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## PROVIDING FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' WRITING IN EFL CLASSES WITH #LANCSBOX

### Abstract

Heavy workloads do not always allow EFL teachers to be sole feedback providers, so there is a need to search for tools to facilitate the feedback provision process. This exploratory case study regarding students' writing in EFL classes adopted a corpus-based approach. It used #LancsBox, a corpus tool, to analyse posts written on Moodle by Lithuanian students of English, as the study aimed to see what kind of information could be received and then provided to the students. The analysis revealed certain spelling variations, collocations, and patterns of information. The article suggests that corpus-driven analysis of written texts could be used for providing indirect feedback to higher-proficiency EFL students to foster their ability to correct their errors independently.

**Key words:** corpus tools, EFL writing, feedback, university students, VMU

### 1. Introduction

Due to high numbers of students in their classes, limited time, heavy workloads, and other reasons, EFL teachers are in constant need to search for additional ways and innovative tools, for instance, applications (e.g., see Rosmalen et al. 2013), to facilitate the process of feedback provision on students' receptive and productive skills. As “technology finds a number of applications in and outside the classroom” (Abdel-Haq & Bayomy Ali

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2017: 15) in various spheres of life, teachers of foreign languages and other study subjects have started using them in their teaching to make student learning more interesting and engaging as well. The need for such tools to assist teacher feedback provision to their students became especially urgent during the Covid-19 pandemic when education of all study subjects at all study cycles moved to online environments. Even before there had been attempts to create and/ or employ ICT and other tools to assist teacher feedback in physical classrooms as well, but in the past several years technologies have definitely become an integral part of every class: online, hybrid, blended, or face-to-face. Some teachers have welcomed the shift enthusiastically as a way to make their teaching more lively and effective and help to improve various skills (Abdel-Haq & Bayomy Ali 2017), while some others have been less happy about it but cannot pretend not to notice the present-day reality that involves the use of the newest technologies and tools.

This paper describes an exploratory case study employing #LancsBox, a software package developed at Lancaster University, as a corpus tool and innovative means that potentially could be used to provide feedback on EFL students' writing, even though traditionally the tool is not meant for this purpose. The study considers its advantages and disadvantages through its actual application to pieces of writing produced by EFL students. Corpora are quite often employed in the context of EFL in order to create wordlists, grammar, and other exercises, but this study attempts to see whether one specific corpus tool could be used for feedback, formative feedback in particular. As Ashkan and Seyyedrezaei noted in their publication, "corpus-based teaching is [...] a democratic instrument of learning" (2016: 195). It is hoped that the use of #LancsBox as an instrument to provide feedback would at least slightly expand the boundaries of EFL teaching and learning and encourage utilising corpus tools (and other not typical means for feedback) in EFL classes more often.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Innovative Tools for Feedback on EFL Writing**

According to Thi and Nikolov (2021), teachers are not always able to provide timely and good quality feedback because they have limited time for it, while their students are mixed in their abilities but expect individual

feedback. Naturally, there is a great need for automated feedback tools to solve or at least reduce this problem. Thi and Nikolov provide an example of *Grammarly* and in their study compare its feedback with teacher feedback. Their analysis showed that *Grammarly* focused only on “surface-level errors” and provided feedback on them, while teacher feedback paid attention to “lower- and higher- level writing concerns” (Thi and Nikolov 2021: 1). This means that the feedback provided by the teacher and the tool differed in scope, but a combination of both could be used in order to provide effective feedback. The study also revealed that the source of feedback was not important, since the students were able to revise their errors in both cases.

The research by Alvira (2016) in the Colombian context analysed another tool and its possibilities. A web 2.0 tool based on screencasts, defined as “digital recordings of the activity on a computer screen, accompanied by voiceover narration” (Alvira 2016: 83), was utilised to provide feedback on EFL writing. The findings demonstrated that the use of the tool increased students’ autonomy and level of motivation, improved their paragraph writing skills (structure, cohesion, and coherence), and even their grades.

