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A MODEL OF FEEDBACK MADE ON STUDENTS' WRITING

Case of second year students at the University centre of Khenchela

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to investigate the effects of content feedback on students' writing performance. We hypothesize that using content feedback would improve students' writing. The participants in this study are second year students in the department of English at the university centre of Khenchela. Our work is divided into five chapters.

In the first chapter, we provide the reader with an overview of the writing skill. We explore the writing process and identify the different activities characterizing it in addition to its different types. We end up with an overview of some approaches and views for teaching writing. We focus on the process approach since it gives importance to revising and providing feedback.

In the second chapter, we introduce feedback on students' written work. We define it, explore its nature and shed light on its different types and some useful techniques. We also precise teacher's role and students' as well, answer important questions such as what should we correct? When to correct? How to correct? What should we focus on? We also consider students' responses and examine teachers and students preferences.

In the third chapter, we will shed light on the different views concerning feedback according to different approaches used in teaching writing. We show the different views of product against process approach and cite some studies turning around form versus content.

In the fourth chapter, we introduce the research design and the methodology used in order to test our hypotheses. An experimental design was implemented. Sixty second year students participated in this experiment divided into a control group and an experimental one. At the beginning of the experiment a pre-test was held for both groups under the same conditions. During a period of three months, the experimental group received content feedback on their written productions whereas the control group received no feedback. After the experimental

treatment, again under the same conditions a post-test was held for the two groups.

In the fifth chapter, we present the data collected from the experiment. The quantitative data from a control group and an experimental one are compared and analyzed. The comparison shows that students' writing in the experimental group highly improves and the number of mistakes decreases due to content feedback. Thus, our hypothesis that the use of content feedback would improve students' writing is clearly proved.

Résumé

L'objectif de cette recherche est d'étudier les effets de l'évaluation de contenu sur les performances de l'écrit des étudiants. Nous émettons l'hypothèse que l'utilisation de l'évaluation de contenu permettrait d'améliorer l'écrit des étudiants. Les participants à cette étude sont les étudiants de deuxième année du département d'anglais au centre universitaire de Khenchela. Notre travail est divisé en cinq chapitres.

Dans le premier chapitre, nous proposons au lecteur un aperçu de l'écrit. Nous explorons le processus d'écriture et nous identifions les différentes activités qui le caractérisent en plus de ses différents types. Nous terminerons avec un aperçu de certaines des approches et des points de vue pour enseigner l'écrit. Nous nous concentrons sur l'approche processus, car il donne de l'importance à la révision et la correction.

Dans le deuxième chapitre, nous introduisons « le feedback » sur le travail écrit des étudiants. En le définissons, nous explorons sa nature et ses différents types et quelques techniques utiles. Nous précisons le rôle de l'enseignant et celui des étudiants. Ainsi, nous répondons à des questions importantes telles que ce que nous devrions corriger? quand à corriger? comment corriger? que devrions-nous mettre l'accent? Nous considérons également les réactions des étudiants et examinons les préférences des enseignants et des étudiants.

Dans le troisième chapitre, nous mettrons la lumière sur les différents points de vue concernant l'évaluation selon les différentes approches utilisées dans l'enseignement de l'écrit. Nous montrons les différentes vues de produit contre processus approches et citons quelques travaux tournant autour de forme par rapport aux contenu.

Dans le quatrième chapitre, nous introduisons le design de la recherche et de la méthodologie utilisée afin de tester notre hypothèse. Un dispositif expérimental a été mis en œuvre. Soixante étudiants de deuxième année ont participé à cette expérience divisés en un groupe témoin et un expérimental. Au début de

l'expérience, un pré-test a eu lieu pour les deux groupes dans les mêmes conditions. Pendant une période de trois mois, le groupe expérimental a reçu des commentaires de contenu sur leurs productions écrites tandis que le groupe témoin n'a reçu aucune évaluation. Après le traitement expérimental, encore une fois dans les mêmes conditions, un post-test a eu lieu pour les deux groupes.

Dans le cinquième chapitre, nous présentons les données recueillies à partir de l'expérience. Les données quantitatives provenant des deux groupes sont comparées et analysées. La comparaison montre que l'écrit des étudiants du groupe expérimental améliore fortement et le nombre d'erreurs diminue en raison de l'évaluation de contenu. Ainsi, notre hypothèse selon laquelle l'utilisation de l'évaluation de contenu permettrait d'améliorer l'écrit des étudiants est clairement prouvée.

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List of abbreviations

ELT: English Language Teaching

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

TESOL: Teaching English as a Second Language

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

FL: Foreign Language

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

AUB: American University of Beirut

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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Introduction

Throughout the history of teaching writing to second language (L2) learners, there has been a constant dispute among scholars and teachers regarding the role of error feedback in helping students learn how to write (Fathman and Whally, 1990; Ferris, 1999a; Lalande, 1982; Semke, 1984; Truscott, 1996).

Although providing feedback is commonly practised in education, there is no general agreement regarding what type of feedback is most helpful and why it is helpful.

As a result of this, many teachers of writing English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) are often confused about how to help their students in writing classes. Some teachers still have a tendency to provide explicit and elaborate grammatical corrections to their students' compositions.

However, there is a serious question as to the usefulness of this kind of direct feedback treatment. Error feedback may not help students improve their accuracy when composing regardless of the teacher's time and effort (Semke, 1984; Zamel, 1985). For example many students make the same errors over and over even though they receive feedback from their teachers. For this reason, some researchers have questioned the effectiveness of error feedback offered in classroom instruction (Semke, 1984; Truscott, 1996).

Furthermore, this traditional way of correcting students' compositions means going through the papers with a red pen, circling, drawing arrows and scribbling comments.

All in all, the business of correcting students' writing is usually a frustrating endeavour for both teachers and students. But worst of all, it seems to be mostly unproductive. When the compositions are returned, students read the overall mark given, shelve (or throw) the papers away

to be forgotten, then repeat the same errors on their next compositions. Besides failing to raise students' interest, it also showed that splattering the piece of writing with red ink killed any motivation that the students might have had.

So, does providing feedback really affect students' achievement in writing?

Writing is a difficult skill for both native and non-native speakers. Writers must balance multiple issues as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling and mechanisms such as capitalization. On the other hand, it is especially difficult for non-native speakers to write as they are expected to create written products that demonstrate mastery of the skill in a new language.

Moreover, acquiring a foreign language is a difficult task. For students in Algeria, writing in English is a process that is time-consuming and entails tremendous efforts to achieve it.

It is the common malady of school writing "...that it is not genuine communication ...the response of the teacher is so often to the surface features of spelling, punctuation and handwriting... (that) the teacher is seen as an assessor (Martin et al 1976). Unfortunately, the main things the teacher marks or takes note of on a students' composition are the grammatical and orthographic errors. Yet, the true reason for writing is to achieve the communicative end.

That is to say, writing that constitute language and that enables the learner to communicate with the others. Moreover, a piece of writing is not just a series of sentences and rules, it is rather a flow of ideas and thoughts that demonstrate the learner's way of thinking which are worth reading and appreciating.

Therefore, teachers should not just look to the surface level of grammar and vocabulary but also respond to the content before they correct it.

In her study of the comments ESL teachers make on their students' papers, Zamel (1985) points out that “ they frequently “misread” students' texts, are inconsistent in their reactions, make arbitrary corrections, provide vague prescriptions, impose abstract rules and standards, respond to texts as fixed and final products, and rarely make content-specific comments or offer strategies for revising the text.” (p. 89)

Teachers should know that writing is a process going through different stages like planning, editing, drafting and revising. Process writing allows for interplay between writing and thinking and since the stages are not fixed and linear the piece of writing is not a final one. Thus it should be taken as a draft.

I.1. Statement of the problem

Providing feedback is often regarded as one of the most important tasks for L2 teachers of writing. The way that teachers structure the classroom for a writing session and the type of feedback they give will undoubtedly determine how their students approach the writing process, consider feedback, and revise their writing (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Lockhardt & Nig, 1995; Mangelesdorf & Schlumbeger, 1992). “Feedback therefore emphasizes a process of writing and rewriting where the text is not seen as self-contained but points forward to other texts the student will write.” (Hyland 2003: 177)

However the shift to a focus on the writing process has not eliminated the difficulties of providing effective feedback. Writing instructors themselves are often uncertain of the best way to provide it. (Leki, 1990; Susser, 1994; Reid, 1994). Its source, nature and focus can differ widely according to the teachers and students' preferences, as well as to the type of the writing task and the effect intended from it.

Over the last twenty years, much research has been conducted in the area of teacher feedback in L2 compositions. This research has consistently shown that students want and value feedback. Even though quite substantial body of research on feedback in L2 writing exists, the findings in these studies have often been inconclusive and contradictory.

As teachers have moved toward providing more specific, text-based feedback as part of the process-approach classroom, an understandable “mismatch” between the type of feedback that students expect and the type of feedback actually given has been found (Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994), with students still expecting the error-correction approach from which teachers have begun to move away.

However, recent studies have shown students with a more positive attitude toward teacher feedback (Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996, 1994), possibly as teachers begin to more clearly justify and explain the rationale behind the process- approach classroom.

Teachers and students agree that despite the time- consuming nature of providing written commentary and revising using this commentary, teacher feedback is both desirable and helpful. Nonetheless, teachers express concerns about how to provide commentary in ways that their students can effectively use to revise their texts and to learn for future texts (Goldstein, 2004).

In fact, error correction research has focused mostly on whether teachers should correct errors in students writing and how they should go about it. The reasons why teachers should correct errors and how they should do it are topics of constant debate; although, much research suggests that error correction is ineffective as a means of improving students’ writing (Polio, et al., 1998; Truscott, 1996).

Hence, it is time to explore another type of feedback which does not focus on grammatical accuracy (form) but rather on the content (organization, development and style).

Given these findings, it is important for EFL composition teachers and EFL pedagogy in general, to understand how feedback on content can be effectively used to improve students' writing quality.

I.2. Aims of the study

The present study attempts to answer questions pertaining to the need for more focused research on content feedback among EFL students since most of the conclusions about content feedback for non-native speakers of English come from ESL research. Specifically, this study investigates the effect of content feedback on improving EFL students' writing. This requires examining any differences in writing performance between two groups of students to determine whether content feedback would produce better writing. Our primary aim is to examine whether content feedback would help second-year EFL students at the university centre of Khenchela to improve their writing.

Our main aim is to look for an alternative to the traditional way of correcting students' compositions in order to encourage them make of writing an easy and pleasant task for both students and teachers.

The other aim of this study is to create in our students' minds the notion of writing as a means of communication. Students must recognize that the rules of grammar, punctuation and spelling are essential for writing, but they are not in themselves the subject matter when they write.

Our other intention is to free feedback from the old connotations students are used to, for instance, to free the colour "red" from its old negative connotation in the writing class. It has traditionally been used to point out to the student's "shameful" errors.

We are also seeking to draw recommendations and suggestions leading to the implementation of feedback on content which will make teachers and learners partners in the writing class.

We also aim at attracting teachers' attention to content feedback and its usefulness. Finally, we hope to bring little contribution to the field of language teaching especially to the teaching of writing.

I.3. Significance of the study

This study is intended to offer insights into theory and practice that underlie effective writing instruction. Concerning practice, this research project may benefit three groups of people. First, for those teachers who used or are using error correction activities in their EFL writing classroom, the study might serve as a stimulus to help reflect on their own teaching. Second, for those who are or who would be teaching EFL writing courses, yet have never incorporated or are not yet planning to use feedback on content in their EFL writing classrooms, the study might serve as a guide to show them what can be done and how. Third, for those who are sceptical about feedback on content, and those who have used feedback on content but found their practice ineffective in one way or another, the study provides concrete examples and analyses to show what some of the problems with feedback on content are and how to solve them. If feedback on content reveals itself successful in improving student writing, it becomes an example of a teaching strategy that has been demonstrated to work in the real classroom.

Regarding theory, this research project may contribute in filling a gap in the current research, as it is carried out to examine the actual effects of content feedback on improving EFL students' writing.

To sum up, the study can advance education in a number of ways. The insights and understandings of collaborative learning and communicative teaching developed in this research can be useful for

teacher education, and for designing, implementing and evaluating EFL writing curricula. Insights into how these students participate in content feedback activities can also be important to research knowledge because they contribute to an understanding of this instructional technique as experienced by its participants in the real world of the classroom.

I.4. Background of the study

The present investigation is largely framed by L2 composition research in the areas of revision and feedback. Although research perspectives provide a common purpose, focus, and interest in the study and teaching of writing, the results of this research are contradictory and inconclusive.

Mastering the skill of L2 writing is a long and complex process, as it involves such a variety of difficulties and complexities that even experienced writers would find difficult. To help learners improve their writing, instructors and researchers alike have been looking for ways to facilitate this process. Writing workshops is an innovative approach that has been widely used in L1 writing classes, in which feedback, revision, discussing and sharing writing are the major activities. These practices contrast with the old teacher-centred methods. It is now widely accepted that learners are active constructors rather than passive recipients of knowledge (Bruffee 1986). Process approach writing focuses on talking and questioning to explore ideas while writing. As a result, students have a greater voice and play a role in deciding what information is useful and how they can work with it. Moreover, training teachers to focus on aspects of meaning when providing feedback rather than surface level concerns can have a positive effect on students' writing.

Similarly, relatively little research has considered what L2 students think about their instructors' feedback, how well they understand it , and whether or how they might employ it for revision when writing

subsequent essays (Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994). In general, this previous research has shown that teachers have different priorities when responding to students' writing. Some studies indicate that teachers respond primarily to mechanics, grammar/usage, and vocabulary (Saito, 1994; Zaaamel, 1985); other studies show that professors pay more attention to content and organization than to mechanical errors. Teachers correction, error identification, and written commentary appear to be the most widely used technique when responding to adult L2 students' writing (Saito, 1994).

Research conducted in L2 language context has also shown that such L2 writers definitely expect feedback on language form, finding it much more important than native speakers do. They also tend to expect teachers to correct all surface language errors in their writing. However, just like L1 students, L2 students seem to prefer detailed feedback. Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) reported that many L2 students often had problems reading teachers' handwriting; they found some comments confusing and often did not understand various marking symbols employed. All of the participants involved in Brice's (1995) study had difficulty and were frustrated with the symbol system the teacher used to indicate grammar or vocabulary errors, and they expressed a preference for more explicit feedback. This confirms the findings of Leki's (1991) and Radecki & Swales' (1988) surveys on feedback preferences. Ferris (1995) also reported that students had a variety of problems in understanding their teacher's comments because of the specific grammatical terms and symbols used, vague questions about content, as well as the instructor's poor handwriting. Moreover, some of these students complained about the feedback being too negative to be helpful. They barely take into consideration the feedback provided on

their early drafts, though they acknowledge its importance. These classroom experiences strengthened our interest to conduct the current study.

I.5. Research questions and hypotheses

The present investigation is aimed to answer the following research questions:

1. Would students' writing progress when teachers adopt a new way of correction?
2. Would student's performance in writing improve after implementing feedback on content?

We hypothesize that by providing feedback on content, students' writing will improve, and the learners would be able to write successfully and communicate with the others through their written productions.

I.6 Overview of the study

In order to answer the research questions, an experimental action - type research approach is conducted. The independent variable of this study is content feedback, and the dependent variable is improvement in student writing. The control variables of this study are age, previous achievement in English composition, year of study, and prior feedback experience.

The setting of experimental investigation consists of two second-year EFL writing classrooms at the university centre of Khenchela. The participants are 60 second-year students of 19 years old from a total population of 156 students.

The teacher-researcher teaches both groups simultaneously. The research for this study takes place over a period of 12 weeks. Before starting the students in the experimental group receive extensive training on coded feedback then a pre-test is conducted for the two groups.

Students of the treatment group write several essays and paragraphs and they benefit from teacher's feedback during and at the end of the writing process. The teacher offers content feedback and he uses codes to correct students' productions. In the control group, the participants write about the same topics without benefiting from the teacher's. After that a post test is conducted for both groups.

The results of the pre-test and the post-test are compared to determine if there is any improvement in students' performance. Notes are to be kept during observations and reflections are made on both, the teaching and students' interactions, throughout the study.

Through a comparison of findings between the control group and the experimental group, this study attempts to provide insights into the effects of content feedback on improving EFL students' writing. A more complete description of the research method and data analysis is presented in chapter four (p.188-194) and five(p. 202-224), respectively.

1.7. Limitations of the study

The current study has a number of limitations, some of which resulted from the design of the original study and some of which emerged from the implementation of the research design.

First, there was a need for precision and minute organization of the course activities and the data collection. Moreover, it was difficult for only one teacher to record students' reactions. Although having one teacher for both groups made the results more valid, as the same person planned the activities in both groups, and the students were exposed to the same teacher simultaneously; nonetheless, the present study is not immune to bias.

Second, the number of students was very small (N=60) and representing only one level. This may cause problems in generalizing results to other second-year students or students of EFL in general.

Third, the study took only three months (12 weeks), and this period did not allow much flexibility in the course activities and data collection, imposing on the researcher strict deadlines. Moreover, during the study we followed the students only for one semester and not for the whole academic year. Besides, the students are learning other course in addition to writing, so we can not distinguish if and how these other courses contributed to their progress in writing. However, even if the period was relatively short we could examine and improve some elements of students' writing. If students experience this method for a longer period they would make greater gains as long time allows for more practice.

Fourth, one of the issues the researcher may come across in the present study is researcher bias. This may be due to the use of special scoring rubric designed for this study. Moreover, because of the complexity of the performed data analyses and the big number of drafts examined, the essays have not been evaluated by another teacher. This is not to deny that all the essays were evaluated and scored according to consistent established criteria.

Furthermore, because of the short time of the study, some aspects of the original programme were modified, and since the teacher researcher made the modifications, a certain degree of subjectivity and personal bias is to be expected.

Fifth, the manner of counting mistakes in this study gave equal weight to all mistakes. We know from previous studies that different types of mistakes may be easier or harder for students at different levels of proficiency to correct. Therefore, not giving weighted scores to different types of errors may make learners appear equal in their ability to correct mistakes where, in fact the kinds of mistakes that one or the other is able to correct may be vastly different.

Finally, students' lack of training regarding self-correction techniques might affect their abilities to correct errors in their writing. Whether or not the participants had previous training in self-correction was not examined in this study.

I.8. Structure of the dissertation

The dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter one provides the reader with an overview of the writing skill. We shall explore the writing process and identify the different activities characterizing it, In addition to an overview of some approaches and views for teaching writing. We shall focus on the process approach since it gives importance to each stage when writing especially revising and providing feedback. Chapter two introduces feedback on students' written work. We shall define it, explore its nature and shed light on its different types and some useful techniques. We shall also precise the teacher's and students' roles. A number of answers would be provided to questions such as what should we correct? When do we correct? how do we correct? What should we focus on? We shall also consider students' responses and examine teachers and students preferences. Chapter three sheds light on the different views concerning feedback according to different approaches used in teaching writing. We will show the different views of product against process approach and cite some studies turning around form versus content. Chapter four introduces the research design and the methodology used in order to test the effects of feedback on writing outcomes.

An experimental design was implemented. Through this quantitative study we intend to explore whether content feedback has a positive effect in improving students' writing. The quantitative data from both control and an experimental group were collected and analyzed. Chapter five presents the findings obtained. The results

regarding what effect content feedback activities had on the quality of students written productions are reported and discussed extensively. Chapter six summarises the research findings of the investigation, and makes recommendations for classroom practice and future research.

Chapter one

Chapter One: The Writing Process

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Introduction

In this chapter, we shall try to provide the reader with an overview of the writing skill. We shall define “writing”, explore the writing process and identify the different activities characterizing it. In addition, we shall introduce its different types; know about its status in (ELT) English Language Teaching then the objectives behind being taught. We finish with an overview of some approaches and views for teaching writing. We shall focus on the process approach since it gives importance to each stage of revising and providing feedback.

1.1. Definition of writing

Writing is an important part of language learning, it is essentially a reflective activity that requires enough time to think about the specific topic and to analyze and classify any background knowledge. Then, writers need suitable language to structure these ideas in the form of a coherent discourse. Learners have to link and develop information, ideas, or arguments in logical sequences. Without writing practice, students have difficulty in achieving clarity, which is the goal of any writing exercise.

In her book “Academic Writing” Ilona Leki (1998:3-4) resembled the writing skill to bike riding. She said that what makes bike riding hard to learn is that you have to do many things at the same time that you do not yet know how to do well: pedal, keep your balance, steer, and watch the road ahead of you. Learning how to write seems to cause similar problems. Even in the first paragraph, you must have an idea of what you want to say, how to explain it, and how to sound convincing to your reader, you have to do all this in English.

