ellis (2009) as “clarification requests”, “repetition” and “recast”, and explicit feedback types are defined as “paralinguistic signal”, “metalinguistic explanation”, “explicit correction” and “elicitation” (p. 8).

In their meta-analysis including research with different feedback types, Russell and Spada (2006) concluded corrective feedback has a beneficial role. In another meta-analysis regarding oral feedback in second language classrooms, Lyster and Saito (2010) addressed oral feedback as having important and long-lasting effects on the development of target language.

### *1.1.2. Written Corrective Feedback*

Despite different feedback types that can be provided as written feedback to the learners, research on feedback practices and preferences of teachers indicated that most of the teacher feedback in written form consists of error correction rather than comments which include other aspects such as praise or criticism (Lee, 2009). Regarding written response, the literature demonstrates that teacher feedback can have negative effects on the learners such as frustration and confusion (Mantello, 1997 cited in Lee, 2009, p. 13). One of the important rejections in the literature against the value and benefit of it in writing classes of language learning came from Truscott (1996). In his article, he claimed that research demonstrated that grammar correction in writing classes is inefficient and even it has unfavorable effects. On the other hand, obviously there is also research which puts forward that students value the feedback from their teachers; error feedback helps students improve their writing, reduce their errors in time, accuracy is crucial in writing and students to whom error feedback is given may achieve considerable progress in the accuracy of their writing in time (Ferris, 2006). Improvements in the accuracy through feedback were supported by different researchers in the literature (Sheen, 2007).

Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2008) made a distinction between written corrective feedback types as “focused” and “unfocused”. In unfocused written corrective feedback, almost all the errors of the learners are corrected, while specific errors are only emphasized in focused corrective

feedback. It can even be highly focused by means of which only a single type of error, such as a grammatical structure, is corrected. “Direct” and “indirect” are other two different types of written corrective feedback which were defined by Ellis et al. (2008). The first one refers to giving the correct answer to the learner whereas the second one means using different strategies to get the accurate form when learners make an error. Another form of written corrective feedback is coding the errors (Sheen, 2007; Frear & Chiu, 2015). By means of coded corrective feedback, the teacher indicates the type of error by using an abbreviated code system such as writing the initial letters of the type of the error. Whereas with uncoded feedback, errors are indicated with different methods such as underlining or highlighting but error types are not specified.

#### *1.1.3. Self-Efficacy Beliefs*

Self-efficacy theory produced by Bandura (1977, 1986, 1997) depends on the theory of social cognition. It comprises one’s own and society. It is the combination of behavior, internal personal factors and the external environment. In other words, it is called as triadic reciprocal causation.

Teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs are in close relationship with their performance and behaviors in the classroom and also with students’ academic achievements (Rosenholtz, 1989). Successful teachers who can increase student motivation and attitude in a positive way may have high self-efficacy beliefs (Miskel, McDonald, & Bloom, 1983). At the same time, there is an effective connection between self-efficacy of teachers and student achievement. When teachers have high self-efficacy, students’ achievement increase also when students’ achievement increase, teachers have high self-efficacy (Ross, 1998). Therefore, for teachers’ self-efficacy, a cyclical positive effect may be mentioned.

The subject of self-efficacy has captured the interest of several researchers and it has taken under investigation in different research studies. For example, a significant correlation between classroom performance fulfilment and teaching self-efficacy was demonstrated by Tschannen-Moran & Hoy (2007). In another research, Klassen et al., (2009) conducted a study which comprised of participants from five different countries and revealed a high correlation between beliefs regarding self-efficacy and job satisfaction levels of teachers. According to Demirel and Akkoyunlu (2010), attitude and beliefs towards teaching significantly correlated in a positive direction.

#### *1.1.4. Teacher Burnout*

Maslach and Jackson (1981) described burnout as an emotional state of fatigue and pessimism which are commonly experienced by individuals that work overtime. Vandenberghe and Huberman (1999) stated that burnout is a problem which is mostly related to stress encountered during professions requiring interpersonal relations. With regard to the reasons of burnout, Maslach & Jackson (1981) highlighted that gradual increase in the feelings of emotional exhaustion is a critical factor for burnout. The next factor is evoking unfavorable feelings and attitudes towards others and the last factor is evaluating oneself in a negative way. In addition, burnout could appear because of too much workload, lack of control, reward, fairness and the disrespectful community at workplace (Maslach & Leiter, 1997). The burnout problem could be experienced by human service professionals like social workers, the staff of a hospital and teachers (Freudenberger, 1974).