Hatziapostolou and Paraskakis (2010) emphasise that certain ICT tools or a mixture of traditional and e-tools could be used to provide or rather communicate formative feedback in a variety of contexts or teaching modes (face-to-face, blended, or distance), but they neither name nor discuss those tools. However, they warn that not all of such tools can provide quality feedback or at least the quality can be arguable in relation to such characteristics of good feedback as time, link to assessment criteria/ learning outcomes, personalisation, and the ability to motivate students. Yet, they describe the so-called Online FEdback System (OFES) which is an e-learning tool used to provide effective formative feedback. It can be integrated into any LMS (Learning Management System) and in turn, engage and motivate students to reach their learning objectives. In their study, the OFES tool focused on effective communication of feedback. The students tried the tool for two years and provided positive feedback on it. The fact that the tool was designed only for a particular unit (topic) the class covered was seen as a limitation by its authors who agreed there was a lot of space left for improvement of the tool in the future.

Another study carried out by Pedrosa-de-Jesus & Guerra explored “innovative ways for promoting written formative feedback in the context of

undergraduate studies and for assessing the effectiveness of [...] feedback mechanisms” (Pedrosa-de-Jesus & Guerra 2018: 3), while Rosmalen et al. (2013) described how they designed an application using automatically created visualisation for formative feedback on summarising. In other words, the studies that have been carried out so far have put their attention to the already existing tools used in education (of foreign languages) and/ or the creation and testing of new ones that could be used for feedback provision on EFL writing. It is also important to point out that the results of such studies are inconclusive and/ or sometimes conflicting and often hardly comparable. Yet, the constant search, creation, and testing of such tools only proves how important it is to have them in the first place in order to ease teachers’ workload and at the same time meet students’ needs so that they can take the provided feedback into account and improve their skills in the future.

## **2.2. Corpus Tools and Language Teaching**

Corpus linguistics tools are not actual ICT tools and traditionally are not meant for EFL teaching and learning. However, since the 1980s (Ashkan & Seyyedrezaei 2016), it has become quite common to use them in language teaching, especially while creating corpus-informed EFL/ ELT materials, since various corpora contain and reflect real-world language use (written and/ or spoken authentic data for data-driven learning) in a variety of contexts. Learner language corpora are explored and exploited for various purposes as well.

The use of corpora in teaching different language skills has been documented in numerous publications. Previous studies have focused on the usefulness of corpora for teaching academic writing skills (Abdel-Haq & Bayomy Ali 2017; Al-Quahtani 2021; Kaya et al. 2022; Özbay & Kayaoğlu 2015), English speaking performance in terms of epistemic markers (Şahin Kızıl & Savran 2018), and logical connectors (Wu 2019). They also focused on vocabulary learning and retention (Ashkan & Seyyedrezaei 2016; Roca Varela 2012), grammar learning (e.g., who and whom in relative clauses) (Phoocharoensil 2012), and analysis of cultural and collocational input in EFL textbooks (Wardani 2020). Other publications on the topic have explored the difficulties (e.g. related to unknown vocabulary or difficult grammatical structures) faced by EFL learners using corpora (Abdel-Haq & Bayomy Ali 2017; Şahin Kızıl & Savran 2018; Oktavianti et al. 2022), as

well as the benefits of corpora as perceived by (prospective) EFL teachers (Özbay & Kayaoğlu 2015; Oktavianti et al. 2022) and language educators building learner corpora (Crosthwaite 2012), etc. In general, the research on language skills in relation to the use of corpora usually focuses on how the language is used by other people (even though they are real, often native speakers but not necessarily), not the students themselves who are in a particular EFL class.

Ashkan and Seyyedrezaei (2016) claim that the use of corpora by language teachers can sometimes be seen as abusive, as they use corpora too much/ often or rely on them too much while creating wordlists and other materials. Özbay and Kayaoğlu (2015) point out that the opposite is the case, as EFL teachers usually lack knowledge and skills related to corpus tools, which results in their resistance to or avoidance of such tools. In either case, when they do use them for writing skills in the language teaching and learning context (e.g., EFL), the following main ways (of usage) can be identified:

Practically, corpora have principally been used in two main ways to inform writing instruction, either through a corpus-based approach where worksheet materials are derived from concordance output, or through a corpus-driven approach, commonly referred to as data-driven learning (DDL), which requires the student to interact directly with the corpus. (Abdel-Haq & Bayomy Ali 2017: 22)

The study of this paper does not fall under either of the main two usages of corpora. Even though the use of a particular corpus tool will serve as a way to inform writing instruction, no materials will be created based on any already existing corpus, and the students will not be interacting with the corpus directly either. Moreover, the search for information on the use of corpora to provide feedback on EFL students' writing or other skills revealed that such studies could not be found. The author of the present paper does not dare to claim that such studies do not exist at all, but this might suggest a gap in the current knowledge, which could be addressed. That is, the value of the paper lies in the fact that it might be one of the first attempts to propose the use of EFL teacher-created corpora compiled from their students' writing in order to provide formative feedback.