Then she added, in some aspects, learning the skill of writing well is different from and easier than learning the skill of bike riding because when you write, it is possible to concentrate on the different parts of the writing activity one at a time. This possibility makes writing much more like making a clay pot than like riding a bike. When you make a piece of pottery, first you must gather and prepare your materials: select the kind of clay you want, soften the clay by kneading it, perhaps find a pottery wheel, and so on. Next, you need some idea of what you want to make, how the piece of pottery is going to be used, and who is going to use it. Only then you can start working on your piece.

While you are working you may change your mind about what you want it to become, instead of becoming a cup it may change or start to be a better flowerpot. If this happens, you revise your image of the final product. As you work, you show your piece to others, who give you opinions and advice on how to improve it. Sometimes you may decide that you are no longer interested in this particular project or that the project is not coming out the way you had originally hoped. You may then decide to abandon the project and begin something entirely different. If you finally manage to produce a pot you like, the good qualities of that pot will be the result of good materials, good planning, good advice from critics, and good execution on your part.

The same is true for good writing. Before you have a finished product, you must gather ideas on the subject you want to write about. You have also to consider who you are writing for and why. As you write, you will consult with others about their ideas and about their opinions of what you have done so far. You may decide to abandon your project and begin something else. Or you may

change your ideas about what you are saying, who you are saying it for, or why you want to say it.

Ultimately, we arrive at the conclusion that the writing skill is built up of many stages as follows:

1. Collecting data
2. Planning
3. Drafting
4. Reviewing

1.2. The writing process

If we can analyze the different elements that are involved in a long piece of writing, we can help learners to work through them, become conscious of them, and use this knowledge positively in their own writing. Then such writing will have a lot of stress taken out of it, tackling one by one the elements which determine what we write down. And this is a list jotted down by an experienced teacher of writing (Brooks, Grundy 1991:7):

- *Deciding what to say.
- *Thinking about starting.
- *Thinking who we are writing for.
- *Thinking in our aim in writing this particular piece.
- *Thinking about the way it should be set out on the page.
- *Deciding on the order in which we put our ideas.
- *Deciding on paragraphing and sub-headings.
- *Giving it a title.
- *Deciding where to put capitals, underlining, italics, quotation marks and other punctuation marks.
- *Spelling.
- *Choosing words to convey meaning.
- *Finding the best word.

- *Writing grammatical sentences.
- *Reading what we have written to see if it reads well.
- *Reading what we have written with another reader.
- *Deleting, adding or changing the text to suit the reader.

Such a list reminds us of many processes that are involved in writing. In fact, if you ask students about their own writing, they are most likely to speak about deciding what to write and how to get started, while some may go on to talk about details of spelling, grammar and vocabulary. Those with more experience occasionally mention paragraphing and organization.

Too often we assume that after giving learners an initial stimulus to arouse interest in a given topic, we can simply leave them complete the writing tasks. But even professional writers must make plans, use notes, reflect on issues, and make several rough drafts before completing their work. So, students who are still learning the process of thinking through writing require their teacher's help to structure and organize their thoughts (Chakraverty and Gautum 2002:22). As Brooks (1991:7-10) says:

“The teacher’s role is to help students develop variable strategies for getting started (finding topics, generating ideas, and information focusing, and planning structure and procedure), for drafting (encouraging multiple drafts) for revising(adding, deleting, modifying, and rearranging ideas) and for editing (attending to vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar, ...etc)

1.3. The Activities characterizing the writing process

1.3.1. Planning

Experienced writers plan what they are going to write. Before starting to write or type, they try and decide what they are going to say. For some writers this may involve making detailed notes. For

others a few jotted words may be enough. Still others may not actually write down any preliminary notes at all since they may do all their planning in their heads.

When planning, writers have to think about three main issues. In the first place they have to consider the purpose of their writing since this will influence not only the type of the text they wish to produce, but also the language they use, and the information they choose to include. Secondly, experienced writers think of the *audience* they are writing for, since this will influence not only the shape of the piece of writing (how it is laid out, how the paragraphs are structured) but also the choice of language- whether for example, it is formal or informal in tone. Thirdly, writers have to consider *the content structure* of the piece- that is, how best to sequence the facts, ideas, or arguments which they have decided to include.(Harmer 2004:04)

In other words, good writers concentrate on the meaning and organization of a text, and engage in the planning activities. This will involve thinking about the purpose of the writing for example, a letter of complaint about a poor service, or a letter to inform friends about a daughter's wedding. The particular purpose implies an organization for the writing and the style appropriate for the readers. The complaint letter would follow formal conventions. The letter to friends would be informal, expressive, probably colloquial and a mixture of description and comment.

Successful writers must be aware of their readers and seek to produce "*reader-based*" prose. In other words, they think about the reader needs to know, how to make information clear and accessible, and what is the appropriate style (for example, formal, friendly, or persuasive). Most writing undertaken in the real world

has a particular readership in view: a friend, a tutor or an official of some kind. It is the knowledge of that readership which provides a context for writing and which influences the selection of contents and style. For example, a description of a person will differ in content and style according to whether it is of a literary character in an academic essay, of a wanted person in police bulletin or of a pop-singer in a teenage magazine.

In this sense, writing is social and interactive in nature as the writer conducts a “dialogue” with a certain reader; the writer selects appropriate information and ideas in order to influence the reader’s responses. Good writers are sensitive to the audience of their writing.

The amount of planning will vary, therefore, in relation to the type of the writing task, from relatively spontaneous writing based on quick mental plan, to something carefully worked out beforehand in notes.

However, it will also differ according to the preferred style of the individual writer, and considerable variation has been observed here. Some learners who appear to take very little time for thinking before starting to write, nevertheless, produce effective writing. They may, instead, pause frequently to reflect during writing.

Flowers and Hayes (1981) (cited in Hedge 2000:305) contributed to our understanding of planning when they suggested that it goes on at many levels and throughout the process of composing. One level is that of the sentences, as writers turn the overall plan into text and draft out their ideas in English. But good writers also work episodically to set goals which structure the next unit of writing.

This is often what they are doing during “the pregnant pauses” in composing. Any initial planning before writing is therefore subject to review at any point as the writer critically evaluates the emerging text and thinks of new ideas and new ways to organize and express them. Widdowson (1983) points to this tendency when he says: “in writing one so frequently arrives at a destination not originally envisaged, by a route not yet planned for in the original itinerary” (1983:41).

If, indeed, episodic planning allows for interplay between writing and thinking, a methodology which encourages students to plan in detail before writing and to keep to that plan, is naive and possibly counter-productive.

1.3.2. Drafting

We can refer to the first version of a piece of writing as a *draft*. This first “go” at a text is often done on the assumption that it will be amended later. As the writing process proceeds into editing, a number of drafts may be produced on the way to the final version. (Harmer 2004:05)

1.3.3. Editing (reflecting and revising)

Once writers have produced a draft they then, usually, read through what they have written to see where it works and where it does not. Perhaps the order of the information is not clear. Perhaps the way something is written is ambiguous or confusing. They may then move paragraphs around or write a new introduction. They may use different forms of words for a particular sentence. More skilled writers tend to look at issues of general meaning and overall structure before concentrating on detailed features such as individual words and grammatical

accuracy. The latter two are, of course, important and are often dealt with later in the process.

When it comes to checking a written document, different styles of reading are required. When the writer reads to extract information, he ignores the smaller details in order to focus on the overall meaning. But when he reads to check the errors, these details become extremely important.

It is a good idea to read through the piece of writing at least twice, looking at it in different ways. The first time the writer reads through his work and skim it quickly to make sure it is properly organized and succeeds in meeting its aims. After that the writer can *proofread* his piece of writing for spelling mistakes and inconsistencies in grammar or punctuation. (Brooks, Marshall 2004:220)

When the writer is proofreading, he reads through the text with the sole intention of checking spelling, punctuation and grammar. At this stage he should not be thinking whether the information is factually accurate or clearly expressed. In fact, when professional proofreaders read all what they see is a succession of words rather than a coherent text.

Professional proofreaders tend not to assume that a document will be correct, and focus actively on looking for mistakes. Proofreading therefore requires the writer to be more alert and critical than usual, and to keep this up for quite a long period of time. Because this level of concentration can be difficult to maintain, people sometimes experience a kind of “word blindness” when trying to proofread. This is especially true when they are looking at their own work. Because they are so familiar

with it, they tend to picture it in the way they accept it to look, rather than the way it actually is.

To overcome the problems associated with proofreading one's own work, it is a good idea to get someone else to proofread it, as a fresh pair of eyes will often see things that the writer misses. However, the ultimate responsibility rests on the writer, and he should read through the piece of writing himself as well. It is advisable to take a break between the end of the writing process and the start of the proofreading process so that the writer can give his eyes and brain a rest and allow himself to switch from "write mode" to "proofread mode". (Brooks, Marshall 2004:221)

Typically, as we have seen, a good writer Proceeds through alternating phases of writing and reflecting. During reflection, writers may re-read the sentences on the page or look back at their original plan and think about how to express the next set of ideas. After writing a part of the draft, they may then review the text and ask themselves questions such as: "is my argument expressed through a clear set of points?" or "does my reader have to make conceptual leaps in order to follow me?" "are any sections repetitious and can they be missed out?", and "do I need to arrange any sentences?"

In this way, addition, deletions, and rearrangements can be made in order to improve the piece of writing. It is noteworthy that all of these questions are to do with meaning and organization. Studies by Perl (1979) and Sommers (1980) showed that less experienced writers were constantly concerned with grammar and correctness and this distracted them from

thinking about the clarity of the ideas and the organization (Hedge 2000:306).

Fraigley and Witte (1981) pointed out that the extent and nature of revision depends not only on the writer's skill but also on the purpose of writing, the genre, the level of formality required and the degree of familiarity with the readers, the subject, or the type of the writing task. These factors can easily be appreciated if we compare writing a letter of complaint to an unknown person for the first time with a regular letter containing news to friends overseas.

The first would probably receive rather more careful revision than the second. It is therefore not the amount of revision that is significant but its effect in making improvements, and this depends on the degree to which revisions help the writer to express his goals of formality. Any classroom activities devised to encourage effective revision will help student writers in English to relate all aspects of writing.

1.3.4. The final version

Once the writer edits his draft, makes the changes he considers to be necessary, he produces his final version. This may look considerably different from both the original plan and the first draft, because things have changed in the editing process. The writer is now ready to send the written text to its intended audience.

We might decide to represent these stages in the following way: planning- drafting- editing- final draft. However, there are two reasons why this diagram is not satisfactory. In the first place, it tells us little about how much weight is given to each stage, but, more importantly, by suggesting that the process of writing is linear

it misrepresents the way in which the majority of writers produce written texts. The process of writing is not linear, as indicated above, but rather *recursive*. This means that writers plan, draft and edit but then re-plan, re-draft, re-edit. Even when they get to what they think is their final draft they may find themselves changing their mind and re-planning, re-drafting or re-editing. They may even start without a plan, and later through a series of planning, and drafting gradually arrive to the final version of the text.

We need to represent these aspects of the writing process in a different way, therefore; *the process wheel* (see figure 1 below) clearly shows the possible directions that writers can take either travelling backwards or forwards around the rim or going up and down the wheel's spokes. Only when the final version is really final the process reaches its culmination. (Harmer 2004:5-6)



Figure 1: The writing process

In practice the process is like this:

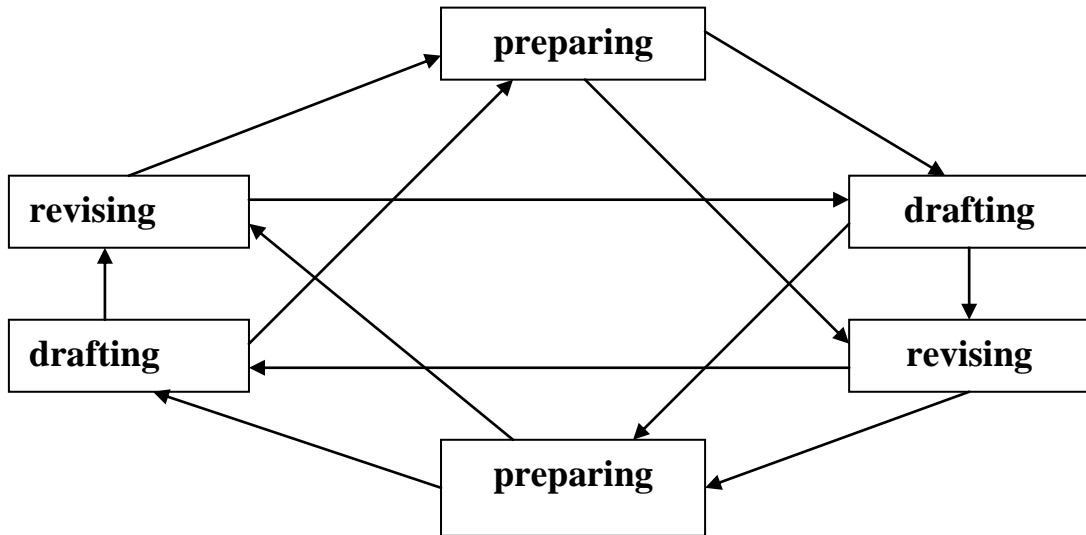


Figure 2: The writing process (Brown, Hood 1989:06)

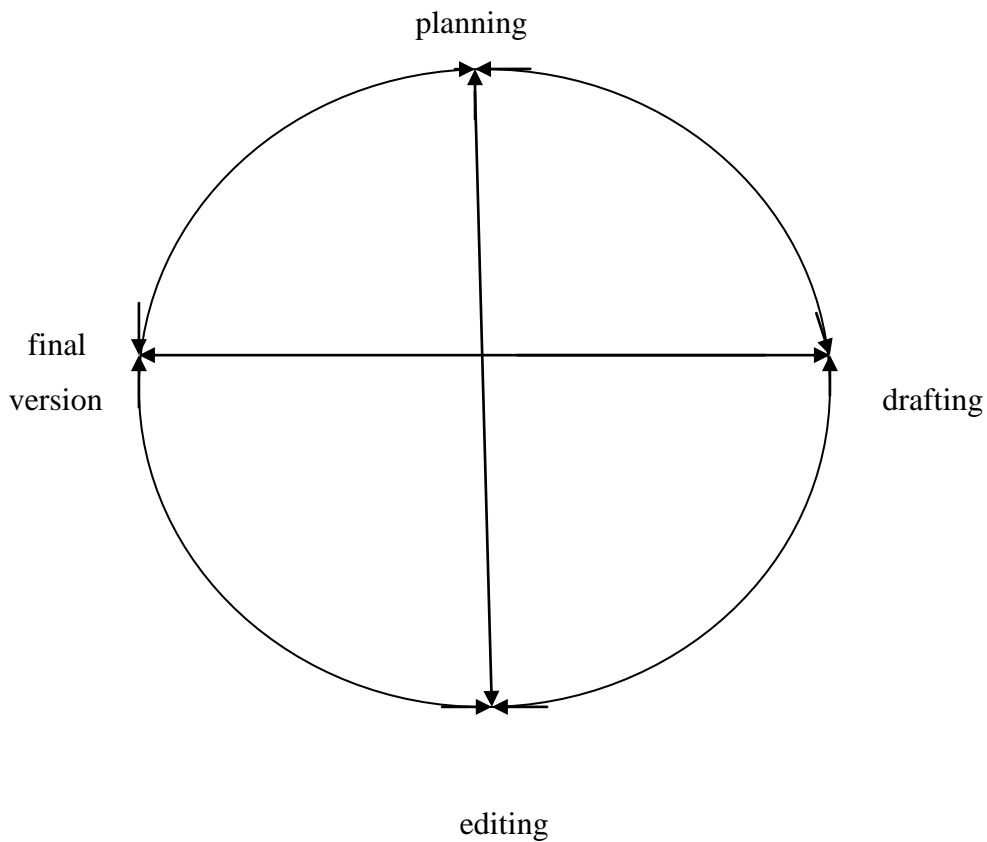


Figure 3: The process wheel (Harmer 2004:6)

1.4. Types of writing

There is a set of types of writing among which we can cite: personal writing, public writing, creative writing, social writing, study writing, institutional writing demonstrated in the following table.

Personal writing	Public writing	Creative writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -diaries -journals -shopping lists -reminders for oneself -packing lists -addresses -recipes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Letters for -enquiry Complaints-request -form filling -application (for membership) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Poems -Stories -Rhymes -Drama -Songs -autobiographies
Social writing	Study writing	Institutional writing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Letters -Invitations -Notes of: -Condolence - Thanks -Congratulations -Telephone -messages -Instructions to friends -family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Making notes while reading -Taking notes from lectures -Making a card index Summaries Reviews Reports of: experiments Workshops -Visits -Essays -bibliographies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Agendas posters -Curriculum vitae -speeches -instructions applications -Minutes -Memoranda -Reports -Reviews -Contracts -Business letters -Public notices

		-Advertisements -Specifications -Note making(doctors and other professionals)
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Table 1: types of writing (*Hedge, writing: 96*)

Davis and Widdowson (1974) draw a distinction between what they call *institutional* and *personal* writing. Institutional writing is the type of writing which we produce in our professional (or institutional) roles, such as that of school teachers, administrators, technicians, and so on. What distinguishes such institutional roles from personal ones (such as that of friends, sons, uncles, parents, etc.) is that there are institutionalized conventions (or rules) as to how one behaves in relation to others who are part of the same institutional network.

If, for instance, we write a letter as a customer to a business firm, there are conventions about what we will say and the way that we will say it. So long as we know what these conventions are, we are unlikely to make any big errors in our communications with the firm. Similarly, the members of the company concerned will also play by the rules, and our business will proceed smoothly, efficiently and impersonally.

Business correspondence is an everyday example of institutional writing; but there are numerous others. Much of the reading and writing which most people do as part of their working lives- and here we include school children and students- falls into this institutional category. Textbooks and business memoranda, instructions and regulations, reports and proposals: all of these are

examples of institutional writing which we all have to deal with from time to time in our working day.

The same is not true of personal writing. Personal writing is of two main types: *personal letters* (or conversations on paper) and *creative writing*. Normally we write personal letters in our native language, unless we are corresponding with a pen friend with whom the only common language is a foreign one. Often teachers encourage such pen friendship as a means of providing a stimulus to writing in the foreign language concerned (White 1980:9).

Creative writing

The term “creative writing” suggests imaginative tasks such as writing poetry, short stories and plays. Such activities have a number of features. Chief amongst these is that the end result is often felt to be some kind of achievement, and that “most people feel proud in their work and want it to be read” (Ur 1996:169). This is significantly more marked for creative writing than for other more standard written products.

Creative writing is “a journey of self-discovery and self-discovery promotes effective learning” (Gaffield-Vile 1998:31) (cited in Ur1996:169). Teachers set up imaginative writing tasks so that their students are thoroughly engaged; those students frequently strive harder than usual to produce a greater variety of correct and appropriate language than they might for more routine assignments. While students are writing a simple poem about someone they care about, or while they are trying to construct a narrative or tell stories of their childhood, for example, they are tapping into their own experiences. This provides powerful motivation to find the right words to express such experience.

There is always a danger that students may find writing imaginatively difficult. Having “nothing to say” they may find creative writing a painful and de-motivating experience, associated in their minds with a sense of frustration and failure. A lot will depend upon how we encourage them. It is also important not to expect whole compositions from the very first. We must build up creative writing bit by bit, starting with phrases and sentences before expecting whole compositions.

The type of writing we get students to do will depend on their age, interests and level. When we set tasks for elementary students, we will make sure that the students have- or can get- enough language to complete the task. Such students can write a simple story but they are not equipped to create a complex narrative. It is all a question of what language the students have at their command and what can be achieved with this language (Harmer 1998:80).

Types of writing are also organized according to the main language functions, the most important ones are as follows:

- Description (including processes and sequencing)
- Narrative
- Exposition
- Instruction
- Explanation
- Definition
- Exemplification
- Classification
- Comparison and contrast
- Cause and effect
- Expressing: purpose, means, prediction, expectancy, reservation, result

- Generalization and specificity
- Discussion and argumentation (problem and solution)
- Drawing conclusions

1.5. The status of writing in ELT

For some time, under the influence of the audio-lingual approach to language teaching, it has been conventional wisdom to regard speech as being of primary importance, with writing being placed a poor second. Indeed, writing was regarded as being a somewhat inferior form of the language, a pale imitation of speech. When zealously applied, this viewpoint has had a number of unfortunate consequences for the learner.

To begin with, the learner was often denied the support of the written language during the early phases of learning. This could be very frustrating to a literate adult, used to learning from written sources.

Secondly, the learner who wished to acquire a reading and a writing control of the language had to proceed through a lot of spoken practice before getting down to the written form.

Thirdly, writing practice, when it was introduced, tended to be an extension of spoken practice even though, as it is quite obvious when we think of it, we do not often write exactly what we say. It would be foolhardy to claim that we have now reached an age of enlightenment and that we now know exactly how to teach writing.