Burnout can be seen easily in educational settings. Vandenberghe and Huberman (1999) explained this situation as giving affective, pedagogical, and ethical aids to students require emotional demands for teachers. Other reasons for teacher burnout were teachers’ characteristic, the conditions related to organization, and managerial leadership types (Brock & Grady, 2000). However, Brock and Grady (2000) asserted that although burnout is seen as a flow of teacher, it actually deprives of the workplace firstly. Work overload, classroom climate which includes discipline problems, low achievement, verbal and physical abuse by students, school violence cause teacher burnout (Brock & Grady, 2000) According to Maslach and Jackson (1986), burnout which appears as stress reaction gradually and

becomes a serious problem over time is characterized by emotional exhaustion which refers to consuming of teachers' energy caused by lasting needs of oneself or students; depersonalization which refers to developing negative and indifferent attitudes of teachers towards students and reduced personal accomplishment which means teacher's accepting oneself ineffective at work.

The consequences of burnout were found to be serious to deal with. There is a negative effect of burnout, which is an accurate psychological condition, on every phase of the lives of teachers (Bousquet, 2012). Job turnover, absenteeism and low morale could be seen among the staff as well as personal distress, physical exhaustion, marital and family problems (Maslach & Jackson, 1981). Some visible psychosocial symptoms of burnout could occur as follows: (1) Distance from students and colleagues which consists of decreased contact, placing barriers between work life and home life etc., (2) physical and emotional exhaustion, (3) attitude change to pessimism including hostile feelings to others and (4) total disgust which refers to terminal burnout (Alschuler, 1980). According to Jacobson (2016), when teacher burnout symptoms begin to increase, learners may be affected emotionally and academically due to the inconsistent behaviors of their teachers, therefore, students' achievement and the quality of education are also affected negatively.

Although the research on the relationship between self-efficacy and teacher feedback is rather limited (Hartley, 2016), the relationship between self-efficacy and burnout was examined by many researchers (Bümen, 2010; Cansoy, Parlar & Kılınç, 2017; Shoji, Cieslak, Smoktunowicz, Rogala, Benight & Luszczynska, 2016; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2010; Stephenson, 2012).

## *1.2. Research questions*

The academic performance of learners and practices regarding teaching may significantly be affected by the attitudes and burnout levels of the teachers (Ispir, 2010) As teachers' perceptions and practices are important aspects of the teaching and significantly affect the students' learning, the aim of the current study is to investigate teachers' practices and perceptions on written corrective feedback and investigate any possible correlations between their preferences on written feedback, self-efficacy beliefs and burnout levels. By investigating these relationships, we aim to discover some of the contextual factors affecting the feedback preferences and practices and suggest solutions for more effective practices. The rationale that burnout levels and self-efficacy beliefs of teachers may carry out a function in preferences of written feedback stems from the information presented in the literature review section. The research questions of this study are;

1. How do the EFL teachers understand written corrective feedback?
2. Is there a relation between self-efficacy beliefs and written corrective feedback preferences?
3. Is there a relation between burnout levels and written corrective feedback preferences?

## **2. Method**

### *2.1. Design*

A mixed method was used with the aim of investigating the teachers' feedback preferences and the relationship between the type of feedback, burnout levels, and beliefs regarding self-efficacy. The data were gathered from a variety of sources that include Teacher Feedback Practice Scale designed by Aridah, Atmowardoyo, and Salija (2017), Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale developed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), Maslach Burnout Inventory developed by Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1997),

and semi-structured interviews. In the study, a mixed methods design, integrating qualitative and quantitative techniques and methods (Dörnyei, 2007) was used as it enables multiple verification and the data triangulation and strengthens the validity and reliability of the results. The perceptions regarding the feedback preferences of the teachers were mainly analyzed by mixing quantitative and qualitative methods, whereas the relationship between feedback types, burnout levels and self-efficacy were mainly explored through using quantitative methods. The reason why a mixed methods design was employed is to have a better comprehension of the issues investigated. Additionally, the aim was to compensate for the weaknesses of each method with the strength of the other (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

## 2.2. Participants

A total of 36 instructors teaching English at different state universities in Turkey are involved in the study. The participants all have taught writing as a separate course or a part of a main course. The mean age of the participants was 37.2 in the range of 25 and 53. 18 participants had 1-9 years of teaching experience, while 18 had 10 years or above teaching experience. The group consisted of 23 (63.9%) female and 13 (36.1%) male teachers. Table 1 summarizes the descriptive statistics regarding the participants.