### 3. Research Methodology

The following *research question* was posed before the study: what sort of feedback is possible to receive and provide on EFL students' writing with #LancsBox? To answer this question, an exploratory case study, adopting a *corpus-based approach*, was carried out with actual pieces of writing by EFL students. It *aimed* to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the mentioned tool concerning feedback provision on students' writing.

*Research materials and tools:* 53 "My memorable trip" posts written by Lithuanian students of upper-intermediate English at Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania) in the autumn semester of 2021 were taken from Moodle and put into a Word.docx document, which became a mini-corpus of 38,613 characters with spaces (*materials*) and then was imported into LancsBox 6.0 (Brezina 2021) that served as a *research tool*. As mentioned before, #LancsBox is a software package developed at Lancaster University. It is available for downloading and possible to use free of charge on all operating systems. Since data can be loaded and imported into #LancsBox, it is a useful tool for many purposes: everyone can upload a variety of selected texts (of their own or taken from somewhere) and work with them. It can be applied to analyse existing or newly built corpora consisting of one file or a number of separate files. For example, if students work on a task where they write something on a shared word.docx on any online platform (e.g., Microsoft Outlook or Google Docs), it saves time for the teacher, since it is easy to download the file and load it into the tool as a mini-corpus. In the present paper, the analysis of a newly built "My memorable trip" corpus will focus on the language used in it.

A variety of tools can be employed in order to provide effective feedback in all classroom contexts. However, how much feedback should be provided might differ depending on particular students, their needs, their proficiency in a particular language if it is a foreign language classroom, such as EFL, expected study outcomes, particular skills, etc. Moreover, Wulandari (2012) points out that students should be given a chance to adopt the provided feedback themselves by making informed decisions based on whether particular feedback is related to their own skills when feedback is general rather than directed at every student personally. For this purpose, it is a good idea to try out #LancsBox as this study does.

## 4. Results and Discussion

In #LanCSBox 6.0, the concordance tool KWIC gives insight into how a particular word or phrase is used in the corpus, so it is possible to see if there is a particular pattern of using that word or phrase. It provides key words in context and “textual enhancements by highlighting the target structure in a sentence making the input more salient” (Kaya et al. 2022: 48). As it allows searching for words, phrases, and grammatical patterns, it is especially useful for EFL teachers who wish to provide feedback on their students’ written production in their own created corpus or corpora. The search via KWIC was done in this study as well in order to see what sort of information could be received and later provided to students in the form of feedback. As the students’ task was to write about their memorable trip, “trip” was entered into the search engine (the settings stayed as they had been originally set – seven words before and after the keyword) to find all of its instances. We found 111 occurrences of “trip” as a keyword. Figure 1 presents some of them.