It would be true to say, however, that writing is no longer relegated to second place. Instead, writing is given its own status in the ELT (English Language Teaching) course. There are a number of reasons for this. For one thing, linguists have become interested in studying the characteristics of written as well as spoken language, and it is now clear to everyone that writing is not simply

a poor relative of speaking. For another, teachers of English have become increasingly concerned with the need to teach writing to students of science and technology, for whom the ability in the spoken language may be secondary or even irrelevant.

Finally, coinciding with the increased interest in written language by both linguists and ELT teachers there has been a considerable growth in the study of language beyond the sentence, that is, in discourse (White 1980:8).

1.6. The objectives of teaching writing

The reasons for teaching writing to students of English as a foreign language include: reinforcement, language development, learning style, and most importantly, writing as a skill in its own right (Harmer 1998:79).

a- Reinforcement

Some students acquire language in a purely oral/aural way, but most of them benefit from seeing the language written down. The visual demonstration of language construction is invaluable for both their understanding of how it all fits together and as an aid to committing the new language to memory. Students often find it useful to write sentences using new language shortly after they have studied it.

b- Language development

The process of writing (rather like the process of speaking) helps the learners as they go along. The mental activity the learner has to go through in order to construct proper written texts is all part of the ongoing learning experience.

c- Learning style

Some students are fantastically quick at picking up language just by looking and listening. For the rest, it may take a little longer. For many learners, the time to think things through, to produce language in a slower way, is invaluable. Writing is appropriate for such learners. It can also be a quiet reflective activity instead of the rush and bother of face-to-face communication.

d- Writing as a skill

By far the most important reason for teaching writing, of course, is that it is a basic language skill, just as important as speaking, listening and reading. Students need to know how to write letters, how to put written reports together- and increasingly, how to write using electronic media. They need to know some of the writing's special conventions (punctuation, paragraph construction) just as they need to know how to pronounce spoken English appropriately.

1.7. An overview of some approaches for teaching writing

To be effective teachers of writing, English as a second language (ESL) composition professionals need an understanding of what is involved in second language (L₂) writing. They need coherent perspective, models, tools for thinking about second language writing in general and ESL composition in particular.

There is no doubt that development in ESL composition have been influenced by and, to a certain extent, are parallel to developments in the teaching of writing to the native speakers of English. However, the unique context of ESL composition has necessitated somewhat distinct perspectives, models, and practices.

The history of ESL composition since about 1945- the beginning of the modern era of second language teaching in the United States-can be viewed as a succession of approaches or orientations to L2 writing, a cycle in which particular approaches achieve dominance and then fade, but never really disappear (Silva 1990:11).

Over the past decades, a number of different approaches for teaching writing have been formed in an effort to provide the best way for learning such an important skill. Each approach saw this skill from a different angle or a different perspective. In teaching writing, we can focus on the product of that writing or on the writing process itself.

When concentrating on the product we are only interested in the aim of the task and in the product. Those who advocate a process approach to writing, however, pay attention to the various stages that any piece of writing goes through. Other approaches focus on other elements such as purpose and audience.

1.7.1. The Product Approach

The product approach dominated the teaching of writing in ELT until the 1980's-it involves using "a model- text" which the students copy. Normally each model text contains lots of examples of a specific type of language the teacher wants the students to focus on such as the simple past. The students read the model text, and do exercises that focus on the language in the model text. Finally, the students might be asked to transform a text, which is in the present simple into the past simple. The model text will help them to do this.

The focus is obviously on grammatical accuracy. The primary goal of product writing is an error-free coherent text. This reflects the preoccupation of ELT methodology at the time- the Audio Lingual Method was in fashion.

Model texts give students confidence and security; something they can use as the basis for their own writing (especially for beginners or lower level learners). The result is highly specific and focused writing practice. It is a good way of getting the students to focus on a specific piece of grammar in their own writing.

However, it is criticized for the lack of creativity and personalisation (the students have little to say in what they write and how to write it). For repetitiveness, being unrealistic (students are obviously not writing for a purpose, but writing to practice a grammar point), for being boring and demotivating. It is also too prescriptive (the model-based approach can be seen as transmitting the message to the student that there is only one way to write correctly).

In reality, of course, there are many different ways of writing well). The product approach has given students the impression that the composing process is linear. One of the main criticisms of the approach, however, is that it does not give students practice writing because it does not reflect what real writers do in real situations.

This is not to say, however, that the product approach no longer exists, nor that it has no practical applications.

1.7.2. Controlled Composition

Controlled composition seems to have its roots in Charles Fries (1945) oral approach, the precursor of the audio-lingual method of

second language teaching. Controlled composition is based on the notions that language is speech (from structural linguistics) and that learning is habit formation (from behaviourist psychology). Given these basic notions, it is not surprising that from this perspective writing was regarded as a secondary concern, essentially as reinforcement for oral habits. Some, like Erazmus (1960) and Brière (1966), believed that these written exercises should take the form of free composition- that is, writer - originated discourse - to extend the language control of the student and to promote fluency in writing.

However, such free composition was soundly rejected by others, like (Pincas 1962:185), who believed it to be “a naive traditional view... in direct opposition to the expressed ideals of scientific habit-forming teaching methods”. She developed this point by explaining that the reverence for original creativeness dies hard. People find it difficult to accept the fact that the use of language is the manipulation of fixed patterns; that these patterns are learned by imitation; and that not until they have been learned can originality occur in the manipulation of patterns or in the choice of variables within the patterns (Pincas 1962: 186).

Pincas seemed to echo the majority opinion, one that focused primarily on formal accuracy and correctness, of employing rigidly controlled programs of systematic habit formation designed to avoid errors caused by first language interference and to positively reinforce appropriate second language behaviour. The approach preferred practice with previously learned discrete units of language to talk of original ideas, organization, and style; and its methodology involved the imitation and manipulation

(substitutions, transformations, expansions, completions,...etc) of model passages carefully constructed and graded for vocabulary and sentence patterns.

In essence, in the controlled composition model, writing functions as “the handmaid of the other skills [Listening, Speaking, and Reading], which must not take precedence as a major skill to be developed” (Rivers1968:241), and must be “considered as a service activity rather than as an end in itself” (Rivers 1968: 258). Learning to write in a second language is seen as an exercise in habit formation.

In this approach the writer is simply a manipulator of previously learned language structures; the reader is the ESL teacher, not especially interested in the quality of the ideas or the expressions and the writer’s creativity but primarily concerned with formal linguistic features like grammar and punctuation. The text becomes a collection of sentence patterns and vocabulary items - a vehicle for language practice. The writing context is the ESL classroom; audience and purpose are also neglected.

1.7.3. Current - Traditional Rhetoric

The mid-sixties brought an increasing awareness of ESL students’ needs with regard to producing extended written discourse. This awareness led to some suggestions that controlled composition was not enough; that writing was more than building grammatical sentences; and that what was needed was a bridge between controlled and free writing. This vacuum was filled by an ESL version of current -traditional rhetoric.

In this theory Kaplan (1964) defined rhetoric as “the method of organizing syntactic units into larger patterns” (p.15) and

suggested that “ESL writers employ a rhetoric and a sequence of thought which violate the expectations of the native reader” (1966:4). “It is necessary to provide the student with a form within which he may operate.” (1966:20).

The central concern of this approach was the logical construction and arrangement of discourse forms. Of primary concern was the paragraph. Here attention was given not only to its elements (topic sentences, support sentences, concluding sentences, and transitions), but also to various options for its development (illustration, exemplification, comparison, contrast, partition, classification, definition, causal analysis, and so on).

The other important focus was essay development, actually an extrapolation of paragraph principles to larger stretches of discourse. Here larger structural entities were addressed (introduction, body and conclusion) and organizational patterns or modes (narration, description, exposition, and argumentation), with exposition typically seen as the pattern most appropriate for use by university-level second language writers.

Classroom procedures associated with this view of writing focus students’ attention on form. At their simplest, they ask students to choose among alternative sentences within the context of a given paragraph or longer discourse. Another variety involves reading and analyzing a model and then applying the structural knowledge gained to a parallel piece of original writing. The most complex types involve asking students (already provided with a topic) to list and group relevant facts, derive topic and supporting sentences from these facts, assemble an outline, and write their compositions from that outline.

In short, from the perspective of this version of current traditional rhetoric, writing is basically a matter of arrangement, of fitting sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns. The writer fills in the pre-existing form with provided or self-generated content. The reader is easily confused and perhaps vexed by unfamiliar patterns of expressions. The text is a collection of increasingly complex discourse structures (sentences, paragraphs, sections, etc...), each embedded in the next largest form. The implicit context for writing is an academic one, with the instructor's judgment presumed to mirror that of the community of educated native speakers.

Though current traditional practices have been regularly and vigorously attacked, their continuing influence is clearly reflected in many of the most well-known and popular contemporary ESL composition text-books, it is still dominant in ESL writing materials and classroom practices today (Silva 1990:13-14)

1.7.4. The Process Approach

The introduction of the process approach to ESL composition seems to have been motivated by dissatisfaction with controlled composition and the current-traditional approach. Many felt that neither approach adequately fostered thought or its expression- that controlled composition was largely irrelevant to this goal and the linearity and prescriptivism of current-traditional rhetoric discouraged creative thinking and writing.

Those who, like Taylor (1981: 5-6), felt that "writing is not the straight-forward plan-outline-write process that many believe it to be" looked to first-language composing process research for new ideas, as-summing with Zamel (1982) that "ESL writers who are

ready to compose and express their ideas use strategies similar to those of native speakers of English” (Zamel 1982:203). The assumptions and principles of this approach were soon enunciated. The composing process was seen as a non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning (Zamel 1983: 165).

Guidance through and intervention in the process were seen as preferable to control- that is, the early and perhaps premature imposition of organizational patterns or syntactic or lexical constraints. Content, ideas, and the need to communicate would determine form (Silva 1990: 15). In essence, composing means expressing ideas, conveying meaning. “composing means thinking” (Raimes 1983 : 261).

In one cluster of L1 theories, the writer is viewed as originator of written text, the *process* through which the writer goes to create and produce discourse is the most important component in the theory. Fraigly (1986) identifies two groups within the process camp, the *expressivists* and the *cognitivists*. Expressivism, which developed in the first decades of the twentieth century, reached its zenith in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, when the individual expression of honest and personal thought became a popular trend in teaching writing (John 1990:25). Writing was considered an art, a creative act in which the process –the discovery of the true self-is as important as the product- the self discovered and expressed (Berlin 1988:484).

Leaders of the expressivist movement: Donald Murray (1983), Ken Macrorie (1971), William Coles (1981), Peter Elbow (1973, 1981), and others- have published widely, advocating classroom techniques that

encourage students to take power over their own prose. Elbow, perhaps the most famous of the group *writing without teachers* 1973, *embracing contraries* 1981, *writing with power : techniques of mastering the writing process* 1981, speaks of writing as a kind of magic that can be performed by anyone who is involved in and believes in his or her tale. (1981: 369).

Teachers advocating the expressivist view are nondirective; they facilitate classroom activities designed to promote writing fluency and power over the writing act. Their textbooks contain assignments designed to encourage self-discovery, such as journal writing and personal essays, through which students can “first write freely and uncritically so that [they] can get down as many words as possible.” (Elbow 1981b:7).

It is the cognitivists or “writing as problem- solving” group that has had more effect upon ESL research and teaching, however, there are two key words in cognitivist discussions: *thinking* and *process*. The first, which identifies high- order thinking skills with problem solving, is the theme of Flower’s textbook *problem-solving strategies for writing* (1985, 1989).

This book requires students to plan extensively. Planning includes defining the rhetorical problem, placing it in a larger context, making it operational, exploring its parts, generating alternative solutions, and arriving at a well- supported conclusion. Once the problem has been identified and the paper has been planned, students continue the *writing process* by translating their plans and thoughts into words, and by reviewing their work through revising and editing. *Problem –solving strategies* by Hayes and Flower (1983) are based upon research that employed think-aloud protocols and other techniques: it revealed that complex

writing processes are not linear or formulaic but rather individual and recursive.

The influence of the process approaches, especially of cognitive views upon modern ESL classrooms cannot be exaggerated.

In most classrooms, ESL teachers prepare students to write through invention and other prewriting activities, encourage several drafts, require paper revision, generally through group work, and delay the student fixation with correction of sentence-level errors until the final editing stage.

Therefore, the goal of a teacher, in this view, is to produce good writers who not only have a large repertoire of powerful strategies, but they have sufficient self-awareness of their own process to draw on these alternative techniques as they need them. In other words, “they guide their own creative process” (Flower 1985:370).

This approach calls for providing a positive, encouraging, and collaborative workshop environment within which students, with ample time and minimal interference, can work through their composing processes.

The teacher’s role is to help students develop viable strategies for getting started (finding topics, generating ideas and information, focusing and planning structure and procedures), for drafting (encouraging multiple drafts), for revising (adding, deleting, modifying, and rearranging ideas); and for editing (attending to vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics of punctuation and spelling).

From a process perspective, then, writing is a complex, recursive and creative process or set of behaviours that is very similar in its broad outlines for first and second language writers. Learning to write entails developing an efficient and effective composing process. The writer is the centre of attention- someone engaged in the discovery and expression of meaning; the reader, focusing on context, ideas, and the negotiating of meaning, is not preoccupied with form. The text is a product- a secondary, derivative concern, whose form is a function of its content and purpose.

Finally, there is no particular context for writing implicit in this approach; it is the responsibility of the individual writer to identify and appropriately, address the particular task, situation, discourse community, and sociocultural setting in which they are involved.

Although the process approach has been generally well and widely received in ESL composition, it is not without its critics. These critics have perceived theoretical and practical problems and omissions of the approach and have suggested that the focus of ESL composition be shifted from the writer to the reader- that is, the academic discourse community.

The process view of writing sees it as thinking, as discovery. Writing is the result of employing strategies to manage the composing process. It involves a number of activities: setting goals, generating ideas, organizing information, selecting appropriate language, making a draft, reading and revising it, then revising and editing .It is a complex process which is neither easy nor spontaneous for many second language writers.

It was in the 1970's that interest developed in what second language writers actually do as they write, motivated largely by a belief that if we wish to influence and improve the outcomes of writing for our learners, then we need to understand how a piece of writing comes into being. In fact, a piece of writing is the outcome of a set of complicated cognitive operations. A major concern of researchers into second language writing has been to identify these mental operations, and a number of research methods have been used to do this: interviews, observation, audio and video recording, and making protocols as writers think aloud during composing. Two studies will serve as examples of this research and its outcomes.

Zamel (1983) made a study of the composing processes of six advanced ESL students, participants in her own optional college writing class. She observed them as they prepared formal papers requiring expository writing. In setting out her research questions, she places herself in a tradition of process-centred studies with similar aims (Eming 1971; Perl 1979; Faigley and Witte 1981).

How do writers write? How do their ideas seem to get generated? What happens to these ideas after they are recorded? To what extent do these writers attend to the development and clarification of these ideas? To what extent and at what point during the process do they deal with more mechanical matters?

(Zamel 1983: 169)

A number of findings emerged: Planning was not a single phase but a thinking activity to which writers returned again and again during composing.

These writers had individual strategies for “getting into” writing. Some wrote notes, lists, or diagrams, and all of the students spent a good deal of time thinking at the outset, but two of the best writers wrote nothing down until they started the essay.

The writing process was recursive and generative, with students re-reading their work, assessing it, reacting, and moving on. There was an interesting distinction between the poorer writers who seemed to focus on re-reading only smaller chunks of discourse and better writers who sometimes re-read whole paragraphs.

Revising took place throughout the process and generally involved considerable changes: for example, composing something new, deleting sentences, and shifting paragraphs around and sometimes eliminating them.

All of the writers paid attention to surface-level features but the better writers dealt with these at the end of the process. It was the poorer writers who spent time throughout the process changing words and phrases.

Linguistic problems seemed to concern the writers least. The better writers used strategies such as leaving a blank or writing down a word in their first language in order not to be distracted as they developed ideas.

Once ideas had been written down and developed, the writers began to edit for surface-level features such as accuracy in grammar, word choice, spelling and punctuation.

These findings have been supported by many other studies—such as the one of Raimes (1985), who supported Zamel’s

(1983) observations on the role of language in the composing process. She suggested that with students who exhibit lack of competence in writing, poor composing competence could be a greater factor in this than poor language competence. She used think-aloud protocols to investigate the writing process and made the following comment on experienced writers:

“They consider purpose and audience. They consult their own background knowledge. They let ideas incubate. They plan as they write, they read back over what they have written. Contrary to what many textbooks advice, writers do not follow a neat sequence of planning, organising, writing and then revising. For while writer’s product- the finished essay, a story or novel- is presented in lines, the process that produces is not linear at all.”

(Raimes 1985: 229)

1.7.4.1. The implications of the process approach

The issues that arise for teachers from insights into what makes a successful writer are whether we can teach strategies for planning, revising and editing, and whether we can help students develop a sense of audience.

Process approach tries to provide useful support for student writers. The nature of the support will depend on the kind of learners, for example, their age, background and needs for writing in English. It could be argued that adult learners should already have developed effective writing strategies in their first language.

However, it may well be the case that students have not received the necessary support in their first language and will benefit from a process approach in the English language classroom, whatever their age. The principle aim of the process approach;

therefore, is to help students to gain greater control over the cognitive strategies involved in composing. This suggests a number of principles for the teacher to incorporate into the teaching of writing (Hedge 2000:308).

a-Helping students to generate ideas

One of the hardest tasks in writing is getting started. Even the most fluent writers in their own language need time to generate ideas and to plan what they are going to write about. Students are no different. If we are going to ask them to write anything more substantial than instant writing, we have to give them the opportunities to think. This is especially true for more formal tasks such as narrative writing, offering opposing views on a topic, report writing, formal letters, the design of publicity material such as advertisements and posters. In academic writing, when tutors set assignments, a first step in pedagogy could be to encourage students to work in pairs and arrive at an understanding of the task by questioning and clarifying the meaning of key expressions and selecting the information needed to fulfil the task. Collaboration makes generating ideas more enjoyable and productive.

In the general EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom, when tasks are set for practice purposes, the teacher has the responsibility of helping students get their ideas together. White and Arndt (1991) make a useful distinction between guided techniques in which questions are used, and unguided techniques in which students generate ideas by themselves.

Both guided and unguided techniques demonstrate the help that teachers can give as students think out a topic, discover a purpose, and decide on a perspective in the early stages of writing.

Notice that these activities show how writing can be stimulated by students working interactively. Such interaction has the value of providing student writers with an audience on whom to test out the selection of content. However, we need to keep in mind the solitary nature of most writing and move students gradually towards the independent position of a writer engaged in real writing tasks.