**Table 1.** Age, gender, and experience

Variables		Values	
Age	Mean	37.2	
	Minimum	25	
	Maximum	53	
Gender		Female	Male
	Number	23	13
	Percentage	63.9%	36.1%
Teaching Experience		1-9 years	10 years or above
	Number	18	18
	Percent	50%	50%

Before the research was conducted, the significance, aim, and methodology of the research were described briefly to the participants. The significance of the study and its contribution to the existing literature were defined in pairs and groups. Following this, the Ethical Review Board approval was acquired from the Education Faculty administration. Due to moral causes, the students were informed that the information that they share during the study would be confidential and the study would not incur any social or psychological risks. In addition, it was validated that the students were involved in the study voluntarily.

## 2.3. Data Collection Tools

The study used four tools to collect data: Teacher Feedback Practice Scale designed by Aridah, Atmowardoyo, and Salija (2017), Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale designed by Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2001), Maslach Burnout Inventory developed by Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter (1997), and semi-structured interviews designed by the researchers. The first tool used in the study, the Teacher Feedback Practice Scale, included 10 items related to the characteristics of particular types of written corrective (Focused Feedback, Unfocused Feedback, Direct Feedback and Indirect Feedback,). The range of the scale was 1 for the least chosen item and 4 for the mostly chosen one. The range of the scores was 10 to 40 from the least preferred one to the most preferred for a particular type of written corrective feedback.

The second tool, the Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale included 12 items. It is a Five-point Likert type scale which ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The 12 items of TSES can be divided into three categories as Efficacy in Student Engagement (2, 3, 4, 11), Efficacy in Instructional Strategies (5, 9, 10, 12), and Efficacy in Classroom Management (1, 6, 7, 8). High scores on these subscales demonstrate a high level of self-efficacy. The third tool, the Maslach Burnout Inventory, included 22 items. The range of the scale was 0 (never) and 6 (every day). It consists of three parts as Emotional Exhaustion, Personal Accomplishment, and Depersonalization. High scores on the first two subscales and low scores in the last subscale shows the characteristics of burnout. The final tool used in this study is the semi-structured interviews designed by the researchers. The questions were aimed to investigate the perceptions regarding the feedback preferences.

#### 2.4. Data analysis

To analyze the data of the study, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), software version 21, was used. First, the reliability coefficients were computed in Cronbach's Alpha. In addition, mean scores regarding the age of the participants were calculated. Second, the number and percentage regarding the gender were calculated. Following that, the teaching experience was computed. In the analysis of first research question, qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The mean scores were computed to see the written feedback preferences of teachers. The qualitative data, obtained from the interviews, were interpreted through Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber's (1998) developing themes technique. Initially, we read the material several times. Then, we documented the first reactions. Third, we decided specific themes and contents related to our research. After that, we marked different themes. In the end, we investigated each theme throughout the document and noted the conclusions. To see the relationship between variables, Pearson's correlation coefficient was used in the second and third questions.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Written Feedback Preferences of Teachers

##### 3.1.1. Quantitative Data

Table 2 indicates descriptive statistics regarding feedback preferences. As indicated in the table, teachers tend to use explicit and unfocused written feedback more. That is to say, Turkish EFL instructors are less likely to use implicit and focused feedback.

**Table 2.** Descriptive statistics of the written feedback preferences

Feedback types	Number	Percentage
Explicit feedback	20	55.6%
Implicit feedback	16	44.4%
Focused feedback	10	27.8%
Unfocused feedback	26	72.2%

The analysis on the feedback types demonstrated teachers chose to provide direct feedback as they achieved the highest scores on this feedback type. Additionally, most of the teachers use unfocused feedback.

As for the relationship between age, gender, experience, and the types of feedback, it was found that teaching experience and age significantly correlated with the feedback preferences  $r(36) = .894$ ,  $p < 001$ , and age significantly correlated with feedback preferences,  $r(36) = .784$ ,  $p < 001$ . These results showed that the more experienced teachers are more likely to use explicit feedback. Therefore, when coefficients of determination ( $r^2 = 0.799$ ,  $r^2 = 0.615$ , respectively) were considered, it could be implied that 79% of the total variance of feedback preferences can stem from teaching experience, and 61% of the total variance of feedback preferences can be caused by age.