Index	File	Occurrences	Texts	Corpus	Context	Display Text
53	my memorab	111 (154.02)	went to Italy. We talked about this	trip	for about two months and one day	
60	my memorab		Marino. And this was the best spontaneous	trip	in my entire life. The trip to	
61	my memorab		spontaneous trip in my entire life. The	trip	to Jumalia beach is the most beautiful	
62	my memorab		to Jumalia beach is the most beautiful	trip	we take, it is a special trip,	
63	my memorab		trip we take, it is a special	trip	especially if it is with my friends	
64	my memorab		I have the most unique journey. My	trip	was planned for school, because I traveled	
65	my memorab		like it too. And this time, my	trip	with class was a new experience, and	
66	my memorab		around the island. We agreed on this	trip	one day before it. For this trip	
67	my memorab		trip one day before it. For this	trip	we rented a van where we all	
68	my memorab		say about this island. Crete. My memorable	trip	to France was two years ago. I	
69	my memorab		was two years ago. I planned the	trip	for the whole family very carefully. I	
70	my memorab		parks. First of all, my most memorable	trip	was to Bulgaria last summer. We decided	
71	my memorab		Last February, in 2020, my school organised	trip	to Czech Republic, city Prague. We chose	
72	my memorab		new connections. It was a three day	trip	At the day time we all visited	
73	my memorab		each other. That was like some team-building	trip	as it helped to find new friends	
74	my memorab		daughter went to Italy. We don't plan	trip	we just bought it from agency. It	
75	my memorab		from agency. It was a summer	trip	on June. We were taking bus. It	
76	my memorab		the past. Nothing bad happened during the	trip	everyone was happy. One of my most	
77	my memorab		of my most memorable trips was a	trip	to Slovakia. I was offered this trip	
78	my memorab		trip to Slovakia. I was offered this	trip	a few years ago by an English	
79	my memorab		Slovakia at the end of October. The	trip	was very long, we rode the bus	
80	my memorab		mountains, visited the Slovak capital. So, this	trip	left a lot of positive memories, experiences	
81	my memorab		such an incredible country. Even though our	trip	to China last more than 24 hours	
82	my memorab		best thing I can remember about our	trip	was people who couldn't hide their surprised	
83	my memorab		journey I have ever had. My last	trip	was one of the most memorable trips	
84	my memorab		saw Buckingham Palace. Every part of the	trip	was amazing. I really enjoyed the food	
85	my memorab		back, my family and I planned a	trip	to Poland. We were always thinking about	
86	my memorab		with each other. That was a great	trip	I don't remember my memorable journey, but	
87	my memorab		my life. It was not my first	trip	on a train. When I was 7	
100						

Figure 1. “Trip” as a Keyword in Context

The concordance lines were then sorted by the left context alphabetically. The patterns of occurrence that were spotted were: “trip” was preceded by an indefinite article “a” (10 instances), the adjective “memorable” (13 instances), which is not surprising in the context of the task, the possessive form “my” (6 instances), as the task required to write about their own trip,

or “our” (8 instances), the definite article “the” (19 instances), and the demonstrative “this” (24 instances). This does not provide us with much information about the kinds of trips the students wrote about, as these are mostly grammatical words (except for the adjective), although individual instances reveal “planned,” “solo,” “spontaneous” (2 instances), “summer” and “unexpected” trips. However, as the students had studied articles in their course before, their usage could be a possible focus of feedback.

When the concordance lines were sorted by the left context alphabetically (Figure 2), it became possible to see certain patterns of information that the students provided about their memorable trips in order to write their paragraphs about them. These could be used for general, positive, or neutral collective feedback, especially about a particular topic such as a memorable trip.

Index	File	Left	Node	Right
42	my memorab	idea to visit Laos and Cairo. The	trip	to Cairo by bus was exciting but
91	my memorab	such an incredible country. Even though our	trip	to China last more than 24 hours
44	my memorab	memorable moments. A memorable trip was a	trip	to Croatia. This trip I did not plan,
71	my memorab	Last February, on 2020, my school organised	trip	to Czech Republic, cth Prague. We chose
68	my memorab	say about this island Crete. My memorable	trip	to France was two years ago. I
23	my memorab	from above. It was a long planned	trip	to Greece. My family have that prearranged
98	my memorab	or 10 years old, I had a	trip	to gymnastics competition in Russia, Moscow. My
91	my memorab	spontaneous trip in my entire life. The	trip	to Jamaica beach is the most beautiful
3	my memorab	summer me and my friends took a	trip	to Latvia, for a week we stayed
4	my memorab	and strong storm started on our way	trip	to Latvia was different experience, because I've
100	my memorab	my holidays in foreign countries, but the	trip	to Palanga this summer. My best best
95	my memorab	back, my family and I planned a	trip	to Poland. We were always thinking about
7	my memorab	Netherlands me and my friends organized a	trip	to Rotterdam. We decided to go with
102	my memorab	we decided to go on a road	trip	to Slovakia and travel by car. Well,
77	my memorab	of my most memorable trip was a	trip	to Slovakia. I have offered this trip
34	my memorab	was seven. My aunts family planned a	trip	to the sea. Aunt called my dad
17	my memorab	and I had long dreamed of a	trip	to Wolf Lair, which is located in
49	my memorab	new experiences and friends. My most memorable	trip	took place in July 2019. The team and
105	my memorab	wanted to visit my brother. The whole	trip	took place two years ago, it started
43	my memorab	of knowledge and memorable moments. A memorable	trip	was a trip to Croatia. This trip I
84	my memorab	saw Buckingham Palace. Every part of the	trip	was amazing. I really enjoyed the food
22	my memorab	are stunning. I think my most memorable	trip	was in 2016- my first flight. It
90	my memorab	do. Jtd participate in the competition. That	trip	was in Autumn, because I remember that
91	my memorab	a short from memory story, but that	trip	was memorable from train with beds till
101	my memorab	trip was the city of Porto. That	trip	was memorable not only because of the
93	my memorab	the sun was set. Overall, this spontaneous	trip	was one of the best thing that
83	my memorab	journey I have ever had. My last	trip	was one of the most memorable trips
82	my memorab	best thing I can remember about our	trip	was people who couldn't hide their surprised
64	my memorab	I have the most unique journey. My	trip	was planned for school, because I traveled
95	my memorab		trip	