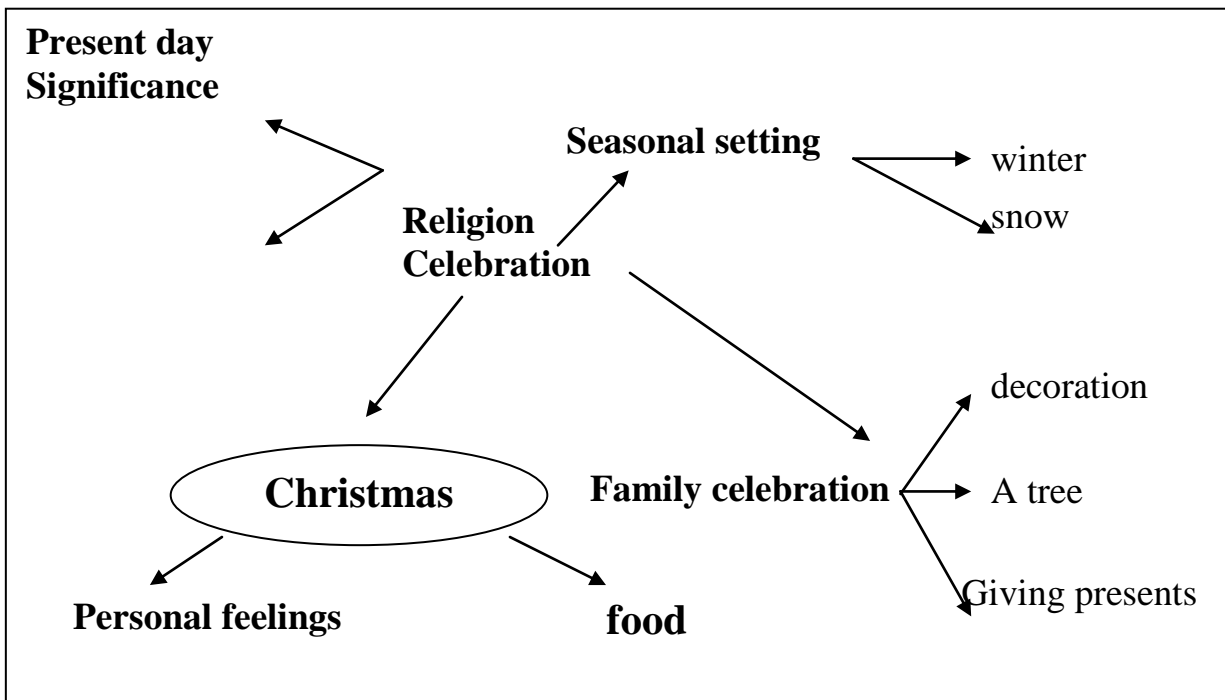


Figure 4: brainstorming technique (Hedge 2000 :310)

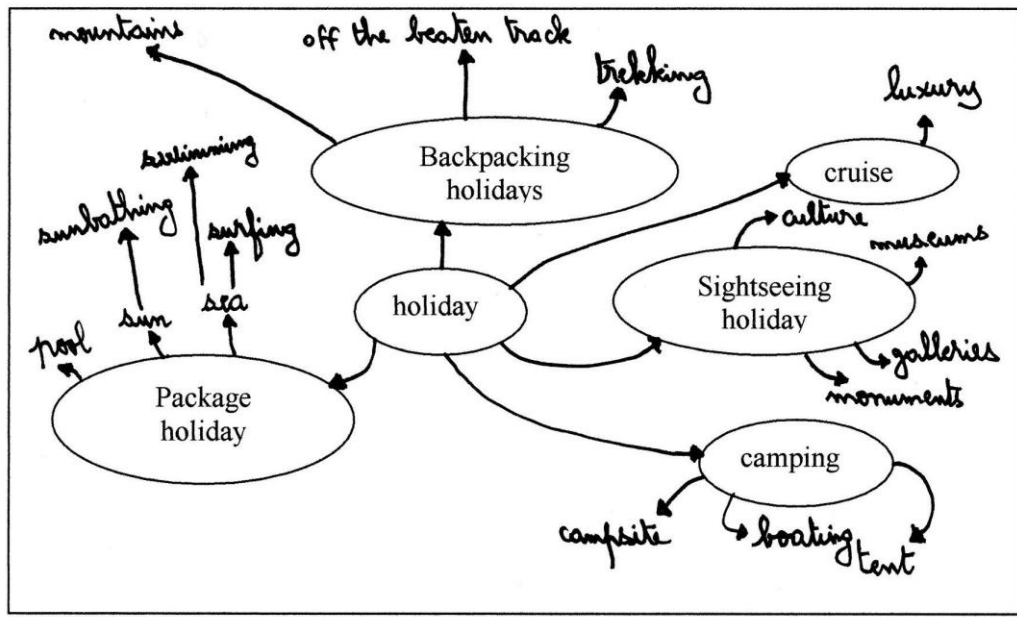


Figure 5: Spidergram for holidays (Harmer 2004:89)

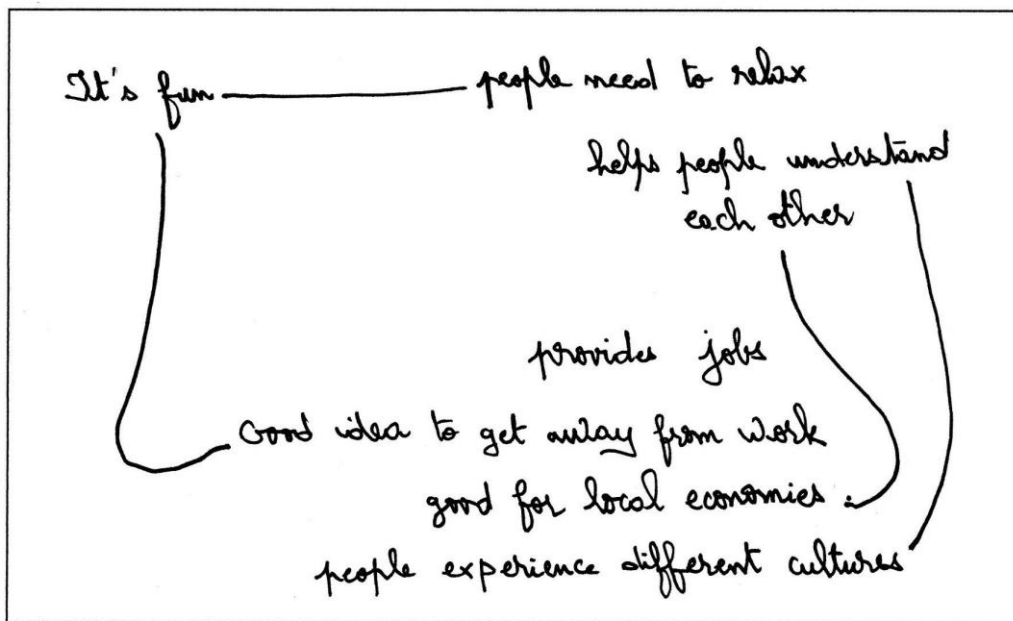


Figure 6: Spaghetti note making for why tourism is so popular (Harmer 2004:89)

b-Providing practice in planning

Given that we know successful writers plan their writing in very different ways, this needs great care. Many teachers now take the view that the best help they can give is to provide students with ideas for planning in the early stages and to let them take up those that they find individually useful and attractive. At the same time, it is essential to communicate the flexible nature of plans, which ideally should change and be adjusted as writing progresses and generates alternative ideas and structures.

There are lots of ways of helping students to organize their ideas: Through planning in groups, asking strategic questions by the teacher, organizing points in a hierarchy of importance for presentation, highlighting essential information, sequencing given information, and sorting and matching ideas. The advantage of mind maps such as “brainstorming” (see figure 4) as a planning strategy for example, particularly for descriptions, is that all the aspects of a topic can be easily seen in relation to each other and possible links between sections of the composition suggest themselves. This can assist with advance planning of the overall text. All of these techniques give initial support for what will eventually be a process undertaken individually (Hedge 2000:308).

c-Contextualizing tasks to develop a sense of audience

Helping student-writers to develop a sense of audience is another important task. With less mature writers, who may not have developed a sense of audience in writing in their first language, we can create audiences and build up awareness of the reader. For example, the school can provide an audience with its population of English language learners; for example, class magazines can be

published for the wider school community. Within the classroom it is possible for the teacher to set up a pair work in which one student's writing forms the basis for a response from the other student in the pair, for instance, both students write a letter of invitation.

At this stage they can help each other plan and draft. If their discussion is in English, this constitutes natural fluency practice. The students then exchange the letters and write replies, accepting or declining the invitation. The principle involved in these letter exchanges is that of task dependency as the success of the exchange depends on the clarity of the letters to their readers: this reflects the interaction of reading and writing in real life.

As students work on writing tasks, it is important that they ask themselves who they are writing for and keep that audience in mind as they write (Hedge 2000:308-309).

d- Encouraging students in revision strategies

Revision is not something that clearly exists in product writing, as the assumption is that the provided model has been followed. Process writing, in contrast, requires that a degree of analysis be undertaken. After the students have written their work, it needs to be revised and evaluated. Learners who are unused to process writing will view revision as a sign of failure if handled poorly by the teacher. As with revision, evaluation is often viewed negatively, mostly due to the traditional technique of merely highlighting the errors in a learner's work. The teacher's task is to provide evaluation that will lead the learners into reflecting on their work. (Simpson 2002).

Many teachers now hold the view that the traditional procedure of taking work in, marking it, and returning it to students when the writing experience is no longer fresh in their minds, has serious disadvantages. This is especially the case if little work is done in class on revising as it gives students the impression that the teacher is primarily responsible for improving the quality of their written work.

A variety of procedures are now used to support revision, and these need to be evaluated against what we know of how good writers go about the process. (Hedge 2000:313).

A popular procedure is conferencing. As the class writes, the teacher can talk with individual students about work in progress. Through careful questioning, the teacher can support a student writer in getting ideas together, organizing them, and finding appropriate language. Keh (1990) (cited in Johns 1990) suggests an elicitation procedure with focusing questions such as «who are you writing to?» and «how have you organized your points?»

Conferencing is a useful technique during the earlier stages of composition when writers are still thinking about content and organization. A popular device at a slightly later stage is the use of checklist. It is for individual use. The contained questions may focus on the overall content and organization, and its appropriateness to purpose and audience. Other types of checklist can be used when students exchange drafts of comment. For example, a checklist on paragraphing could contain the questions:

- does the composition divide naturally into several parts?
- do the paragraphs reflect those parts?

-does each paragraph have a topic sentence with a main idea?

-does each paragraph have an effective concluding sentence?

Reformulation is a useful procedure when students have produced a first draft and are moving on to look at more local possibilities for improvement. It has the particular advantage that it provides students with opportunities to notice any differences between the target model and their own production and thus to acquire language forms. Reformulation (Allwright 1984) proceeds through the following stages:

- 1- The students carry out a guided writing task. The task is guided to ensure that the content and organization of their writing is similar. Indeed, collaborative work could be used at the planning stage.
- 2-Each student writes a first draft and hands it to the reader.
- 3-The teacher marks the work by indicating problems by means of underlining or highlighting (see figure 5).
- 4- The teacher chooses one student's essay and reformulates it, following the ideas closely but improving the expression in terms of accuracy.
- 5- The original piece and the reformulation are copied so that students can compare them.
- 6- The class works in pairs and groups, identifying the changes in the reformulation and discussing the reasons for them.
- 7- The teacher, with the class, discusses the changes and gives a rationale, inviting comments and questions.

8- Students then go through their own first drafts and revise them in the light of any useful information they have gained.

Wf	wrong form:	the <u>best</u> will be its achievements
Ww	wrong word:	patient, funny and <u>kindly</u>
T	wrong tense:	in the last few weeks you <u>doesn't</u> <u>have</u> much fun.
Λ	something is missing:	you arrive in Brighton Λ the 1 st February.
Sp	wrong spelling:	<u>confortable</u> Sp
WO	wrong word order:	you haven't seen [yet] London
P	wrong punctuation:	look out (p).
V	wrong verb form:	the titanic <u>sunk</u> very quickly.
//	new paragraph needed:	
Ø	not necessary:	John came in and he sat down.
U	you don't need a new sentence. Join up the idea	
?	I don't understand what you are trying to say.	
_____	This isn't quit right: it needs clearer expression (usually the teacher provides an alternative.	
[]	this part needs to be re-arranged or reworded	
!!	You really should know what's wrong here because	
	-we've just done it in class.	
	-I've told you so many times.	

Figure 7: an example of a coding system for correcting a written work
(Hedge 2000: 316)

The advantage of reformulation is that it allows discussion of such aspects as how ideas are developed, how a range of structures, vocabulary, or connecting devices can be used, and how the style needs to be appropriate to the readers.

The revision strategies described before have the same aim of encouraging students to see writing as something that can be improved, and they train learners in looking for areas for improvement.

It is good for every teacher to ensure that a variety of techniques are used to encourage this essential activity in the writing process.

1.7.4.2. The advantages and disadvantages of the process approach

Several issues arise for any teacher trying to incorporate principles of process writing into his or her professional practice. First, teachers need to provide time for writing in the supported learning environment of the classroom. Many students will benefit from structured tasks, which teach them strategies for planning, drafting, and revision. In addition, collaborative writing provides students with readers and critics of their work in the classroom.

Many teachers would argue that setting aside the time needed for feedback, and for the revision of several drafts, is unrealistic, particularly within the constraints of school systems; and particularly where classes are large. With regard to this issue, one compromise is to spend as much time as possible in the early stages for teaching writing and then to encourage independence through out-of-class practice. If it is true that we learn to write through

writing, then this suggests the more practice the better. Collaborative writing gives the opportunity of sharing writing.

Therefore, the activity moves away from being just an assignment towards being a more natural exchange of ideas and reflections with the teacher and the rest of the class.

The process approach to writing is not without its critics, and the questions of time and large classes are certainly issues of implementation which any teacher needs to take into account. Another concern relates to students who are preparing for examination. The multiple-draft approach is hardly suitable for timed examination: a distinction needs to be made between classroom writing aimed at developing efficiency, and exam preparation, which aims at demonstrating that efficiency, and for which other strategies are needed. A serious related criticism is that the process approach does not address the realities of life for those students who are working with English writing in academic contexts, where essays have to be produced under time constraints.

The process approach aims to get to the heart of various skills that should be employed when writing.

The writing process is more complex, and the various stages of drafting, reviewing, redrafting and writing, etc, are done in a recursive way: we loop backwards and move forwards between these various stages. Thus, at the editing stage we may feel the need to go back to a pre-writing phase and think again; we may edit bits of our writing as we draft it.

Ron white and Valerie Arndt are keen to stress that “writing is re-writing that revision-seeing with new eyes- has a central role to play in the act of creating text” (white and Arndt:1991:5) in their

model, process writing is an interrelated set of recursive stages which include:

- Drafting
- Structuring (ordering information, experimenting with arrangements, etc)
- Reviewing (checking context, connections, assessing impact, editing).
- Focusing (that is making sure you are getting the message across you want to get across).
- Generating ideas and evaluation (assessing the draft and/ or subsequent drafts).

White and Arndt's model can be represented diagrammatically as follows:

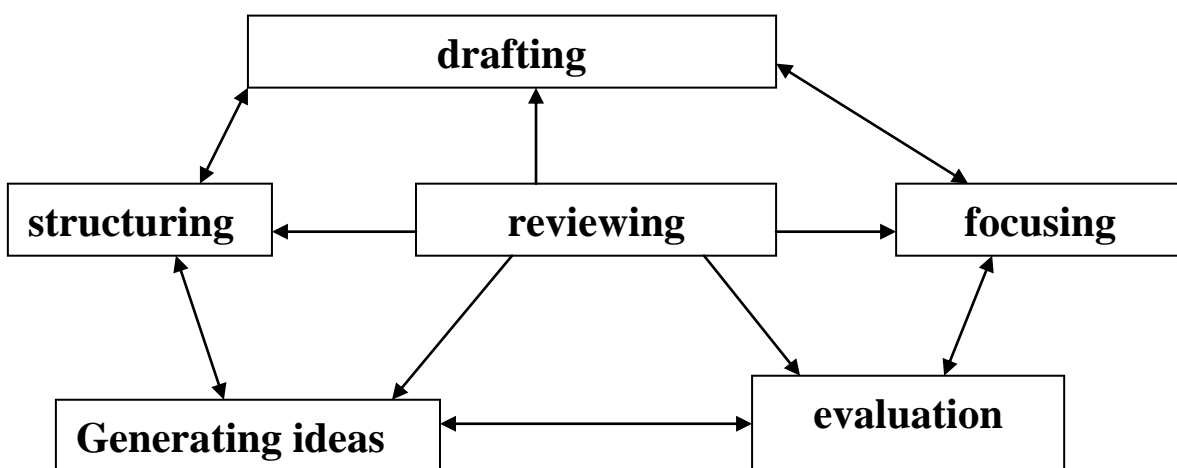


Figure 8: White and Arndt's process writing model

One of the disadvantages of getting students to concentrate on the process of writing is that it takes time: time to brainstorm ideas or collect them in some other ways; time to draft a piece of writing and then, with the teacher's help perhaps review it and edit it in

various ways before, perhaps, changing the focus, generating more ideas, re-drafting, re-editing and so on.

This cannot be done in fifteen minutes. However, the various stages may well involve discussion, research, language study, and a considerable amount of interaction between teacher and students and between students themselves so that when process writing is handled appropriately it stretches across the whole curriculum.

There are times when process writing is simply not appropriate, because either classroom time is limited, or because we want students to write quickly as part of a communication game, or when working alone, we want them to compose a letter or brief story on the spot.

1.7.5. English for Academic Purposes

Much of the previous criticism of the process approach has come from proponents of English for academic purposes orientation, which seems as much a reaction to the process approach as an attempt to construct a new and distinct perspective on ESL composition. One major part of this criticism is that the process approach does not adequately address some central issues in ESL writing. Reid (1984a, b) has suggested that the approach neglects to seriously consider variations in writing processes due to the differences in individuals, writing tasks, and situations; language proficiency; level of cognitive development.

Critics also question whether the process approach realistically prepares students for academic work. According to Horowitz (1986: 144), the approach “creates a classroom situation that bears little resemblance to the situation in which (students’ writing) will eventually be exercised” (p.144). He goes on to suggest that a

process orientation ignores certain types of important academic writing tasks(particularly essay exams) and that what he sees as two basic tenets of the process approach- “content determines form” and “good writing is involved writing”- do not necessarily hold true in many academic contexts. In essence, he asserts that the process approach overemphasizes the individual’s psychological functioning and neglects the socio-cultural context, that is, the realities of academia- that, in fact, the process approach operates in a socio-cultural vacuum.

The alternative proposed involves a primary focus on academic discourse genres and the range and nature of academic writing tasks, aimed at helping to socialize the student into the academic context and thus “ensure that student writing falls within the range of acceptable writing behaviours dictated by the academic community” (Horowitz 1986:789). The suggested instructional methodology aims at recreating the conditions under which actual university writing tasks are done and involves the close examination and analysis of academic discourse formats and writing task specifications; the selection and intensive study of source materials appropriate for a given topic, question, or issue; the evaluation, synthesis and organisation of relevant data from these sources; and the presentation of these data in acceptable academic English form.

In brief, from English for academic purposes orientation, writing is the production of prose that will be acceptable at the academic institution, and learning to write is part of becoming socialized to the academic community- finding out what is expected and trying to approximate it. The writer is pragmatic and

oriented primarily towards academic success, meeting standards and requirements. The reader is a member of the hosting academic community who has well developed clear and stable views of what is appropriate. The text is more or less conventional response to a particular task type that falls into a recognizable genre. The context is, of course, the academic community and the typical tasks associated with it. While the English for academic purposes approach has gained many adherents, some perceive its emphasis on writing in various disciplines (particularly in scientific and technical fields) as questionable. The critics see a humanities - based approach with a primary focus on general principles of inquiry and rhetoric as more viable and appropriate.

1.7.6. Interactive Approach

Another lesser-known view is the vision of the writer as a person involved in a dialogue with his or her audience (Bakhtin1913). In this approach, text is what an individual creates through a dialogue with another conversant; thus, both the writer and reader take responsibility for coherent text.

Hinds (1987) has provided some useful insights into the writer- reader relationship in various languages, suggesting metaphors for this “middle-of-the-road” view. He refers to English as a “writer-responsible” language, “since the person primarily responsible for effective communication is the writer” (1987:143). However, “in Japan, perhaps in Korea and certainly in ancient China, there is a different way of looking at the communication process. In Japan, it is the responsibility of the reader to understand what the author intended to say” (1987:144).

In ESL classes, then, those teachers who take an interactive view can speak of English as “writer- responsible”; student writers must make their topics, their argument, their organization and transitions clear to the reader. Specifically, the writer producing English expository prose should pre-reveal the form of the text (e.g., “the problem to be discussed in the paper...”) and the content (e.g., “...is pollution”) within the first paragraphs of their texts (Meyer 1977), provide generalizations at appropriate points in the discourse, maintain and develop topics in a manner accessible to the reader.

Other features of “writer-responsible” text include organization of the discourse in a manner familiar to the reader, appropriate use of cohesion, and direct explication of information (Singer 1984).

1.7.7. The Social Constructionist View

Another role of the writer appears in the social constructionist literature. Here, the written product is considered as a social act that can take place only within and for a specific context and audience (Coe 1987). For the proponents of the social constructionist views, the language, focus, and form of a text stem from the community for which it is written.

Inspired more than twenty years ago by Kuhn’s *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970), social constructionists have argued that “reality, knowledge, thought, facts, texts and so on are constructs generated by communities of like-minded peers”. (Bruffee 1986: 774). Bruffee notes that:

"Social construction assumes that the matrix of thought is not the individual self but some community of knowledgeable peers and vernacular knowledge of that

community. That is, social construction understands knowledge and the authority of knowledge as community-generated, community-maintaining symbolic artefacts". (Bruffee 1986:777)

Thus, for the social constructionists, knowledge, language, and the nature of discourse are determined for the writer by the “discourse community” for whom the writer is producing text. Swales (1990) has provided a recent and carefully constructed six-part definition:

1-A discourse community has a broadly agreed upon set of common public goals. (Sometimes these goals are implicit, unfortunately. For students, implicitly shared goals of academic discourse communities are often difficult to understand.

2- A discourse community has mechanisms for intercommunication among its members. These can include meetings- e-g., TESOL newsletters and journals, letters to the editor or to other members of the community.

3- A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback. Journals, for example, are created for these purposes, though unfortunately, most students have little opportunity to participate in the community at this level.

4- A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims. Genres can vary considerably, from letters and journal articles to posters and memos. For ESL writers at the graduate level, these genres become increasingly important; for undergraduates and students in primary and secondary schools, “school based writing” - e-g., for essay examination- is more common.

5- The discourse community has some specific vocabulary. Prominent members of the community can and do add to this vocabulary.

6- A discourse community has a limited level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discursal expertise.

