The role of individual differences on L2 learner's written corrective feedback processing

Sophie McBride*, M. Dolores Mellado*, Olena Vasylets** & Alberto Sánchez*
* Universidad de Murcia, ** Universitat de Barcelona

Studies focusing on written corrective feedback (WCF) have received ample attention in SLA-oriented research (as reviewed in Hyland & Hyland, 2018; Kang & Han, 2015), with the very act of processing WCF recently gaining momentum in the field. Researchers have focused on L2 learner's noticing and awareness in order to gain an insight into the cognitive processes of L2 learners when engaging with the feedback provided (e.g., Qi & Lapkin, 2001; Sachs & Polio, 2007; Cerezo et al. 2019). Notwithstanding, very little research is available on how learner variables (IDs) may influence this engagement. The scarce research available has found that certain IDs were able to predict the levels of depth of processing (DoP) of WCF, with the analysis of introspective measures (think-aloud protocols) shedding further light on the interactions found. Thus, in order to contribute to this body of work, this exploratory study (as part of a wider research programme) set out to investigate the effects of (i) cognitive (working memory and language aptitude) and (ii) affective (writing anxiety, self-efficacy and L2 writing motivation) variables on the processing of WCF. We invited 18 high-intermediate English studies undergraduates to elaborate a text based on a problem-solving picture-based task. Participants were provided with direct WCF and were invited to reflect on the error corrections received (via think-aloud and written languaging tables). Additionally, participants completed a series of ID tests representative of the independent variables of the study. The WCF processing was analysed according to Leow's (2015) operationalization of DoP levels. Preliminary results confirmed initial predictions that learners who scored higher on cognitive ID tests demonstrated deeper levels of WCF processing, which, in turn, resulted in higher post-test accuracy scores. Affective variables (specifically, writing anxiety) were also found to play a role in inhibiting the potential of WCF processing.