Figure 2. “Trip” Sorted by the Left Context

Our EFL students provided information on time (e.g., a few years ago, three years ago), abstract place (e.g., abroad); reasons for travelling (e.g., because we wanted to visit my brother), cost, duration (e.g., lasted for seven days), occasion (e.g., for our anniversary), means of transport (e.g., on a train), destination (e.g., to Cairo, to China, to Greece, to France, to Slovakia, etc.), and who they travelled with (e.g., with my boyfriend). The most frequent form was the form ‘to be’ in the past tense - ‘was’ (25 instances). As the students described their past trips, not their planned



trips for the future, this finding is not unexpected. Thus, the use of past grammatical forms could be a source of feedback in the corpus as well. On the other hand, other past forms might need to be searched for separately and would require more time.

Based on the textbook this particular class of EFL students used, the actual “My memorable trip” task and the orientation questions that had been given on Moodle before the study were the following:

*Think of a memorable journey/ trip you have been on. Write a description of it (something similar to the text about travelling by train that we read in class) and your experience in 60–100 words. The following questions might help you:*

- 1. How did you plan your trip?*
- 2. Where did you go and when?*
- 3. Who went with you?*
- 4. What means of transport did you use?*
- 5. Which places did you visit? What did you see?*
- 6. Did anything exciting/bad/ interesting, etc. happen?*

Thus, through the application of the corpus tool, it is possible to see that in their posts written on Moodle, the students definitely focused on these questions, especially on questions 2, 3, and 4 discussed above. That is, the paragraphs were to the point, but at the same time, the students added some other pieces of information that they considered to be relevant about their memorable trips, such as costs, reasons for travelling, or duration that made their paragraphs more detailed and informative, which is an interesting finding. However, as one could expect, it is not possible to check whether the written paragraphs were coherent, as the KWIC search focuses on the form(s) in the corpus, not the structure of the texts in it.

The GraphColl tool on #LancsBox allows visual representation in terms of collocations (co-occurrence of words/ word clusters) for a chosen word in any imported corpus or corpora. The set GraphColl settings were the following: span 5<>5, statistics 03-MI, threshold statistic value 3.0, and collocation frequency 5; unit – no change in settings). Having chosen this option, “trip” in the “My memorable trip” corpus had 37 close and not-so-close collocates that Figure 3 displays. The closer the word to the node (“trip”), the stronger the collocation in the corpus. The words on

the left of the figure usually precede “trip” in the corpus, while those on the right are used after. Others (those that are above or below “trip”) appear sometimes before but sometimes after “trip.” These may or may not be actual collocations per se, as is the case in this study, but such visual representation could be a useful way for EFL teachers to check whether their students use certain collocations correctly, when a writing task asks them to use particular collocations they have studied in class recently.