Those who hold the social constructionist view acknowledge that becoming an accepted member of an academic discourse community presents particular problems for “basic writers- with whom ESL students have a great deal in common in terms of “outsider status”. Patricia Bizzell (1987: 131), perhaps the most vocal proponent of the concerns of “outsiders” notes that students from other than standard English cultures must develop multiple literacies; they must work with a cultural and discourse repertoire much broader than those developed by students from standard English cultures. Often, ESL and basic writing students are seen as failures.

Large members of students- are incompetent in the form of literacy preferred in school. This “academic literacy”, as I call it, entails the ability to use Standard English and think academically- Hence to be an “academic illiterate” is to be unpractised in Standard English and inept in “critical thinking”. (Bizzell 1987:131)

Bizzell and others who write about the social constructionist nature of discourse suggest two approaches for teaching writers who are “outsiders”. The first, preferred by Bizzell, is based on the premise that students should not be forced to acquire academic literacy and become part of the academic discourse community. Instead, it is the academy that must change to adapt to the many cultures that the students represent. Other, seemingly more realistic, teachers and researchers attempt to understand both what

academic literacy means and how best to introduce it into English for academic purposes (EAP) classes.

This second group is composed of two subgroups, each with a different approach to teaching the language of academia. One is the “general academic” group, who base their teachings upon the belief that there is a general set of tasks and a basic academic language that ESL teachers should present to students, and that task and language transferral can take place after a student has been presented with the common core of academic language and conventions. It is the duty of the researcher, then, to discover these transferable tasks and to provide opportunities for task practice in ESL classrooms (Johns 1988).

A second group of ESL specialists maintain that the understanding of general tasks will not suffice in many instances, for each classroom and each discourse community has unique characteristics that must be searched out. Connor and Johns (1989), for example, found that approaches to argumentation differ considerably between business people and engineers; Swales (1984) notes the predictable characteristics of scientific introductions; Huckin (1984) speaks of special features of scientific articles. This juxtaposition and confusion of approaches to academic literacy underlines a persistent need for additional theory and research to justify positions and realize them in EAP classrooms (Johns 1990: 27- 29).

1.7.8. Genre Approach

In a genre approach to writing students study texts in the genre they are going to be writing before they embark on their own writing. Thus, if we want them to write business letters of various

kinds, we let them look at typical models of such letters before starting to compose their own. If we want them to write newspaper articles, we should make them study real examples to discover facts about construction and specific language use which is common in that genre. This forms part of the pre- writing phase.

Chris Tribble (1997: 148- 150) suggests the following “data collection” procedure as an introduction to the writing of letters to newspapers. Students are asked to spend some time every day, for a week, looking at letters to the newspapers. They are asked to make notes of particular vocabulary and / or grammar constructions in the letters. For example, we might tell them to find any language which expresses approval or disapproval, or to note down any if-sentences they come across. They can use dictionaries or any other resources when they need to check understanding. At the end of a week they bring the results of their research to the class and make a list of commonly occurring lexis or grammar patterns.

The teacher now gets the students to read articles in today’s paper and plan letters (using the language they have come across in the data collection phase) in response to those articles. Where possible they should actually send their letters in the hope that they will be published.

Students who are writing within a certain genre need to consider a number of different factors. They need to have knowledge of the topic, the conventions and style of the genre, and the context in which their writing will be read, and by whom.

Many of our students writing tasks do not have an audience other than the teacher, of course, but that does not stop us and them working as if they did.

Asking students to initiate a given style would be seen as encouraging them to see writing as a form of “reproduction” rather than as a creative act. Imitation as only a first stage, however, designed to enforce adherence to strict genre rules.

Can we make a compromise between the constraints of the genre approach and the vision of writing as a process?

Given that writing is a process and that what we write is often heavily influenced by the constraints of genres, then these elements have to be present in learning activities. Building the writing habit is extremely important, but without looking at examples of different genres to see how they are constructed, and without becoming used to drafting and re-drafting, students are unlikely to become effective writers.

In past discussions of process and genre, writers tended to think that these two ways of looking at writing were mutually exclusive- that is; teachers either got students to look at written genres or had them concentrate on the writing process itself. Yet there is no good reason why this should be the case. We may feel, for example, that analysing a certain written genre in order to be able to write within that genre is an integral part of the planning stage in a process approach. In the same way we may well get students to concentrate on the writing process - drafting and re-drafting for example- when they are writing within a genre.

To sum up, the product approach emphasizes error-free coherent text, whereas controlled composition focuses on the lexical and syntactic features of a text. ESL current- traditional rhetoric focuses on discourse- level text structure, while the process approach attends to the writer's composing behaviours. The English

for academic purposes approach focuses on the reader, in the form of the academic discourse community.

Writing is by nature an interactive process- as suggested by the interactive approach- because it involves out of the symbolic interplay between writer, text and reader. Consequently, by making conditions more authentic than the ones in traditional classroom tasks, an awareness of audience, purpose and intentionality is reinforced.

Writing involves more than just producing sentences. To be able to write a piece of prose, the student writer must be able to write a connected series of sentences which are grammatically and logically linked. It is also necessary to be able to write appropriately for the kind of the purpose and audience the student has in mind, and it is in institutional writing that the guide- lines for appropriateness are most easily discovered, demonstrated and applied.

The student writer must also write in order to communicate something to his intended audience, and since this audience is not physically present, what he writes must be clear, precise and unambiguous as possible. In short, the student writer must produce a piece of discourse which embodies correctness of form, appropriateness of style and unity of theme and clarity.

Conclusion

In this section we have shed light on writing and the writing process. We have traced the different activities involved in writing. Recently, writing stopped to be regarded as secondary. It proved to be as essential as the spoken form in acquiring a second language. It is also one of the basic elements that should be mastered in order to reach the communicative end of language. Like the other study skills writing is taught according to certain approaches. The leaders of each approach look to writing from different angles and suggest views and perspectives about how writing should be understood and urge researchers to adapt and adopt new teaching methods based on those views.

After drafting the final version of his piece of writing, the learner is now ready to send the written text to its intended audience. In an academic setting, i.e. the classroom the audience to whom the learner's piece of writing is directed is the teacher; who reads and evaluates the written piece that is, he provides feedback. This step will be studied in details in the following chapter.

Chapter *two*

Chapter Two: Feedback

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Introduction

In this chapter we shall introduce feedback on students' written work. We shall define it, explore its nature and shed light on its different types and some useful techniques. We shall also precise teacher's role and students' as well, answer important questions such as what should we correct? When to correct? how to correct? What should we focus on? We shall also consider students' responses and examine teachers and students preferences.

2.1 Definition

Feedback can be regarded as a means of providing information and as a reinforcer for revision. It consists of comments and information about performance that someone has demonstrated.

Beyond the specific focus of feedback in writing, there is a long, more general history of research of feedback. Overall, three broad meanings of feedback have been examined (Kulhavy and Wager 1993). First, in a motivational meaning, some feedback, such as praise, could be considered a motivator that increases a general behaviour (e.g., writing or revision activities overall). This piece of the definition came from the research that tried to influence the amount of exerted effort through motivation (Brown, 1932; Symonds and Chase, 1929). Second, in a reinforcement meaning, feedback may specifically reward or punish very particular prior behaviours (e.g. a particular spelling error or particular approach to a concluding paragraph). This piece of the definition came from the law of Effect (Thorndike, 1927). Third, in an informational meaning, feedback might consist of information used by a learner to change performance in a particular direction. This piece of the definition came from information-processing theories (Pressey, 1926; 1927)

2.2. Kinds of feedback

At various stages in a writing activity, teachers should intervene with editorial comments, motivating suggestions, or language advice.

Students, indeed, expect feedback on what they are doing or what they have done.

The way teachers react to students' work depends not only on the kind of task the students are given, but also on what they want to achieve at any one point. There are a number of ways of reacting but these generally fall within two broad categories: responding or correcting.

2.2.1. Responding and correcting

a-Responding

When responding to our students' work we are not only concerned with the accuracy of their performance but also-and this is crucial- with the content and design of their writing. We might respond, for example, to the order in which they have made their points; we might respond by saying how much we enjoyed reading their work-and then recommend that the student have a look at a book which has more information about the same topic. When responding we are entering into a kind of affective dialogue with the students. That is, we are discussing their writing rather than judging it.

b-Correcting

On the other hand, is the stage at which we indicate when something is not right. We correct mistakes in the students' written production on issues such as syntax (word order), concord (grammatical agreement between subjects and verbs), and collocation (word choice).

In a "process-writing" sequence, where the teacher's intervention is designed to help students edit and move forward to a new draft, responding is often more appropriate than correcting. Our task, as

teachers, is to say what is right or wrong, but to ask questions, make suggestions, and indicate where improvements might be made to both the content of the writing and the manner in which it is expressed. Feedback of this kind becomes more and more appropriate as the students' level improves and they can take advantage of such help.

2.2.2. Ways of correcting students' work

Perhaps the most common way of correcting students' work has been to return it to students with a great deal of underlining, crossings-out, question marks, and the occasional tick. There may be a place for such correction especially in test marking for example, but this kind of intensive correction can be counter-productive. There are a number of more effective ways which make correction a positive and useful experience.

In what follows, some feedback methods are introduced. They are not meant to be definitive - further development and refinement are needed-but they have been tried out by practising teachers or researchers. These techniques reflect the rationale to use feedback and have been proved to work profitably with process writing.

a-Selective correction

A way of avoiding the proliferation of red ink all over a student's work is through selective correction. In other words, we do not have to correct everything. We can correct only verb tenses or only punctuation, or focus instead exclusively on word order. We may only correct paragraph organization or the use of appropriate levels of formality. We may only correct two paragraphs in a composition and highlight mistakes in the others.

If we are going to apply a selective approach, students need to know about it. When we tell them that this time we are only going to be looking at punctuation, they will concentrate on that aspect.

Selective correction is a good learning tool. In other words, a way of making selective correction really effective is to discuss with students what the teacher should be looking out for. If the students are part of the decision-making process, they are likely to approach the task with more commitment and enthusiasm than usual, and they will pay a great deal of attention to the area earmarked for the teacher's correction.

b- Using marking scales

Many teachers use a range of different marking scales when correcting written works and tests. This means that though students may fall down on, say grammar, they can still perhaps do well in the way they answer a task or in their use of vocabulary. Teachers may want to give marks out of five (05) for each category they have chosen for students (e.g.: grammar, vocabulary, coherence, cohesion). Together with indications of mistakes, such marking scales will help students to focus on the particular area they need to work at.

c- Using correction symbols (codes)

In order to avoid overabundance of red ink, many teachers use correction symbols. These also have the advantage of encouraging students to think about what the mistake is, so that they can correct it themselves. Many course books include correction symbols in their writing training to.

There is no set list of symbols. Different teachers and course books have their own ways of expressing different concepts. However, the following symbols are frequently used:

Symbol	Meaning	Example of Error
S	A spelling error	The answer is <u>obvius</u>
WO	A mistake in word order	I <u>like very much it.</u>
G	A grammar mistake	Iam going to buy <u>many</u> furniture.
T	Wrong verb tense	I <u>have seen</u> him yesterday.
C	Concord mistake	People <u>is</u> angry.
Λ	Something has been left out	He told λ that he was sorry.
WW	Wrong word	Iam interested <u>on</u> Jazz music.
{ }	Something is not necessary	He was not{too }strong enough.
?M	The meaning is unclear	That is a <u>very excited</u> photograph.
P	A punctuation mistake	Do you like London.
F/I	Too formal or informal	<u>Hi</u> Mr Franklin, Thank you for your letter.

Table 2: Using codes in correcting writing (Harmer 2004: 50)

The teacher writes the symbols above or next to the place in the student's writing where the problem occurs. Students make the necessary adjustments to his or her writing because he knows what the symbols mean since they were given a copy of the correction symbols at the beginning of the term.

To make students benefit from the use of symbols such as these, they need to be trained in their use.

d- Tick charts

These can be designed in a variety of ways. Here is a sample:

	Excellent	Good	Adequate	Inadequate
Interest and general force of content				
Organization, development and coherence of ideas				
A clear sense of audience and purpose				
Overall task achievement				
Appropriacy of style and register of language used				
Range and complexity of grammatical structures				
Range of vocabulary				
Accuracy of				

grammatical structures				
Accuracy of vocabulary				
Use of cohesive devices				
Spelling				
Punctuation				
Effective and appropriate layout, general presentation and handwriting				

Table 3: Tick charts (Harmer 2004: 52)

e- Reformulation

Reformulation is a way of showing students how they could write something more correctly. Instead of asking them to find the mistake and correct it, the teacher shows how he or she would write the incorrect sentence. The student then learns by comparing correct and incorrect versions. Reformulation is extremely useful during drafting and re-drafting.

f- Referring students to a dictionary or a grammar book

Sometimes teachers indicate that a mistake has been made and then tell students to go and look the problem up in a dictionary or a grammar book. If, for example, the student writes I am not interested about sailing, the teacher can say “have a look at interested in your dictionary”.

In the same way we can suggest that students consult a grammar book if they are having tense, grammar, or word order problems.

The advantage of referring students to books in this way is that it encourages them to look at the information with a purpose in mind. They will learn as they correct.

Sometimes it is difficult to explain a mistake on paper, or it is impossible to understand exactly what the student wanted to write. In such cases teachers can ask students to talk to them so that they can sort out the problem face-to-face.

g- Remedial teaching

When teachers read students' written work and they come across mistakes which many people in the same class are making, remedial teaching will then be necessary. In such cases correction can be achieved by showing the class sentences produced by the students that exemplify the mistake and asking them to put them right. It is a good idea for the example mistakes to be anonymous so that no individual student feels held up to ridicule.

h- Student Self-Monitoring Technique

This is a very simple technique to implement. The learners number the parts that they are unhappy/unsure about as they write the texts and at the bottom of the page they then explain in a bit more detail what the problem they are having is e.g. "I'm not sure whether I should say ' to play aerobics or to do aerobics' ", " Should I use the present perfect or the past simple here? ", " Is it a good idea to start a new paragraph here? ", "Does my conclusion have enough effect or do I need to add something else in?". This could be done in the learners' first language if they were at a lower level.

When the teacher receives the work he can easily respond to the questions/comments and add in extra feedback. The technique gives the

teacher a good insight into his students' intentions and problems. It also means that if the learners themselves indicate where they would like feedback, the motivation to act on that should be a lot higher. With this idea students are also taking more responsibility for their learning.

The basic assumption of the student self-monitoring technique is that teacher and student should meet on a one-to-one basis as editor and writer to discuss the draft text. This one-to-one conference is the best situation for providing feedback since both parties can work together to solve the problems that arise.

Unfortunately, the teacher may find it difficult to afford or arrange the time for an individual conference. To alleviate the difficulty, Charles (1990) suggests that students can annotate their drafts with comments and questions for the teacher's responses. The teacher responds, in return, by writing to these notes with direct and appropriate feedback. This technique not only facilitates the teacher's understanding of the writer's problems, but also allows students to play a more active role in gaining access to teacher feedback. Charles (1990) describes her techniques as a four-phase activity.

Step 1: Students draft and 'monitor' their texts

Students write the first draft, underline and annotate the problem areas for teacher response.

Step 2: Teacher/editor responds in writing to the monitored comments

Teacher responds to the first draft and replies the written queries. He also adds further comments and returns the paper.

Step 3: Students respond to editorial comments and rewrite their drafts

Students produce a second draft and add further explanations or questions to the teacher's comments. First and second drafts are then handed in.

Step 4: Teacher/editor responds to student comment and second drafts

The teacher again notes down on the first draft any further explanations that are necessary. Teacher responds to the second draft checking whether the student is able to deal with the problems identified during the self-monitoring phase. Further revisions can go on depending on the students, the nature of paper and the time available. If not, the second draft may be the final revision.

The merit of the student-centered self-monitoring technique is that it encourages students to look critically and analytically at their writing as if they were the reader. Moreover, the teacher can give tailor-made feedback to individual students.

i- Minimal marking

This technique is similar to using correction codes but not as obvious. Instead of having different symbols types of problems, the idea is that you write an X in the margin for every language error in the line i.e. two errors, two X's. The learners not only find the problems, but work out what type of problems they are as well. From the teacher's point of view the technique is a quick one and this idea again works well with surface errors. On the other hand, students can find it a lot more frustrating than the correction codes.

j- Written commentary

This involves writing detailed comments on the problems that exist in the learners' work. The idea is to guide the learners so as they can try to self-correct. At times this may not be easy or possible for them so the teacher might want to give them the correct version or advise them where in their dictionaries or grammar books they could find the correct answer.

k- Taped commentary

If teachers cannot give face-to-face feedback they might well consider taping their comments about a piece of student writing on tapes

provided by the students. This has the advantage (for some) of allowing them to be more expansive than written responses sometimes are. Students may well enjoy getting reactions in this format since it is both more personal and more immediate than written comments at the end of a paper. (Harmer 2002:114)

1- Electronic comments

A lot of feedback can now be given electronically, either via e-mail or through text editing programmes. For the growing number of students who have access to computers and do their writing via keyboard, feedback of this kind is extremely useful.

E-mailing comments to students is an ideal way of responding to their work as it goes through various drafts, since as students work at their computers they can incorporate the comments that their tutor is making, or reply to questions that are being asked. However, teachers need to lay down guidelines here, since, without them, there is the danger that students will e-mail them every time they have a new idea, and their lives could be completely taken over by such e-mailing traffic.

Text-editing packages, such as the "track changes" tool that comes with Microsoft's Word application, allow teachers or other responders to make amendments and corrections, and also to leave notes and questions on a word-processed document which the student can react to at the same time as the edit that document on the screen. Once "Track changes" is engaged, students can either accept or reject the amendments that the teacher or fellow student has suggested, and look, too, at the notes that have been attached to the document.

A problem with this approach is that it can easily lead to the kind of over-marking.

However, electronic comments and correction of this type differs from handwritten marking in one significant way- namely that it can be

acted on instantly without the student having to find a fresh sheet of paper, rub things out, or make clean copies, etc. A click of the mouse accepts or rejects the changes. Typing is immediately 'clean' and a piece of correct writing can emerge within a very short space of time. (Harmer 2002:114)

m. Correcting spaghetti writing

The teacher may often find that many students can communicate ideas and meaning, but they often write loose-jointed sentences without meeting the standards of grammatical accuracy and coherence. This kind of writing in terms of incoherent sentences is referred to as spaghetti writing by McDevitt (1989). To help students learn to be responsible for their own mistakes, students need to be trained to solve the problem of sentence-level incoherence. First of all, students must be taught what a sentence is. Basically, the process of correcting spaghetti writing can be divided into 2 phases:

I. Pre-writing Exercise

(1) Recognition of 'basic sentence':

The teacher gives some complex sentences to students and asks them to divide each sentence into meaningful word groups. Students are then asked to underline the basic sentence which can stand as a complete and meaningful statement.

(2) Expansion exercise:

The teacher asks students to expand a number of basic sentences by responding to specific guided WH-questions. The teacher may also highlight a particular word to be expanded. For example:

T: The policeman stopped the car. (When? Why?)

S: The policeman, thinking that the driver was drunk, stopped the car at once.

(3) Linking devices:

This is an exercise to reinforce students' skill in manipulating conjunctions. Students fill in the blanks in short texts, such as: although
.....

Smoking is dangerous for your health so

because

II. Post-writing Analysis

First, the teacher presents a completed paragraph of ungrammatical English to see whether students can locate and correct errors. If necessary, the teacher can underline the mistakes for students. Then students are asked to examine each of the previously marked sentences and divide them into meaningful word groups. If students find any sentence with no basic sentence or with too many basic sentences, students have to rewrite paragraph, keeping the original ideas of the writer.

n. Providing interactive feedback

Marking can be a tedious classroom chore. Teacher correction seldom brings improvement in subsequent writing since teacher correction is often regarded - by both teacher and student - as an ending of the writing process. By reducing the negative effects of marking errors without reducing the benefits of the teacher's diligent efforts, Hyland (1990) Suggests 'minimal marking' and taped commentary to make feedback more productive and interactive. The means to 'minimal marking' is by using correction codes. This leaves a space for active correction by the student rather than reading the disheartening correction of the teacher written in red. By decoding the correction symbols, students have the opportunity to identify the mistakes and correct them for reassessment by the teacher.

If teacher needs to give more detail (which is always the case) and sophisticated comments in areas other than mechanical errors, the technique of recorded commentary is useful. Instead of writing tedious comments, the teacher can just read through the paper and talk about the weaknesses and merits, recording them on a tape recorder. Hyland (1990) claims that this method is more effective since the writer “can see how someone actually responds to [his/her] writing as it develops”.

However, Hyland reminds us that it is not possible to include all the mistakes in terms of ‘codes’ and too many codes could be confusing. Also, codes do not represent all kinds of feedback.