### 3.1.2. Qualitative Data

Regarding the perceptions of teachers about giving feedback, contrary to what Truscott says (1996), teachers believe that giving feedback helps to students' writing. Nearly all the participants stated positive statements about giving feedback. The teachers especially highlighted the importance of giving corrective feedback. One teacher said, *“Definitely, it ensures that learners can see and identify their weaknesses and strengths which is the basic underpinning of the autonomous learning. The second issue to be valued here is that the learners will be aware of their own learning process whether they are improving or not through feedback”*. Another one expressed, *“Of course, it should be given. Thanks to feedback, students can improve themselves by being aware of what they have done, even if it's a mistake or not”*. *“I think so because students get information about their work and if teachers give feedback I think that students feel themselves important. Because their teacher spends time on their jobs and so they try to correct their mistakes and try to do better”*. Some of the teachers mentioned the importance of teachers' opinions regarding their students. A teacher said, *“The ideas of their teachers are important for students. If there is no feedback, students may not know the reason for their studies because they don't get anything at the end of their study. But if feedback is provided, students get motivated because they feel that they produce something for a certain aim”*.

As for the feedback preferences of teachers, there exist differing views and opinions. One of the teachers said, *“Implicit and metalinguistic feedback should be given so you can make the students think about their errors and when they learn the correct version on their own; they won't be able to forget it and it'll be permanent”*. Another teacher stated, *“Actually, implicit feedback can be beneficial because students spend time on their own mistakes and try to do the correct one. They discover themselves. So, this can be more educative than the explicit ones because they learn it by themselves. I think that is the best way. However, it can change according to the students. Sometime students may not be aware of their own responsibilities and also their proficiency levels may not be good enough to find and correct their own mistakes. The implicit one sometimes can cause misunderstandings or missing points. However, the explicit one is direct and clear. Therefore, I think the teacher should decide to use some techniques according to their students' proficiency levels”*. A more experienced teacher expressed *“It depends on the level of the students. For A1-B1 level, most of the time, it could be appropriate giving explicit, focused and metalinguistic feedbacks. But that doesn't mean that we shouldn't give other feedbacks. We need to use all of them for each level; it also depends on the error/mistake type. If they are more qualified, implicit and unfocused feedback could be better”*. Another one said, *“It depends on different variables involving learner characteristics, the task itself, and teacher characteristics. Therefore, I cannot claim that explicit is better than implicit or vice versa, in similar vein focused versus unfocused. Each of them has some advantages over others and this makes them suitable for a particular student at a particular time and on specific tasks”*. Thus, it can be understood from the responses of the participants that the more experienced teachers tend to use explicit feedback, whereas the less experienced ones are more likely to use implicit feedback.

### 3.2. The Relationship between Written Feedback Preferences, Self-efficacy and Burnout

The reliability of the scale was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results indicated a good reliability ( $\alpha = .87$ ). To see if there was a significant correlation between self-efficacy levels and written corrective feedback preferences, Pearson's correlation coefficient was calculated. When the total of Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale and feedback preferences were examined, a statistically significant correlation was discovered between self-efficacy levels and implicit feedback,  $r(36) = .776, p < .001$ , and self-efficacy levels and unfocused feedback,  $r(36) = .361, p < .05$ . The results showed that the teachers who have a higher degree of self-efficacy beliefs prefer to give more implicit and unfocused feedback. Thus, when coefficients of determination ( $r^2 = 0.480, r^2 = 0.130$ , respectively) were considered, it could be implied that 48% of the total variance of Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale can stem from implicit feedback, and 13% of the total variance can arise from explicit feedback. Table 3 summarizes the results.

**Table 3.** The relationship between feedback preferences and self-efficacy

		Implicit feedback	Unfocused feedback
TSES Total	Pearson Correlation	.693	.361
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.03
	N	36	36

The reliability of the Maslach Burnout Inventory was analyzed using Cronbach's Alpha. The results demonstrated a good reliability ( $\alpha = .82$ ). Pearson's correlation coefficient was used to see whether there was a significant correlation between written corrective feedback preferences and burnout levels of the teachers. When the total of Maslach Burnout Inventory and feedback preferences were investigated, a statistically significant correlation was found between the total of Maslach Burnout Inventory and explicit feedback,  $r(36) = .612, p < .001$ , and the total of Maslach Burnout Inventory and focused feedback  $r(36) = .568, p < .001$ . The results showed that the teachers who have higher burnout levels prefer to give more explicit and focused feedback. Thus, when coefficients of determination ( $r^2 = 0.374, r^2 = 0.322$ , respectively) were considered, it could be implied that %37 of the total variance of Maslach Burnout Inventory can stem from explicit feedback, and %32 of the total variance can arise from focused feedback. Table 4 summarizes the results.