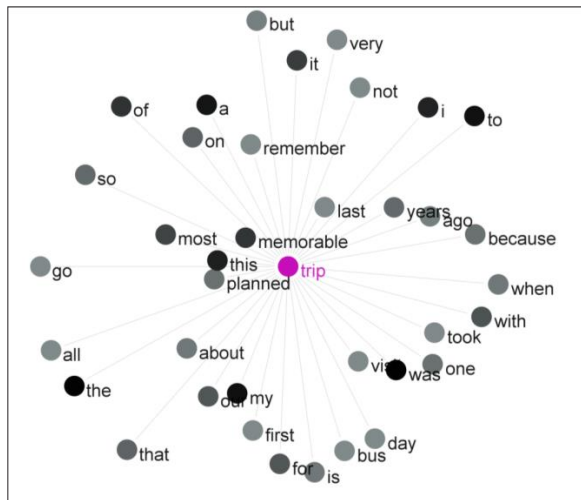


Figure 3. Collocates of “Trip” in the Corpus

As being on a trip involves travelling, it was also interesting and useful to see how the verb “travel” was used by the students who wrote about their memorable trips. “Travel” in all its forms was searched for by using the KWIC tool on LancsBox 6.0. This involved knowledge of advanced search options in the corpus, as the search for “travel”, just like “trip” discussed above, would have provided only the instances of this exact form, not all the forms of “travel” present in the corpus. Therefore, EFL teachers would definitely need more training on such options in order to be able to make use of this and other #LancsBox (or other corpus) tools effectively and efficiently. The command that was necessary in this particular case is seen in the search section of Figure 4.

Index	File	Occurrences	Texts	Corpus	Node	Context	Display Text
1	my memorab	51 (70.76)	Left	my memorable trip corpus	travel	7	by train from Sacramento to New York,
2	my memorab		up with the idea of wanting to		traveled		through several states. During the day, I
3	my memorab		but the excitement was much greater. I		traveled		of different races and nationalities. For me,
4	my memorab		darkening, it was possible to discuss with		traveled		alone. Me and my three friends decided
5	my memorab		the longest and most impressive journey of		traveled		whole island, except the Turkish territory. We
6	my memorab		in 2000. We rented the car and		traveled		with my mum and sister. In Norway
7	my memorab		years ago I have visited Norway. I		traveled		with a sport dance club. We all
8	my memorab		years ago I have visited Italy. I		traveled		to Venice. I really enjoy the environment
9	my memorab		St. Peter's Basilica. The next day we		traveled		For me all the process is very
10	my memorab		in which part of Lithuania I was		traveled		to find or rented a car. Although there
11	my memorab		most of the time in Orcaea we		traveled		abroad. As long as I remember, the
12	my memorab		but it was the first time I		traveled		numerous kilometers till we reached the hotel
13	my memorab		we had to sleep in there and		traveled		with my family to Russia, the Anapa
14	my memorab		When I was twelve years old, I		traveled		to this country is not so easy.
15	my memorab		We planned this trip all year because		traveled		by car. That was really challenging because
16	my memorab		us, my mom's friend lives there. We		traveled		in my life. I never had a
17	my memorab		was the best and the most exciting		traveled		with my school to four famous European
18	my memorab		years ago I had a chance to		traveled		with a friend who also was great
19	my memorab		Germany, France and Netherlands. Luckily I was		traveled		to train for all of us, up
20	my memorab		go by train. It was first time		traveled		to the United Arab Emirates with my
21	my memorab		my favorites. A few years ago, I		traveled		with public transport. It was very interesting
22	my memorab		there, our family had to resort to		traveled		with Shinkansen (Japanese bullet trains), and we
23	my memorab		interesting experience since we got to by		traveled		all over the West Coast. I did
24	my memorab		rested for three days and then we		traveled		to Croatia seven years ago. I traveled with
25	my memorab		was offered by my mother. I agreed. I		traveled		with my mom. I rode the bus all
26	my memorab		agreed. I traveled to Croatia seven years ago. I		traveled		to Belgium with the Erasmus+ project. It
27	my memorab		be repaired. My most memorable trip was		traveled		without my friends and family. Only eight
28	my memorab		First time in my life, I was		traveled		to Portugal. Together with three other teams
29	my memorab		place in July 2019. The team and I		traveled		by bus, still stopping in another country. On the
30	my memorab		Portugal. Together with three other teams we		traveled		

Figure 4. All Forms of “Travel” in the Corpus

There were 51 occurrences of “travel” being used in the corpus. As can be seen in Figure 4, there were some spelling variations when the verb “travel” was used in the past and continuous tenses – one “I” (AmE) or double “I” (BrE). As the Lithuanian education system prefers British English rather than American English, there should have been 35 cases of double “I” usage in the corpus, not 9 as it was. This would not be considered an error in a university test or examination, but the students could be informed about their preference for American spelling, which they may or may not have noticed themselves, and which might be explained by the influence of American popular culture (e.g., songs, films, social media, etc.). In addition, some more differences between American and British English could be highlighted by the teacher (e.g., spelling in some other words, differences in vocabulary, etc.). Thus, the corpus-driven feedback could go alongside or be expanded by teacher feedback.