2.2.3. Ways of responding to students’ work

Correction has been applied to issues of grammar and lexis rather than to text design or issues of content. Many students value this kind of correction extremely highly and feel uncomfortable when other kinds of feedback are offered. Yet, if the teacher wants to respond to written work as an assistant or a guide (rather than as an evaluator or judge) a focus on only lexical and grammatical mistakes will not be appropriate. Responding to our students’ work is about reacting to their ideas and to how they put them across.

a- Responding to work in progress

When students are involved in a writing task in class, especially where this is part of a process sequence, teachers will often “visit” students and talk to them about what they are writing. They may ask what a certain sentence means, or wonder why they have started a composition in a particular way, or suggest that they re-check some information they have made notes about.

When, as teachers, we are involved with work-in-progress we have to think carefully about the way we give advice or make suggestions. It is very easy to say “I wouldn’t do it like that, I would do it like this”,

which, because it comes from the teacher, is taken by the student to be more or less a command. Sometimes there may be good reasons for this, and students may be very happy to receive such comments. Nevertheless, it is sometimes preferable to ask questions such as “Why have you done it this way?” (asked as neutrally as possible) or “What do you want the reader to understand here?”, so that students have to come to their own decisions about how to revise and edit their work.

Students often get tremendous benefit from this kind of personal attention from teachers. For our part as teachers, we need to approach the task with great sensitivity, doing our best to draw decisions from the students themselves rather than telling them what to do. (Harmer 2004:113)

b. Individual/group conferencing

These involve face to face conversations between the teacher and the students so as the students don't come in cold. The teacher would be best advised to give the learners some questions to think about beforehand. Useful ones might be:

- What is the main point of your written piece?
- Who are you writing to?
- What is your audience?
- How have you organized things?
- Do you feel that you have achieved the set task?
- What specific area (s) do you want me (the teacher) to look at?
- Are there any parts that you feel not sure or unhappy about?

After the conference the learners could rewrite the work and hand in both versions. With group conferences you can let the students look at their work as a group first of all, using the same or a similar questionnaire and then intervene a little later.

With individual conferences you will need to think of what the rest of the group are going to do meanwhile. However, both group and individual conferences do at least have the advantage of helping to make the learners more independent and autonomous as well as being quite a realistic activity. It also helps to integrate shy students and show their problems and capacities as well.

Carnicelli (1980) makes it clear that although conferencing can take various forms; all conferencing has one common feature: It is a conversation between two parties, that is, between a teacher and a student. It is the conversation that yields the merits and strengths of the conference method.

Conferencing is designed to help students find their own way in writing. Carnicelli lists six major teacher activities when a conference method is adopted:

1. The teacher should read the paper carefully;
2. The teacher should offer encouragement;
3. The teacher should ask the right questions;
4. The teacher should evaluate the paper;
5. The teacher should make specific suggestions for revising the paper;
6. The teacher must listen to the student.

He also summarizes five major advantages of the conference method:

1. Individualized instruction in writing is more effective than group instruction.
2. The teacher can make a more effective response to the paper in an oral conference than in written comments.
3. The student can learn more from an oral response than from written comments.
4. Conferences can promote self-learning.
5. The conference method is the most efficient use of the teacher's time.

c- Responding by written comments

Sometimes our response is delivered in written form when students hand us a draft of what they are working on. In such circumstances, it is always a good idea to write down what we think is good in the students' work. No one appreciates empty compliments, but encouragement is extremely important at this stage.

If students have written compositions about their childhood memories, we may ask to see a draft version before they produce a final essay. Here it will be vital to be encouraging and helpful rather than judgmental. The teacher might write comments such as these:

I enjoyed your draft composition very much. I liked the description of your grandparents. They sound like interesting people. In some ways they are the most interesting part of your story.

I have one or two suggestions to make:

- * How about starting the composition with that description of your grandparents' house? It would be a good way in to the topic.
- * I wouldn't include the bit about your sister and the dog.
- * Be careful with your use of past tense verbs. Check whether you should use the past simple (I ran) or the past continuous (I was running).

Figure 9: written comments (Hedge 2000: 77)

Such advice can be extremely useful and should help students to avoid mistakes in their final version. It will almost certainly be constructed more effectively than it would have been without the teacher's intervention. Nevertheless, as with feedback on work -in-progress, these statements from the teacher may look more like commands and may close down the students' thinking rather than encouraging it. We would instead put most of our comments in question form to overcome this, for example: 'which part of your story would be

the best way to begin your composition, do you think, How important is the incident with your sister and the dog?

2.3. Peer feedback

It is always the teacher who gives feedback by responding or correcting. But this is not the case. Teachers can also encourage students to look at each other's work and give advice and make suggestions about how it could be improved. Students become, in fact, their colleagues' audience and, sometimes, their evaluators. Such peer review is an important element in writing activities.

With this technique the students do the written work at home and then bring the piece to class. They hand it to their partners, who then assess the work and give comments. A good idea is to give the group some type of questionnaire to work through while they are reading the written work. This can be done by giving the students guidelines or structured checklists that can be focused on a specific set of criteria such as paragraphing, linking words, punctuation, etc. The learners then talk to each other through revisions and comments, asking the teacher for clarification or arbitration when necessary.

Again this idea helps learner autonomy and it is positive that the teacher is not always the only audience for the written work. Peer reviews can also be very effective, as the learners themselves can oftentimes be a lot more honest with each other than the teacher might decide or dare to be.

Afterwards, if the teacher has time in the lesson itself, he could get the students to write the piece, taking the comments into account and then hand in both versions to look at.

Here is a sample questionnaire:

Now look at your partner's work and while you read it think about the following questions. Make some notes and when you finish give your partner some feedback

- Is the piece well organized?
- Are the ideas well presented and coherent?
- Has the piece achieved the set task?
- Is the audience and purpose of the piece clear?
- Is the overall message clear, coherent and intelligible?
- Does the work follow the guidelines for the word count?
- Are the style and the register of the language used appropriate?
- Is there a wide enough range of lexis and expression used?
- Is there a wide enough range of syntax used?

Comment on the accuracy of...

- Lexis
- Syntax
- Expression
- Spelling
- Punctuation
- Use of cohesive devices

Figure 10: A questionnaire used in peer feedback (Hedge 2000: 80)

Peer feedback may be referred to by many terms such as peer evaluation, peer critiquing, peer editing or peer response (Keh, 1989). Yet all of these names refer to the same kind of activity:

Students read their peers' papers and make responses to them as a reader. This gives writing an authentic purpose rather than being only an assignment to be graded, and, in turn, develop a sense of a divergent audience, thereby motivating students to communicate better 'stories' (Urzua, 1987).

Students presumably react more willingly and actively to the questions and feedback made by their trusted friends. They can all feel the joy of sharing their comments and their writing within the group (Lacy, 1989). At the same time, they become a better critic of themselves, for they become more aware of their own writing as they are reading another's writing. Students therefore learn more and become more confident as well. However, Urzua (1987) reminds us of how

crucial the question of training learners to cope with the task is. Students may not be able to ask constructive questions for redrafting. Surely, students must be trained or guided to perform the task - for example, to be critical of the development of ideas and organization in written discourse.

2.4. The role of the teacher

When teachers give feedback on students' written performance, they are called to play a number of different roles. Chris Tribble suggests that at one extreme they will be seen by students as the examiner.

Almost all teachers will set class tests or mark practice papers for the public exams their students are taking. The students will justifiably expect some kind of objective evaluation of their performance. This role contrasts strongly with the teacher's potential as the audience, responding to ideas and perceptions that the students have written about. Between these two extremes the teacher may act as an assistant (helping the students along), a resource (being available when students need information or guidance), an evaluator (saying how well things are going so far), or an editor (helping to select and rearrange pieces of writing for some kind of publication- whether in or beyond the classroom).

When looking at learners' work, the teacher is supposed to take on three distinct roles, that of reader, writing teacher and language expert.

1. Reader

This involves interacting with the written work and reacting to the content and ideas as a simple reader or interested party. It might include comments such as "I've seen that film as well and I didn't like it either"; "Something similar happened to me last year when I was on holidays in Oran" etc.

2. Writing teacher

This obviously involves helping students grapple with the writing skill as a whole and with its different sub-skills such as focusing on genre, working on text organization and coherence, helping with discourse makers and linking words, grammatical skills, etc.

Remember that we cannot take for granted that students are good writers in their own language. Neither can we forget that the writing sub-skills, strategies and styles may not be the same over different languages. Even on the occasion that they are, it is not always easy to make the jump and apply these successfully in a foreign language.

3. Language expert

Here the teacher is in more traditional role, helping the learners with lexis, grammar, spelling, etc and correct any problems or other language errors that they might find.

Students are often inclined to see the teacher as an examiner more than anything else. This is hardly surprising since it is generally teachers who make tests and make decisions about final grades. It is therefore important to show that this is not the only role we can fulfil as teachers.

2.5. The importance of feedback

Responding to students' work-and correcting it- only becomes useful if the students can do something with this feedback. This may just be the encouragement they receive from an enthusiastic teacher or from their peers-encouragement that spurs them on. Where suggestions have been made, we expect students to at least consider their work in the light of these suggestions and may be act on the advice which is given.

When teachers return corrected work to their students, they should ensure that the students do not immediately put it to one side, with only a cursory glance at the grade and some of the mistakes. Good correction

methods include ensuring that the students understand what the mistakes are and how they can be corrected.

As teachers it is our task to make sure that the students derive as much benefit as possible from our and others' reactions to their writing. However, we need to bear in mind that not all students -indeed not all writers- are as good at editing as others. Not all students are good at letting their mistakes work for them. At the end it is, to an extent, up to them to decide how much they want to (or can) take from what we or their peers suggest.

There may be disagreement as to when feedback should be given. In a large-scale survey of feedback in L1 writing, teachers were seen to favour giving feedback during the writing process, whereas the students preferred their teacher to respond to the final version (Freedman, 1987).

2.6. Direct versus indirect feedback

Long (1977) identified the difference between error correction and feedback. The purpose of error feedback is to help students detect grammatical errors and correct them (cited in Makino, 1993). In this context, direct feedback is more closely related to error correction than error feedback. Ellis (1985) also noted that this direct method is just low-level correction and not real feedback.

According to Hendrickson (1984), the purpose of indirect feedback is to indicate either the presence or the specific location of errors; direct feedback means not only to indicate the presence or location of errors, but also to suggest correct forms. If the students are only provided with direct feedback on their final drafts, they do not have an opportunity to reflect and correct the errors for themselves; they only note the errors marked by the teacher. This is one reason why indirect feedback has received more support among researchers (Ferris, 2002; Hendrickson, 1984; Lalande, 1982; Robb et al. (1986) suggested that teachers should

not waste time giving direct feedback to students if both direct and indirect feedback methods are equally effective.

Frodesen (2001) also suggested that indirect feedback was generally more useful than direct correction in composing. He advised L2 writing teachers not to provide correction on all errors because it makes students feel overwhelmed and reduces their motivation for learning.

Others have reported that indirect feedback may be more beneficial to students than direct feedback in editing because indirect feedback can guide learning and help students solve problems by themselves (Lalande, 1982). In the case of Hendrickson (1984), the combined method of indirect and direct feedback was considered most beneficial for the students in the revision process, because some types of errors could be more readily corrected by the students and others could not. For example, if students make an error concerning a noun editing they can correct their own error by using the cues that a teacher gives, or by referring to a grammar book.

However, they may have more trouble choosing appropriate words in context and using acceptable sentence structures if only the locations of errors are indicated without any guidance as to how to correct the forms as shown in the study of Ferris et al. (2001). Depending on their linguistic competence and exposure to language use, students have differing levels of difficulty when asked to correct errors if teachers do not give them enough information.

Supposing indirect feedback is superior to direct feedback for pedagogical reasons, the next issue may be the level of explicitness or salience of indirect feedback (Ferris et al, 2001). However, there have only been a few studies performed that examine the effectiveness of indirect feedback across levels of explicitness.

In a study of 134 Japanese EFL students, Robb et al. (1986) explored whether the salience of indirect feedback influenced students' accuracy, fluency, and syntactic complexity. They classified indirect feedback into three subcategories: coded, non-coded, and marginal feedback. First, coded feedback is a method in which teachers provide a coding scheme that indicates the types of student errors, such as noun ending and tenses, etc. Students are supposed to correct the errors themselves. Second, non-coded feedback only marks the location of the errors by underlining or circling them; teachers do not specify the error types or correct forms. Third, marginal feedback signals the number of errors per line by writing in the margin.

The students have to both discover and correct their errors. It is reasonable to consider marginal feedback the most challenging method for ESL writers. Contrary to this expectation, Robb et al. (1986) found no significant difference in the accuracy of students' writing among the two indirect feedback groups or the direct feedback group.

The researchers noted that it was not worthwhile to provide full detailed feedback about the students' errors if less salient feedback had the same effect as full feedback. The central issue addressed in this study was the improvement of accuracy by attending to various types of feedback treatment. Again, this study added more evidence that students' accuracy does not improve much over a short period of time (in this case, only 7 months of class).

On the other hand, Ferris et al. (2001) more directly examined the impact of indirect feedback across levels of explicitness focusing on students' self-editing ability. They investigated how explicit error feedback needed to be in order for it to help ESL writers' self-correction ability. The subjects were 75 ESL students who were enrolled in a writing class at California State University, Sacramento. The students

were randomly assigned to three groups: one experimental group with coded feedback, one experimental group with non-coded feedback, and one control group with no feedback.

Once again, it was expected that non-coded feedback would be more difficult for the students to use in correcting their texts. However, similar to the study of Robb et al. (1986), they found no significant difference in a 20-minute in-class self-correction activity between the coded feedback group and the group that had received non-coded feedback. As a result, Ferris (2001) cautions that though her previous studies showed that less explicit feedback may be equally effective in the short term, this strategy may not give sufficient input to help students acquire linguistic structures and reduce error over time. Furthermore, Ferris suggests that if the teacher provides students with a clear and consistent coded feedback, students may show more progress in the long run than if errors are simply underlined, but there has been little research undertaken to support this hypothesis to date.

2.7. Perspectives regarding students' responses

As previously discussed, there have been a lot of discrepancies among researchers as to the effect of error treatment. Zamel (1985) noted that teachers focused mostly on sentence-level grammatical errors and their comments were mostly vague and prescriptive. Other researchers warned about the negative aspect of overt error correction in terms of the quality of subsequent essays and students attitudes towards writing (Hendrickson, 1977; Semke, 1984).

Then, what about students' preferences? Do ESL students want to receive error correction or are they offended by it? It is true that Truscott's argument (1996) that teachers' decision making should not be based only on students' preferences. However, teachers still need to listen to students' voices not because they should follow their opinions

but because they should understand what their students expect in class. It may reduce the conflict between the teacher and the students.

One of the first researchers who attempted to illuminate students' perspectives of error treatment was Cohen (1987). Before that, researchers had focused on the nature and the most effective types of error feedback. In a very extensive survey of 217 students from New York State University, Cohen reported that many students consider the teacher's feedback valuable for improving their writing.

Radecki & Swale (1988) examined what attitudes students have toward different types of feedback along with their role as learners in the process of writing. Fifty-nine ESL students of various backgrounds and levels were surveyed and eight of them were interviewed. The students were divided into "receptor", "semi-receptor", and "resister" groups depending on their attitude toward teacher feedback. In the case of receptors and semi-receptors, both groups preferred integrated types of feedback comments covering both content and grammatical accuracy. As to the role of students and teachers, these two groups responded that both sides have responsibility in the process of error correction. Overall, the respondents showed positive and appreciative reactions to error correction. Regarding feedback types, many students preferred direct correction of all errors. The same result was recently reported by Chandler (2003).

Most researchers examined students' responses to general teacher feedback including content and forms. Leki (1991) focused more on the error correction issue, surveying 100 college-level ESL students in a U.S institution. She found that ESL students were very concerned about grammatical accuracy in writing. The majority of the students (70%) responded that they favored comprehensive error correction, not selective correction in which only serious errors were marked by

teachers. These students preferred indirect to indirect error correction. They felt that they could learn more when they had an opportunity to correct errors after their errors were marked by their teachers. Chandler (2003) also reported similar students' responses as to feedback preferences.

Enginarlar's (1993) replication study of Radecki et al. (1988) surveyed 47 freshman-level EFL students in Turkey. Positive feelings toward teacher feedback were found, and student responses were very similar to those of Radecki et al. (1988). The most important implication of this study was its emphasis on a problem-solving approach to revision as a collaborative effort between teachers and students.

In a study of Hedgcock & Lefkowitz (1996), students preferred a combined type of written comment and individual conference. These researchers also found substantially different attitudes between ESL and foreign language (EFL) student learners in motivations for writing and attitudes toward feedback. EFL students preferred form-focused feedback whereas ESL students wanted feedback on both content and form. Also, the ESL writers specifically disliked the red pen which was most frequently used in marking errors.

Ferris (1995b) first separated students' reactions to feedback on preliminary drafts versus final drafts. Her findings showed that students were very appreciative of teacher feedback and considered it valuable.

Based on literature about students' responses to error correction, Ferris (2002) critically reviewed and summarized studies regarding students' responses to feedback.

*Students feel that teacher feedback on grammar and errors is extremely important to their progress as writers.

*Students in the most recent studies also see value in other types of teacher feedback (on ideas and organization).

*Student writers mostly favor comprehensive teacher marking of errors.

*Student writers, when given a choice of teacher marking strategies, tend to prefer that teachers mark errors and give those strategies for correcting them over either direct correction of errors or less explicit indirect methods.

*Students sometimes found teachers' marking systems confusing or cumbersome (Ferris 2000: 33-34)

Even though some researchers used to speculate that L2 students had negative feelings towards error correction (Semke,1984), the findings of empirical studies have shown that most students want to receive error correction and consider it very helpful in enabling them to minimize their grammatical errors and improve the quality of their writing rather than being harmful or offensive. Of course, students' preferences and opinions cannot be a major factor determining teacher's feedback as Truscott (1996) argued. Nonetheless, everyone would agree with the fact that teachers should consider students' needs in their decision-making process.

Based on the previously cited research, if teachers understand the students' strengths and weaknesses and provide appropriate feedback, teacher feedback appears to help students' self-correction ability, at least in the short-term. Regarding the level of explicitness of feedback, more research is required to verify the findings in the study by Ferris et al. (2001) and to apply to ESL and EFL students as well as immigrant and international student populations. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to examine the effect of coded feedback on students' performance in writing.

Also, students' level of proficiency may affect their success in editing their own errors (Hendrickson, 1984; Rapp, 1988). As the results

of the study by Rapp (1988) show, more proficient students might better detect and correct errors by themselves.

2.8. Comparing instructor and student preferences

How to respond to student writing is a controversial topic in second language writing instruction and theory. Several studies have investigated the effects of various types of teacher feedback on students' writing skills, but little research has explored instructors' and students' preferences for feedback and error correction.

Preferences are important; if teachers and students both understand the purpose of certain correction techniques and agree on their use, feedback is more likely to be productive. Conversely, if teachers and students have mutually exclusive ideas regarding correction techniques, the result will most likely be feedback that is ineffective and, in the worst case, discouraging for students who are learning to write in their second language. Here we will compare the preferences for error correction and paper-marking techniques of EFL university instructors with the preferences of their students. In addition, some implications for classroom teaching will be discussed.

Even though the research evidence on the effects of error correction on students' writing skills is far from conclusive (Ferris 1999, 2004; Huntley 1992; Leki 1990), several research studies investigating the effects of different types of feedback on second language students' writing have suggested that explicit error correction of surface-level errors (spelling, punctuation, grammar) seems to be generally ineffective (Huntley; 1992; Truscott, 1996). Truscott goes even farther to conclude that this type of correction should be abandoned in second language writing classes because it can have harmful effects.

On the other hand, the research generally does advocate feedback on the student writer's handling of content and organization. There is

evidence that such feedback is necessary and does result in improving student writing (Fathman and Whalley 1990; Huntley 1992; Kepner 1991). Huntley (1992) maintains that feedback on content and organization should be provided to students while feedback on form should be avoided, and she recommends that second language teachers incorporate peer reviews and student-teacher conferences in their teaching as two valuable alternative feedback methods to traditional error correction.

2.8.1. Teacher preferences for error correction and feedback

In spite of the research evidence pointing to the futility of surface-level error correction, the relatively few studies that have investigated second language instructors' and students' preferences for feedback to writing suggest that surface-level correction is often what students want and expect from their teachers. For instance, based on a survey of 59 ESL students' attitudes towards feedback on their written work, Radecki and Swales (1988) concluded that if ESL teachers do not correct all surface errors they might lose credibility with their students.

In a similar survey of 100 ESL students' preferences for error correction, Leki (1991) found that students equate good writing in English with error-free writing and that they expect and want all errors in their papers to be corrected. Additionally, in a survey of 47 EFL students' attitudes towards classroom feedback procedures, Enginarlar (1993) reported that students perceive surface-level error correction as effective teacher feedback.

Saito (1994) and Ferris (1995) also reached similar conclusions based on their respective surveys of students' attitudes towards feedback in an ESL context.