**Table 4.** The relationship between feedback preferences and burnout

		Explicit feedback	Focused feedback
MBI Total	Pearson Correlation	.612	.568
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.00
	N	36	36

## 4. Conclusions and Discussion

The study resulted in three conclusions. Firstly, EFL teachers prefer to use explicit and unfocused written feedback compared to other feedback types. In other words, most of the EFL teachers give explicit and unfocused feedback to their students. The second conclusion is that experience is related to



feedback preferences. To be more specific, more experienced teachers are more likely to use explicit feedback. Third, EFL teachers who have a greater degree of self-efficacy beliefs prefer to give more implicit and unfocused feedback, whereas EFL teachers having higher burnout levels prefer to give more explicit and focused feedback.

The conclusions of this study is in compatible with the findings acquired from the earlier studies. For instance, Cristina-Corina and Valerica (2012) found a significantly positive correlation between job satisfaction and teaching profession perceptions, and they also discovered some differences related to the mentality regarding the teaching job. In another study, Öztürk (2016) found that experienced teachers are more apt to give feedback types which are more input-giving more than the inexperienced teachers, and they strongly believe the efficacy of these forms of corrective feedback. In another study, Coşkun (2010) investigated teachers' practices regarding error correction in Turkish EFL context. He found that teachers have a tendency to correct the errors and prefer to give more explicit correction compared to other feedback types.

Some recommendations can be offered by taking the results into consideration. It is obvious that teachers' feedback actions are affected by socio-cultural issues and the contextual factors in particular contexts. Thus, rather than entirely depending on their own practices, teachers should create a more dynamic and effective learning and teaching environment by considering feelings, reactions and preferences of their students.

Further research should focus on the correspondence and balance between teachers' feedback practices and students' expectations in more detail. The first limitation of this study is that 36 teachers participated in the study. To be able to generalize the results, more comprehensive studies including a higher number of participants are required. The data collection methods are the other limitation of the study. In this study, Teacher Feedback Practice Scale (Aridah et al., 2017), Teachers' Sense of Efficacy Scale (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2001), Maslach, Burnout Inventory (Maslach et al., 1997), and semi-structured interviews designed by the researchers were used. Other research approaches which involve various methods and techniques are needed to understand the issues better.

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## Öğretmenlerin yazılı geri bildirim tercihleri, öz yeterlilik inançları ve tükenmişlik düzeyleri arasındaki ilişki

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### Öz

Bu çalışmada, yabancı dil olarak İngilizce öğretmenlerinin yazılı düzeltici geri bildirim algıları ile yazılı düzeltici geri bildirim tercihleri, öz yeterlilik inançları ve tükenmişlik düzeyleri arasındaki ilişki incelenmiştir. Bu bağlamsal faktörlerin yabancı dil olarak İngilizce ortamında öğretmen algıları ve tercihleri üzerindeki etkisini araştırmak için nicel ve nitel teknik ve yöntemleri içeren karma yöntem tasarımı kullanılmıştır. Türkiye’de çeşitli devlet üniversitelerinde İngilizce öğreten toplam 36 eğitimci çalışmaya katılmıştır. Veri toplama için üç farklı anket ve yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme kullanılmıştır. Sonuçlar katılımcı öğretmenlerin yazılı düzeltici geri bildirim tercihleri ve tükenmişlik düzeyleri arasında anlamlı bir korelasyon olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca öğretmenlerin yazılı düzeltici geri bildirim tercihleri ve öz yeterlilik düzeyleri arasında da anlamlı bir korelasyon olduğunu göstermiştir. Diğer sonuçların yanı sıra, öğretmenlerin belirgin ve odaklanmamış yazılı geri bildirim tercihleri ile tercihleri ve tecrübe düzeyleri anlamlıdır.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* Yazılı düzeltici geri bildirim; öğretmen tükenmişliği; öz yeterlilik inançları

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