When the concordance lines were sorted by the right context alphabetically, it became possible to see three patterns of how the students used “travel”: to provide information on means of transport with the preposition “by” (e.g., by bus, by car) (task question 4), where they travelled (e.g., to Portugal) (task question 2), and with whom (e.g., with my family) (task question 3). When the concordance lines were sorted by the left context alphabetically, it showed that the students mostly wrote about their travelling from the personal point of view by using the pronoun

“I” and the collective “we”. These results are similar to those about the use of “trip” discussed above.

Having discussed the findings of this exploratory case study concerning students’ writing while utilising #LancsBox, the following main advantages of the corpus method in EFL could be observed (the order of the list does not mean the order of importance):

- 1) It is possible to generalise about the tendencies of students’ writing without focusing solely on errors.
- 2) This may motivate students when positive or neutral feedback is provided rather than only negative (positive reinforcement).
- 3) Corpus-driven feedback could serve as a means for formative assessment (no grades given, as it is feedback meant for improvement in the future).
- 4) It is objective, accurate, unbiased, trustworthy, and valid feedback.
- 5) Students may not take such feedback personally/ emotionally (information is given by the tool).
- 6) It would be useful for adult learners or higher proficiency students, including for self-revision.
- 7) It would enhance the efficacy of teacher feedback.
- 8) It is data-driven learning.
- 9) It saves time and energy on the part of the teacher.
- 10) It has an option of visual representation.
- 11) It can focus on particular pre-selected (by the teacher or maybe even by the students) aspects (e.g., specific grammar or lexis covered in class recently).
- 12) It encourages independent student error correction.
- 13) It can go alongside teacher or peer feedback if needed or be followed by peer feedback activities (e.g., for structure and coherence).

Previous studies suggest that such focused (selective) feedback seems to be more effective than comprehensive feedback (Cheng et al. 2021). In the context of this case study, data-driven learning would take place, based on certain issues discussed in class, with details and examples provided, as the students would be asked to improve their writing, whether it is a paragraph, an essay, or some other piece of writing. This activity could be followed by group or pair work where peer feedback would be given on the

structure, content, organization, and/ or other elements of the texts (global issues). In other words, corpus data-driven feedback (focused corrective feedback when a limited number of forms is focused on or selective corrective feedback when one form is selected) would be an important part but not the only source of feedback. In fact, a combination of forms and methods of providing feedback is supported by previous research (e.g., Zaman and Azad 2012). In addition, some studies (e.g., Saidon et al. 2018) show that sometimes students take teacher-provided feedback personally and emotionally. Therefore, corpus data-driven feedback would help the students see the feedback as impartial.

Moreover, as prior studies (e.g., Zaman and Azad 2012; Daukšaitė-Kolpakovienė 2022) suggest, students prefer teacher feedback rather than peer feedback, and, despite their learning styles (Tasdemir and Yalçın Arslan 2018), want it to be frequent. Therefore, students should be made aware of the fact that their peers may also bring valuable insight into their writing. They could consult their teachers if they do not agree with or are not sure about the feedback provided by their peers in the activities following the corpus-driven feedback, since sometimes EFL students doubt the value of peer feedback due to their self-perceived or likely peer low(er) proficiency in English (Daukšaitė-Kolpakovienė and Mačianskienė 2023). Furthermore, both peer feedback and data-driven feedback, in this case, would be formative feedback activities, and the provided feedback could be both positive and negative. Thus, the focus of feedback would not necessarily be on errors, even though the purpose of the discussed feedback would be to improve students' writing skills. Formative feedback as such is useful in low-stakes assignments (Owen 2016; Gedye 2010) or medium-stakes assessments (Shute 2008) in which students have a chance to practice certain skills before submitting the final version of their written work and improve that way.