Regarding teachers' preferences, Kern (1995) compared Foreign Language (FL) students' beliefs about language learning with those of

their teachers and found that students held beliefs about pronunciation, error correction, and the importance of learning grammar and vocabulary that were different from their instructors' beliefs. Moreover, in a study investigating 824 FL students' and 92 FL teachers' beliefs about error correction and the benefit of a focus on form in language learning, Schulz (1996) reported some discrepancies among teachers as well as between teachers and students.

Specifically, students were generally more receptive to receiving corrective feedback in both written and spoken language than were teachers. A follow-up study that compared the 1996 data with responses elicited from 607 FL students and 122 teachers in Colombia revealed relatively high agreement between students as a group and teachers as a group across cultures on most questions (Schulz 2001). However, several differences were again evident between student and teacher beliefs within each culture.

Such discrepancies about corrective feedback between students and teachers may obviously cause miscommunication and result in unsuccessful teaching and learning; therefore, it is especially important to continue to explore this area of research in ESL and EFL writing.

2.8.2.Examining instructor and student preferences

This section will discuss the results of a study exploring EFL university instructors' preferences for error correction and paper marking techniques and their beliefs about what constitutes effective feedback to writing; instructors' preferences and beliefs will be compared to those of their students.

Participants

The participants in the study were 14 female EFL instructors at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in Lebanon. AUB offers an intensive English course, English 100, in addition to a series of three

courses in English language skills: English 102 (Enrichment Course in English), English 203 (Academic English), and English 204 (Advanced Academic English). These courses provide training in both oral and written communication, with an emphasis on the reading, writing, and research skills required of university students.

Twelve teachers stated that their native language is Arabic, while the remaining two specified English as their native language. Ten of the instructors have taught EFL for more than ten years, one for six years, and the remaining three for less than five years. In addition, 12 of the instructors stated that they regularly attend teacher-training workshops. Finally, all instructors hold an M.A. degree in Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) or a related field; two are currently studying for a Ph.D., and one has already obtained a Ph.D. in TEFL.

Survey instrument

After background information was obtained from the instructors, they were administered a four-part questionnaire based on Leki's *Survey of ESL Students' Preferences for Error Correction* (1991), which was adapted to obtain the preferences of EFL teachers. According to Leki (1991), the original survey would have been more effective if it had specified which draft of a piece of writing was being referred to; therefore, an effort was made in this study to include questionnaire items referring to both first and final drafts. The instrument aims to explore attitudes towards feedback of various features of students' writing, such as content, organization, grammar, vocabulary choice, and writing style, as well as preferences for various teacher paper-marking techniques.

Data collection

A questionnaire was sent to 34 instructors by mail during the second half of the 2003-2004 Fall Semester, and 14 instructors returned completed questionnaires.

A matching student version of the questionnaire was administered at the same time to 156 students enrolled in English language classes at AUB; results of the student survey appear in Diab (2005) and are compared to the instructors' responses discussed in this article.

Results and discussion

The comparison of teacher preferences with those of their students are presented and discussed according to the following three categories:

1. Degree of preference for accuracy in students' writing
2. Beliefs about the relative importance of various writing features
3. Degree of preference for paper-marking techniques

2.8.3. Teachers' preferences for accuracy in students' writing

According to teachers' responses twelve of the 14 EFL instructors agree that it is important that their students have as few errors as possible in their written work, and ten feel that error-free writing is also important to their students. Since 90% of the EFL students in Diab's (2005) student survey state that it is important to have as few errors as possible in their written work, and 77% indicate that fewer errors are important to their English teachers as well, the instructors and students seem to be in agreement regarding accuracy in student writing.

2.8.4. Teachers' beliefs about the relative importance of various writing features

The instructors' responses reveal that they are divided in their beliefs about the relative importance of grammar, spelling, and punctuation when responding to a first draft. Concerning the remaining

features, most instructors agree that it is important to respond to vocabulary choice, organization, writing style, and ideas on a first draft.

Instructors' responses regarding a final draft are similar to those regarding a first draft, except for the surface-level features; interestingly, most instructors agree that the teacher should correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors when responding to a final draft. In general, these teachers respond to more errors on a final draft than on a first draft and, in particular, they respond to more surface-level errors on a final draft than on a first one.

It seems that these instructors believe such errors are not worth attending to when responding to a student's first draft, while in response to a final draft, which the student will not presumably revise further, the student may as well know the correct structure.

In their responses to the same questionnaire items, a slight majority of students feel that correction of grammar errors is more important than correction of other features.

There is minimal variation in the students' responses regarding first and final drafts, and in both cases they generally agree that the teacher should respond to surface-level errors.

The teachers, however, either disagree or are neutral about responding to such errors in a first draft. Thus, there is obviously some discrepancy between instructors' and students' views regarding what writing features should be responded to and how to offer feedback to a first draft as opposed to a final draft.

Moreover, only one instructor states that students read every teacher mark or comment on their writing carefully and six believe that students look at some comments more carefully than at others; in contrast, 63% of the students state that they read every mark/ comment carefully,

while only 19% stated that they look at some comments more carefully than others (Diab 2005).

In addition, the instructors' responses reveal that these EFL writing teachers believe that their students treat various writing features such as grammar, vocabulary choice, content, and style equally, while the students' responses to the same item exhibit a different belief regarding the importance of various features in their writing. More specifically, most students regard comments on the writing style and on the ideas expressed in the paper as the most important teacher marks they look at; slightly fewer students regard organization, vocabulary choice, and grammar as most important, and a few students regard comments on spelling and punctuation as important, indicating some discrepancy between students' and teachers' beliefs and expectations about feedback to writing.

2.8.5. Teachers' preferences for paper-marking techniques

The instructors' preferences for such paper-marking techniques as proofreading symbols and a red-colored pen are fairly divided, with nearly half of the teachers having no opinion on either marking technique. Only two instructors agree that using a red-colored pen is necessary in responding to either a first or a final draft, which contrasts with students' preferences: around half of them state that the teacher should always use a red pen when responding to either a first or a final draft.

Moreover, none of the EFL instructors prefer "crossing out what is incorrect and writing the correct word or structure" as the best technique to mark errors in a first draft, while 11 prefer "showing where the error is and giving a clue about how to correct it" as the best technique.

In comparison, nearly half of the students surveyed also prefer the technique of providing clues to errors in response to a first draft.

However, regarding preferences for pointing out errors in a final draft, there is somewhat more discrepancy among instructors' views, here instructors did not generally choose one technique from among those listed, and some of them added various techniques they use when correcting a final draft, such as providing comments on general strengths and weaknesses, using a checklist, and commenting on the improvement made since the first draft. In comparison, 57% of the students prefer "crossing out what is incorrect and writing the correct word or structure" as the best technique for responding to a final draft.

Additionally, in response to either a first or final draft, very few students think that simply marking the error, or ignoring errors completely while focusing on ideas are the best teacher feedback techniques.

Thus, there seems to be considerable discrepancy between instructors' and students' preferences for feedback techniques to point out errors on a final draft.

Regarding instructors' preferences for feedback/ marks provided on a first draft with many errors, only one instructor feels that all errors should be corrected while eight instructors prefer to correct only errors that might interfere with communication. In addition, some instructors add that writing clear comments and holding conferences with students are important techniques when responding to a first draft with many errors.

As for responding to a final draft, instructors are fairly divided in their opinions on how much feedback to provide; only three instructors agree that all errors should be corrected, and five state that they correct only errors that might interfere with communication. In contrast, only 10% of the students want teachers to focus exclusively on errors that interfere with communication in the first or final draft; indeed, many of the

students prefer that teachers correct all errors when responding to both first and final drafts (33% and 45%, respectively). Again, this indicates a discrepancy between instructors' and students' expectations regarding teacher feedback to students' writing.

Finally, it is worth noting that instructors are fairly divided in their evaluation of several sample corrections indicating some discrepancy in their preferences for error correction. As mentioned earlier, the instructors are also divided in their beliefs regarding the relative importance of grammar, spelling, and punctuation in students' writing, especially in response to a first draft. Obviously, such discrepancies among EFL instructors, particularly those teaching various sections of the same course at the same institution, show a lack of consistency that may be deleterious to writing instruction.

2.8.6. Implications for classroom teaching

Obviously, the comparative analysis of 14 EFL instructors' beliefs about error correction and paper-marking techniques with those of students at the same institution cannot be generalized to all EFL instructors and students across different learning and teaching contexts, and the shortcomings of the self-report measures used in this study, such as the ability and willingness of the participants to respond accurately and conscientiously to the survey questions, are important to mention; nevertheless, two main implications for the EFL classroom can be made based on observations made in this study.

First, similar to Kern (1995) and Schulz (1996, 2001), this study reveals various discrepancies between instructors' and students' views regarding their beliefs about various aspects of feedback to writing, such as what writing features a teacher should respond to, how a teacher should respond to a final draft as opposed to a first draft, how many errors a teacher should respond to, and finally, how a teacher should

correct or mark errors. Such discrepancies between student and teacher expectations regarding feedback may obviously be a cause of miscommunication and unsuccessful teaching and learning; therefore, as it is recommended by Ashwell (2000) and Ferris et al. (1997), teachers should help their students understand how feedback is intended to affect their writing and why it is given the way it is.

Students' need for error correction is not necessarily indicative of the effectiveness of such feedback (Hedgcock and Lefkowitz 1994, 1996; Radecki and Swales 1988); some students may hold unrealistic beliefs about writing, usually based on limited knowledge or experience. Therefore, in addition to exploring student beliefs, teachers can try to modify students' unrealistic expectations about error correction and reinforce realistic ones (Leki 1991). Administering a student version of the questionnaire used in this study at the beginning of the language course, followed by a classroom discussion, is one way of achieving this goal.

The second observation is the somewhat disconcerting finding that instructors themselves are divided in their preferences for error correction and in their beliefs regarding the relative importance of various features in students' writing, such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation, particularly in response to a first draft. Similarly, Schulz (1996) also found discrepancies in FL teacher beliefs about error correction and suggests that FL teaching is "far from a united profession" (p.348). It seems that the group of EFL instructors surveyed in this study also presents a somewhat disjointed front. Since teachers' beliefs are likely shaped by preparation and in-service development and training, professional experience, as well as their own experience as language learners, it is not surprising that language teachers may hold different beliefs about language teaching and learning.

Therefore, in addition to holding informal discussions with students on error correction, feedback, and writing, language instructors should hold informal conversations on error correction and feedback with other instructors, preferably early in the semester. A formal questionnaire such as the one employed in this study, followed by a group discussion, may provide a valuable opportunity for instructors to become aware of different opinions and realize that some beliefs they have taken for granted may not be held by other teachers. Teachers who themselves hold misconception or unrealistic beliefs about language learning can transmit these beliefs to their students, either explicitly or through their instructional practices (Horwitz 1988).

Thus, it is also strongly recommended that teacher education programs and language teacher-training workshops include a session addressing teachers' beliefs about error correction and feedback to student writing. Indeed, such sessions are essential to inform prospective language teachers about learner preferences, equip them with strategies to modify any unrealistic opinions that may be a hindrance to successful learning, and, just as importantly, make them aware of the possible consequences and implications their own beliefs might have on the language learning and teaching situation.

2.9. Areas to focus on when assessing a piece of writing

We have all written papers for some courses to be checked and graded by our instructors. We know very well that a paper that is returned with red markings and notes all over is quite discouraging for the writer. Knowing this, while giving feedback we may of course use pink pens and put smiling faces here and there on the paper but still we see the light in the students' eye fading. If our aim is to win the student instead of discouraging him, we should be looking for ways of giving feedback without losing the student.

The most important aspect while giving feedback is adopting a positive attitude to student writing. While marking mechanically we may not realize that we are showing the student only his mistakes-negative points. If the student receives only negative feedback, he may easily be discouraged from trying to form complex structures and using new vocabulary. However, feedback sessions can be a beneficial experience for the student if the teacher shows the strong points as well.

When providing feedback on a piece of writing we can look at four different areas:

1- Communicative competence

This focuses on:

- a- the organization of the piece as a whole
- b- how well the piece is presented and how coherent the ideas are
- c- whether the set task has been achieved or not
- d- whether the work is within the set word limit
- e- if the message is coherent and intelligible

2- Appropriacy of style, register of the language and general language used

3-Range of lexis, syntax and expression

4-Accuracy and control of language including lexis, syntax, expression, spelling, punctuation and use of cohesive devices

Another important point to consider while giving feedback is the amount of correction on the end product. In academic writing, the end product is expected to have:

- A wide range of vocabulary
- Correct grammar
- Meaningful punctuation
- Accurate spelling
- Varied sentence structures
- Unity and coherence in ideas

- Well-supported and explained major points.

If the teacher tries to make comments and corrections on the final version of the student paper, the teacher would be exhausted and the student would be discouraged. One alternative can be giving feedback *through* the process of writing. That is, while the student is planning and organizing his ideas, the teacher can comment on the unity and coherence of ideas. Or while the student is writing his draft, the teacher can proofread for word-order, subject-verb agreement, spelling mistakes. This gradual checking can minimize the exhaustive red marks on the student paper. Another advantage of such correction is that the student sees these comments when the writing experience is still fresh in his mind.

Another strategy for decreasing teacher writing on a student paper is to use some kind of “code”. This list of symbols which show typical mistakes can be found in writing guides such as APA or MLA or the teacher can come up with one like this:

<i>Code</i>	<i>Explanation</i>	<i>Example sentence</i>
WF	Wrong form	The <u>strong</u> ^{WF} of Hercules amazed the spectators
WT	Wrong tense	I <u>knew</u> ^{WT} him for years.
Sp	Wrong spelling	Seperate ^{Sp}

For such a code to be useful for the students, they should be familiar with it beforehand. If you think photocopying would not be enough, you could post an enlarged version on the wall of the class as well. Seeing the common mistakes on the wall may also reduce the number of student mistakes.

Providing constructive feedback to the student, using a special code for proofreading, and editing a student paper through planning and drafting stages are some suggested ways for correcting and giving feedback to student writing.

2.10. Factors to take into consideration when correcting and giving feedback on students' written work

1. Distinguishing between serious and minor errors may be a good guide in choosing what to correct.
2. You should prioritize what you are correcting and grading. Do not focus only on grammar because students start to think that grammar is the only thing that counts in writing. Most teachers react primarily to surface errors, treating the composition as if it is a “series of separate sentences or even clauses, rather than as a whole unit of discourse” (Zamel, 1985: 86)
3. It is a good idea to distinguish between writers who have tried and who have not. Presentation, obvious spelling, punctuation, and capitalization mistakes may be there because the student did not bother to edit and proofread her own paper. Ask the student to edit it before you check the assignment.
4. Lower level learners particularly will have trouble with finding the appropriate word and they need more modeling. Provide correct vocabulary choices. Most of the time word choice is idiomatic or conventionally agreed upon and it is difficult for the learners to come up with the correct or appropriate word even if they consult the dictionary.

5. When correcting prepositions, a very common error in the writing of Turkish learners of English, it is a good idea to provide the correct preposition if it is introduced the first time. For recurrent errors, indicating wrong preposition use and expecting the learners to self-correct would be a good idea.

6. Teachers should use consistent and standardized methods to indicate to their students the type and place of errors. Correction legends, lists of symbols often prove useful if the teacher first trains her students on their meaning and what is expected from the students when a certain symbol is used.

7. Written comments on content should be consistent. Teachers must use a set of clear and direct comments and questions, and also should familiarize students with these comments. These comments must address the strategies required to improve the essay and not just indicate what the teacher found lacking or interesting. It has been reported that without training, students just tend to ignore written comments on their essays.

8. Lower level learners have been found to benefit from more direct correction rather than indirect correction in which symbols are used or the place of error has been indicated. Another thing that has to be kept in mind in teaching beginning level students is, because the students are struggling with both linguistic structure and writing conventions, the teacher has to stress different things at different times. When the learners are making so many mistakes, it may be futile for the teacher to try to correct every error on the paper: it will be a waste of both time and effort for the teacher and very discouraging and unmanageable for

the student. Sometimes the teacher should wait for the students to reach some fluency, and then stress correctness.

9. It has been found that students who receive feedback and self-correct their mistakes during revision are more likely to develop their linguistic competence than those who receive no feedback and those who are not asked to re-write. Therefore, revision in the form of re-writes is a must if we want any improvement.

10. Conferencing is a particularly useful technique to show the learners the errors in their papers. Students can directly ask the teacher questions on the issues they have trouble with. At the same time the teacher may check the students' meaning and understanding.

2.11. Reconsideration of Error Treatment

Many people now understand writing to be a developmental task which can be conceived as a performance made up of a series of lesser skills, one built upon another (Garrison, 1981). The chief activity in writing is learning to write. By writing, the learner is engaged in a complex process which demands the knowledge of content to be written about, the procedural knowledge that enables the manipulation of content (e.g. knowledge of syntactic form) and the procedural knowledge that enables the production of a piece of writing of a particular type (Hillocks, 1987).

It is recognized that in skill acquisition, there is an important place for feedback. Feedback can be regarded as a means of providing information and as a reinforcer for revision. It consists of comments and information about performance that someone has demonstrated. The role of feedback as input in the learning process is thus crucial to skill acquisition.

Understanding the importance of providing feedback does not necessarily enable teachers to provide appropriate feedback. Teachers have to find the right way of providing feedback for learners. Johnson (1988) introduces two different situations in which a learner may get things wrong.

The first one is that the learner simply does not have the appropriate knowledge, and so the knowledge or skill the learner possesses is faulty or incomplete. This is what Corder (1981) calls an error. The second situation is that a learner lacks processing ability. The problem here does not concern whether the learner's knowledge is faulty or not; the learner has difficulty executing the knowledge he has acquired in operating conditions. The learner could correct his/her wrong-doing

after careful re-examination, however. The result is what Corder (1981) calls a mistake.

The two distinctions address two issues relevant to feedback practices in writing pedagogy. Bialystok (1982) argues that the first distinction concerns the learner's knowledge of the formal properties of the target linguistic codes, while the second highlight the ability to make use of the formal properties to express meaning and content. Obviously, during writing, a student needs these two kinds of knowledge or feedback to perfect the writing skill: (1) feedback towards a better mastery of the formal properties of the target language and (2) feedback to develop procedural knowledge for creating and expressing ideas. The former is a 'mechanical' issue and may appear in the form of error correcting, while the latter may be qualitative and presented as advice or questions to guide the student to refine ideas and negotiate meaning in the process of composing.

In addition to distinguishing the 'mechanical' and 'qualitative' issues, four additional considerations must be taken into account if the feedback system is to function adequately. Johnson (1988) clarifies these four elements:

- a. a desire or need of the learner to correct the wrong behavior;
- b. an internal representation of what the correct behavior looks like (i.e. the learner's own understanding about the correct behavior);
- c. the realization of an occurrence of a wrong behavior; and
- d. an opportunity to re-practice the skill as reinforcement.

The first element indicates that, in providing feedback, the teacher has to think of a better way to arouse and motivate learners to attend to errors themselves rather than rely on the spotting of errors by an 'outsider'. Johnson (1988) goes on to claim that a teacher's initial guidance should aim to help the learner from an internal representation

of what the correct behavior is. The imposition of rules and standards by an authority may work against the making of an internal representation; the learner needs to be made aware of having executed a wrong behavior so that proper treatment to eradicate the wrong behavior can be carried out.

However, the best way to provide feedback and guidance, according to point (d) above, is not an explanation but an actual re-trial of the expected behavior based on the feedback provided by the teacher. One of the advantages of such re-practice is that “the most useful feedback comes from those areas of mismatch which students are themselves able to identify” and “learn what they will from the comparison” (Johnson, 1988). The importance of this feedback system is the emphasis on the use of teacher feedback in providing input for further re-trial by the learner.

Moreover, Annet (1969) reminds us that how soon re-trial takes place after corrective action is more crucial than how soon the corrective action takes place after the occurrence of a mistake, if the learner is to take full advantage of it. The implication is clear: the need for a feedback session after performance as well as one before re-trial. The implications of Johnson’s model for providing feedback in process writing can be summarized as follows:

- a. feedback is crucial and necessary to the acquisition and perfection of writing skills.
- b. feedback should include information on both content and form; an awareness of error in the part of the learner is essential; yet the arousal of the learners to attend to the error him/herself is even more important, and hence,

c. the external standard or imposition of criteria from an authority in correcting is not as effective as providing information for learners to correct their own errors.

d. correction of wrong behavior works best when it is done as re-trial in the real operating conditions.

That is, the teachers should not aim at correction of incorrect sentences but a redrafting of the previous work.