Undoubtedly, the corpus method for feedback on EFL students' writing has its limitations:

- 1) It mostly involves indirect collective feedback (rather than local and direct), even though personalised feedback is possible.
- 2) It is selective rather than comprehensive feedback (as it focuses on only several pre-selected aspects).
- 3) It focuses on the form rather than content in writing (even though some information about it can be received, as, for instance,

whether some of the task questions are answered in the Moodle posts as discussed above).

- 4) It is not suitable for low-proficiency EFL students.
- 5) Students may not take such feedback seriously.
- 6) It is difficult to comment on the structure or organisational features of written pieces (but this can be left for other activities involving, for example, group or peer work).
- 7) It would require teacher training on corpus linguistics and the use of corpus tools, especially their advanced options.
- 8) It could be time-consuming if a teacher would like to make use of the tool to the fullest in order to provide feedback on EFL students' writing.

If learner data had been coded in the corpus or it had been annotated, it could have provided more information about the students' language use. However, this would be time-consuming on the part of the teacher, and it would not be possible to provide timely feedback either. Of course, this would require a lot more skills and knowledge related to corpus linguistics as well. On the other hand, as some researchers, such as Tehrani (2018), point out, feedback should be personalised. As a result, collective feedback may be seen as a limitation or rather a disadvantage of the use of #LancsBox for feedback on EFL writing, but even if collective feedback provided using data-driven corpus analysis turned out to be not effective for every individual student, undoubtedly it could still be handy in the learning process in many ways.

If separate files rather than one file with students' writing were used, a certain degree of individual feedback would be possible in comparison to the collective one. It is also possible to apply the tool using one file with one student's writing at a time. In such a case, the provided feedback would definitely be personalised, but it would require a lot of time in order to provide such feedback to every student in the class. This would not necessarily be very meaningful, as it would be difficult to spot tendencies and variations of all sorts of forms, especially when a piece of writing is quite short (as it was in the "My memorable trip" task).

It is important to mention that if there is a need to analyse very large corpora, a new version of the tool has already been released – #LancsBox X. However, this particular case study is limited in the size of the used corpus (based on a particular task) and the functions of the corpus tool it

employed. Therefore, future studies could try to apply other options of this or other corpus tools in EFL writing or other skills. They could also involve students' opinions on or perceptions of feedback on their writing or other skills provided utilising corpus tools.

## **5. Conclusions**

#LancsBox is only one of a variety of types of media to provide formative feedback to EFL students on their writing without reading every single piece (e.g., a paragraph, Moodle post, etc.) word for word, which would be time-consuming for all teachers, including those who teach other subjects. Information from the tool is relatively easy and quick to collect, so it is a great advantage for teachers, but at the same time, the use of the tool could be seen by their students as an interesting and objective means to provide feedback. Effective integration of #LancsBox in writing instruction can definitely provide insight into students' writing and increase the efficacy of teacher feedback, promote data-driven learning, boost student motivation to study, and encourage them to take responsibility for their independent error correction and improvement of their writing. Various findings received through the corpus tool integrating students' writing can be successfully employed for both positive and negative feedback in an EFL or other classroom. The feedback provided using the corpus tool could also go together with teacher feedback and/ or peer feedback. Of course, the disadvantages of the use of #LancsBox to provide feedback on students' writing in the EFL setting should not be disregarded, as a quick use of the tool would not allow personal feedback (unless a separate file imported in the tool uses one student's writing). This means that it is a good idea to employ this and possibly some other corpus tools only while providing feedback for higher proficiency (and/ or adult) EFL students who would have enough skills to perceive indirect collective feedback as beneficial and in turn act based on it.

The use of corpora to provide feedback to EFL students seems to be quite promising and has the potential for successful implementations in EFL classrooms. Even though it has its limitations (considering the fact that the discussed tool is not meant for feedback provision), the advantages the article discusses are worth considering. It is hoped that this exploratory case study will contribute to the promotion of the use of corpora tools in

the EFL context for a greater variety of purposes (not only corpus-informed materials or student activities using corpora), as ample objective evidence they offer proves their pedagogical usefulness.

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