These considerations turn our attention to the inadequacy of the ‘school’ tradition. The traditional approach neglects the complex nature and the non-sequential process of writing, and so the approach cannot provide input to students in different stages of the writing process. Very often, the teacher does not give a second chance for students to revise their work. Moreover, we should be cautious about the underlying principles of the product approach. First, the “accuracy-based” concept of writing wrongly views the production of a piece of writing as a way of reinforcing and consolidating language skills. Student writing is not meant to be perfect. It is a learning-to-write practice; the sole purpose of writing is not for marking, grading or testing (Raimes, 1983).

Teachers need to ask themselves why must there always be a certain external standard imposed upon our students without regarding our students as individual writers learning to become competent? It is surprising in the traditional paradigm to find that a teacher’s job in responding to student writing is primarily the identifying and penalizing of errors.

By responding only to grammatical errors, teachers misconceive that writing ability is just an act of becoming more proficient in the linguistic code of the target language, without thinking that feedback on content and meaning is also essential to student writers.

Even worse, the teacher who works from a product approach often ends the feedback session abruptly without providing the feedback to help the student to revise his/her work. This kind of feedback session is more like a marking session. Hyland (1990) describes the problems that “careful marking should benefit students, [yet] it often seems that it is feedback itself, rather than students acting on feedback, which terminates the exercise.” On the other hand, the traditional way of marking and correcting student writing makes the learners feel annoyed or even makes them dislike writing.

Ultimately, the teacher cannot help the learners become competent writers. Thus, the role of the teacher is trivialized. The assistance and feedback given by the teacher should not be confined to the last stage of the writing process. The marking of products should always open more opportunities in which students can redraft their work. By depriving them of their opportunity for redrafting and reassessing, the students cannot have the chance of correcting the wrong behavior and re-practicing the correct behavior.

It is therefore no wonder that some authors question the usefulness of teacher feedback (Fathman and Whalley, 1990). Research evidence confirms that conventional teacher feedback does not have a significant effect in enhancing student’s writing proficiency. Stiff (1967) claims that both terminal and marginal correction do not significantly relate to writing quality. Hendrickson (1978) finds that providing correct form on student writing has no statistically significant effect on students’ writing proficiency. In another study, Hendrickson (1981) shows that the relation of both directive and selective corrections to the reduction of error is insignificant. Similarly, no conclusive results in terms of writing improvement are found for either long or short written comments made by teachers (Hillocks, 1982). Graham (1983) reports that students who

received feedback on every assignment did not make fewer errors than those students who received feedback on every three assignments.

That is to say, more frequent feedback does not ensure more improvement in writing. Robb et al. (1986: 85) further confirms that “the more direct methods of feedback do not tend to produce results commensurate with the amount of effort required of the instructor to draw the student’s attention to surface errors”. Finally, Greenbaum and Taylor (1982) report that over 30% of students’ errors were categorized incorrectly by their teachers when correcting students’ work.

Moreover, correction of errors by teachers could be disheartening to the students and could reinforce their tendency to focus only on sentence-level problems, neglecting the discourse as a whole (Chenoweth, 1987). This could lead to an obsession with the final product, which is a serious writing block hindering the awareness of discovering what one wants to say (Halsted, 1975). Once the learner is obsessed with grammatical correctness, he/she can hardly concentrate on generating ideas and conveying them properly in his/her written discourse.

Writing teachers should not be surprised to find that ESL writers can only assimilate a small amount of corrective feedback from a teacher into their own current grammatical system (Ross, 1982). In addition, Corder (1981) and Brumfit (1980) hypothesize that students will retain feedback if they are forced to approach correction as a problem solving activity. Moreover, Anson (1989) warns us that if students’ errors are often corrected by an external agent, students will never venture to write without the approval of the agent and so they can hardly reach the target of becoming proficient writers.

To conclude, the failure and the negative psychological effects caused by the traditional product approach are largely caused by a

misunderstanding of the nature of composing and the misapplication of some traditional educational orientations (such as behaviorist views of learning) by writing teachers. In addition, not many teachers have knowledge of how an effective feedback system works. This is understandable considering that a new era of research on theory and practice of writing pedagogy began only 30 years ago (North, 1987) and that the process approach is still not widely practiced in writing classrooms.

Moreover, the process approach does not really exclude the correction of errors: Editing and revision are processes vital to the process approach. The process

Approach in no way excludes editing and revision, but rather calls for a different management of the correction of errors and of the provision of feedback. It is to the discussion of this management function that we now turn to.

2.12. Feedback as revising and rewriting

In order for the student to learn from the writing process, a more interactive and student-centered approach in giving feedback to students is required. One guiding principle proposed by Kehl (1970) suggests that teachers communicate “in a distinctly human voice, with sincere respect for the writer as a person and sincere interest in his improvement”. To put this orientation into practice, writing teachers need to help students to build a sense of awareness in themselves as writers, a sense of confidence and self-worth, to counteract the negative influence of the traditional approach. Praise and positive reinforcement could be incorporated into our teaching strategies to promote a better teacher-student relationship. (Daiker, 1989). This means the teaching of writing could be more humanistic. Diederich (1963) says that the use of

praising whatever a student does well improve writing more than any kind or amount of correction of what he does badly, and that it is especially important for the less able writers who need all the encouragement they can get.

In the process orientation, teachers are not authorities but facilitators; they are not judges or mere proofreaders but genuinely interested readers of original texts created by students (Zamel, 1985). It will also be necessary in the process approach for students to learn to be their own critic reader capable of revising their own prose without relying too much on extensive input from the outsider. The change of writing from 'writer-based prose' to 'reader-based prose' is not easy for learners. Writers need to pay attention to writing as communication of meaning and treat writing as goal-oriented activity.

The teacher is perhaps the best audience (Lacy, 1989) of the students and should work as reader-and-editor. Students need to discuss, to expand and to 're-see' what has been written down with the teacher. The teacher's role is active throughout the writing process. Teachers have to cater to a wide range of activities to explore learner's strategies for better discourse and redrafting (Brumfit, 1979).

This student-centered process-focused approach tries to accommodate individual differences among students while enabling every learner to become actively involved in the process of producing meaningful as well as 'correctly' written discourse. Before re-defining the concept of feedback for process writing, let us review the four basic assumptions about giving information towards revision:

a. FEEDBACK IS RECURRENT

Feedback and responses must be incorporated within the writing process as recursive and cycling events.

b. FEEDBACK IS INPUT FOR REVISION

Feedback and responses shall always be given as a kind of input for further revision and redrafting.

c. FEEDBACK IS NOT GRADING

Feedback and responses to a writer's efforts should not be postponed until the last stage of the writing process. Providing feedback must be distinguished from grading or marking.

d. FEEDBACK IS GIVEN AS APPROPRIATE

Different kinds of feedback and responses (e.g. content-focused and form-focused) must be given to the writer at different points in the writing process as appropriate. Taking all this into consideration, the concept of feedback can be reformulated as follows:

Feedback is an inseparable and recursive component of both the teacher's instruction and the writing process. It contributes input throughout the writing process as a means of tapping the unexplored resources from the writer. It represents a sense of audience and purpose informing the on-going writing process, while establishing a concept of collaborative reader-editor relationship between teacher and student. The feedback from the reader-editor appears as input for further reexamination and revision of the prior written work by providing optimum opportunities to develop and refine ideas, and may take various forms such as conference and interview. It also helps the writer to achieve and acquire a sense of confidence, a sense of voice and a sense of power in language while gaining access to competent writers or to other writers, whose experience and competence may be similar to or different from that of the author.

Conclusion

In this chapter we defined feedback on writing, and we explored its different kinds whether correcting or responding is concerned, and the ways used in the marking techniques, answered some critical questions. We showed the difference between direct and indirect feedback and different views of their advocators. We also shed light on student's responses, and instructor's and students preferences as well.

We explored EFL University instructors' preferences for error correction and paper-marking techniques and their beliefs about what constitutes effective feedback to writing and to compare of their students. The analysis of teacher and student responses revealed various discrepancies between instructors' and students' preferences for error correction and paper-marking techniques, as well as differences in beliefs among instructors themselves.

Therefore, it is recommended that teachers incorporate classroom discussions on error correction, feedback, and writing in order to help their students understand how feedback is intended to affect their writing and why it is given in a particular way. And just as important, it is recommended that teachers become aware of their own beliefs about error correction and feedback to student writing.

Chapter three

Chapter Three: Feedback According to Different Approaches

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Introduction

In this chapter we will shed light on the different views concerning feedback according to different approaches used in teaching writing. We will show the different views of product against process approach and cite some studies turning around form versus content.

3.1. A historical overview of teaching writing: product versus process approach

While reading student papers, teachers often ask themselves, "How can I give the best feedback to help my students improve their compositions?"

The question is difficult because there is little agreement among teachers or researchers about how teachers should respond to student writing. Much of the conflict over teacher response to written work has been whether teacher feedback should focus on form (e.g., grammar, mechanics) or on content (e.g., organization, amount of detail). Griffin (1982: 299) has noted, «the major question confronting any theory of responding to student writing is where we should focus our attention"

Should classroom teachers' written feedback focus on form or content?

Does the research in composition support the current trends in composition teaching to focus on content?

Changes in both the focus of composition teaching and the focus of feedback have occurred over time. Early in the nineteenth century, rhetoric was taught, and little or no attention was paid to grammatical correctness (Connor, 1985). Toward the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, interest in grammatical correctness grew. Textbooks focused on exercises that required students to find and correct errors. In recent years, there has been emphasis placed on the writing process. Many process writing textbooks have been published which

focus on content through several drafts of a paper and leave examination of form to the final draft. However, many teachers maintain a strong interest in correctness in spite of this recent focus on process (Applebee, 1981).

Theories about teaching English as a second language have affected perspectives regarding feedback on writing over the past several decades. Raimes (1991) summarized the shift in the teaching of writing according to second language acquisition theory. Until the 1970's, language teachers put great emphasis on accuracy and attached greater importance to form rather than meaning. During this period, when behaviourism and structuralism predominated in the language learning field, writing was regarded as a tool to practice grammatical structures. Accurate forms of language were given the highest priority in writing classes. In this framework, writing was mainly taught through controlled writing exercises and students had few opportunities to express their opinions in written English. With regard to errors, most writing teachers spent a lot of time treating students' errors and they usually provided the correct forms directly.

Since the 1970's, the major teaching theory has been Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which has emphasized the communicative function of a language. In this framework, writing teachers have attempted to help their students gain fluency in writing. Free writing was a popular technique used frequently in the classroom.

Since then, some first language (L1) teachers and scholars have taken an interest in the writing process, rather than the product itself (Faigley & Witte, 1981; Sommers, 1980). Being influenced by L1 research, many L2 researchers have applied the process approach to L2 writing (Keh, 1990; Raimes, 1984; Semke, 1984; Zamel, 1980, 1985).

Zamel (1980) suggested that the purpose of composing should be to help students express their feelings, experiences and opinions. This approach emphasizes the ongoing steps of student writing from prewriting to post-writing such as brainstorming, planning, drafting, rewriting, and editing (Keh, 1990). The act of writing is considered to be a matter of communication between reader and writer, and is not restricted to grammar practice.

The recent orientation towards a more learner-centered approach to second language learning and teaching leads to a more demanding role for teachers and learners. One of the most important changes resulting from this shift is that the teacher is no longer “the dispenser of knowledge” or “the distributor of sanction and judgments” (Sheils, 1986). At the same time, this shift calls for greater learner participation and responsibility in the learning process. From this perspective, the teacher appears to be less ‘prescriptive’ in dominating classroom practices and is less authoritarian, as learning is now seen to be an individual activity as well as a socially-shared experience.

A new emphasis on collaborative effort between teachers and learners also assumes a greater contribution from the learner in the learning process (Nunan, 1988). The learner is no longer a passive recipient but an active participant in the classroom process. In order to fulfill this active role, learners also need to develop an awareness of themselves as learners.

Moreover, the product oriented approach considers the writing process as a linear one which can be determined by the writer before starting to write (Hairston, 1982). In this orientation, writing is conceptualized as a sequential completion of separate tasks (Reid, 1982). The focus of the product approach in writing is on a composition made up of a series of parts - words, sentences, paragraphs - but not on

the whole discourse with meaning and ideas (Sommers, 1982). Thus, the teaching of writing in the product approach is a matter of prescribing a set of predetermined tasks or exercises to the students. The students are in effect engaged in a task of putting words into grammatical sentences. To a large extent, this is not composing but a ‘grammar exercise’ in a controlled context.

This approach reflects the school tradition which emphasizes the “conscious memorization of grammar rules and the student’s explicit knowledge of these rules” (Jones, 1985). Language proficiency becomes the primary element that determines the skill of composing, while the importance of discovering ideas and creating meaning is overlooked.

With such a restricted view of composing, writing teachers are often distracted from responding to student writing, as their time is taken up primarily by identifying and correcting mechanical errors. This ‘police-force concept of usage’ (Mills, 1953) not only vividly reflects the traditional belief of error-free writing dating back to 1874 at Harvard University (Connors, 1985), but also reflects the legacy of educational approaches such as, in second language teaching, audiolingualism which asserts that teachers have to prevent the occurrence of errors at all cost (Richards and Rodgers, 1986).

Hence, the teacher’s role in writing becomes limited to that of spotter of grammatical errors and reinforcer of a set of grammar rules. However, feedback that is focused on errors does nothing to help students in generating and exploring ideas in writing. This kind of response also pays no attention to reader-based discourse.

Fortunately, the shift of focus from the product to the process of writing has caused many teachers to reconsider their practices in ESL writing pedagogy. From the new perspective, the L2 writer is seen as an

active thinker in the writing process rather than a passive ‘tabula rasa’ to be supplied with or instructed in prespecified content or grammar rules.

Both teachers and learners are now collaboratively involved in discovering what written language is and how a piece of writing is produced. We no longer believe that writing is a uni-directional process of recording “presorted, predigested” ideas (Taylor, 1981). Instead, writing does not follow a neat order of planning, organizing and writing procedures. It is recursive, a “cyclical process during which writers move back and forth on a continuum, discovering, analyzing, and synthesizing ideas” (Hughey, et al., 1983). Editing for grammatical and mechanical accuracy should come in the final stage. The traditional product-oriented view of writing which regards writing as linear and fragmented procedure is thus contrary to the actual writing process (Flower and Hayes, 1981). Writers are able to make modifications of any sort on the written text or in their original plans as they review their writing. The process approach regards writing as a creative and purposeful activity of reflecting - both in the sense of mirroring and in the sense of deliberate on (Pennington, 1991) one’s own thoughts. The written product, opposite to the product approach, is not seen as an end itself.

Rather, it is the manifestation of a more effective writer in the making. The student is seen both as a learner and as a writer, and the purpose of writing is clear: a written communication with the writer himself/ herself, with his/her fellow learners, with his/her teacher, and with his/her intended readers (Stewart, 1988).

The rise of the process approach marks the beginning of a new era for L2 writing pedagogy. It renders a new perspective in giving response to student's written work and a new way of providing feedback.

Since the emphasis of writing is now on the whole discourse, the stress of language is on function rather than on form, on the use of a language rather than on its usage (Stewart, 1988), where usage is defined as a body of conventions governing the use of a language. Teachers no longer act primarily or only as the authority on writing, but rather as consultants and assistants to help students to take over the responsibility as writers. The traditional feedback which concentrates on the surface-level mechanics is inadequate in this new orientation. Instead, the teacher must attend to the various processes involved in the act of composing, in order to help students produce coherent, meaningful and creative discourse.

In the process approach, the teacher's role has shifted from an evaluator of the written product to a facilitator and co-participant in the writing process. The emergence of a process-oriented approach argues for a completely different feedback system.

Unlike the product-centered paradigm which regards composing as a product to be evaluated, the process-oriented approach considers writing as a complex developmental task. It pays more attention to how a discourse is created through the negotiation and discovery of meaning than to the production of error-free sentences. Language is a means to explore the writer's ideas. The focus in the process approach is on how to give "reader-based" feedback (Elbow, 1981), and the editing of grammatical accuracy is postponed to the final stage. By offering feedback on both content and form, the process approach is more embracing, in that it helps students from the first stage of generating ideas to the final stage of refining the whole written discourse. The work of providing feedback to students will also become more demanding. The teacher has two roles to play. Teachers may, on the one hand, present themselves as helpful facilitators offering support and guidance;

on the other hand, they may act as an authority imposing critical judgment on written products. The patterns of feedback and responses given by the writing teacher depend very much on the teacher's conception of the composing process and his/her understanding of learner's errors.

Product-oriented feedback is mainly form-focused, emphasizing grammatical correctness while neglecting other aspects such as the discovery and construction of meaning in the writing process. Obviously, there is a need to address concerns of accuracy and language in the feedback stage of writing. Thus, the product approach can usefully be incorporated into the system of the process approach.

Feedback in the process approach emphasizes a reader's (a teacher or peer's) response regarding the content and organization and leaves grammatical accuracy to the final editing phase. Therefore, advocates of the process approach have often argued that overt error correction may hinder the development of fluent writing (Semke, 1984; Zamel, 1985). Zamel (1985) examined whether error correction was effective in improving grammatical accuracy in compositions by comparing students who had been given correction on grammar with those who had been provided with feedback on content only. She reported that no significant difference was found in accuracy of composing between the two groups throughout the experimental period. However, students who were given only content feedback were superior to those who were given grammar feedback.

Semke (1984), who utilized a process approach, suggested that teachers should be concerned more about content since error correction did not help L2 German students improve their accuracy. She found that error correction did not make a difference in the accuracy of her L2 students' compositions. Semke formed four groups for the study: the

first group was given comments on grammatical errors; the second group was provided with comments on content; the third group was provided with comments on both grammar and content; and the fourth group had errors pointed out. She reported that there was no significant difference in accuracy of the students' compositions among the four groups after the 10-week experimental period.

Findings from the studies of Semke (1984) and Zamel (1985) gave L2 writing teachers considerable insights about the need to be more concerned with content than with surface forms by recognizing the communicative aspect of writing. However, the finding regarding the effect of feedback improvements in surface level grammar usage in composing must be interpreted cautiously. In the study by Semke (1984), for example, a 10-week experimental period may not have been long enough to observe the effects of feedback on students' interlanguage.

Therefore, even though the students did not show significant improvement in the post-test, this study could not guarantee that error correction had no benefit for the students in terms of long-term development.

Whether grammar correction is effective or not? Does it help students' improvement in writing or not?

Concerning this crucial point we consulted two opposing views of two researchers Truscott's view against Ferris one. Ferris who is for grammar correction and Truscott against.

3.2. The “grammar correction” debate in L2 writing: Form against content

3.2.1. Truscott's claims against grammar correction

Truscott (1996) argues that grammar correction in L2 writing classes should be abandoned, for the following reasons:

1. Substantial research shows it to be ineffective and none shows it to be helpful in any interesting sense.
2. For both theoretical and practical reasons, one can expect it to be ineffective.
3. It has harmful effects. He also considers and rejects a number of arguments previously offered in favor of grammar correction.

In second language (L2) writing courses, grammar correction is something of an institution. Nearly all L2 writing teachers do it in one form or another; nearly everyone who writes on the subject recommends it in one form or another. Teachers and researchers hold a widespread, deeply unshakable belief that grammar correction should, even must, be part of writing courses. But on what do they base this belief? The literature contains few serious attempts to justify the practice on empirical grounds; those that exist pay slight attention to the substantial research that has found correction ineffective or harmful. Most writing on the subject simply takes the value of grammar correction for granted. Thus, authors often assume the practice is effective, without offering any argument or citing any evidence. When someone cites evidence, it generally consists of only one or two sources, with no critical assessment of them.

Researchers have similarly failed to look critically at the nature of the correction process. Work on the subject rarely considers many practical problems involved in grammar correction and largely ignores a number of theoretical issues which, if taken seriously, would direct doubt on its effectiveness.

Finally, researchers have paid insufficient attention to the side effects of grammar correction, such as its effect on students' attitudes, or the way it absorbs time and energy in writing classes.

Commentators seem to feel that we cannot eliminate such problems through limited adjustments in the correction process, so we simply have to live with them. They assume that grammar correction must be used in writing classes, regardless of the problems it creates; this assumption is very rarely discussed seriously.

Grammar correction is too important to be dealt with so carelessly. We have an obligation to our students and to our profession: to go beyond this uncritical acceptance and to look more seriously at the evidence, at the logic of correction, and at the problems it creates. This will mean seeing the subject through the eyes of a doubter, which is what he proposed to do.

'My thesis is that grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned. The reasons are: (a) Research evidence shows that grammar correction is ineffective; (b) this lack of effectiveness is exactly what should be expected, given the nature of the correction process and the nature of language learning; (c) grammar correction has significant harmful effects; and (d) the various arguments offered for continuing it all lack merit.

Before proceeding with the argument, though, we need to clarify a few points. First, we do not deny the value of grammatical accuracy; the issue is whether or not grammar correction can contribute to its development. Nor do we generally reject feedback as a teaching method; we will have very little to say about responses to the content, organization, or clarity of a composition, for instance, and we certainly will not suggest that such responses are misguided. Finally, the key term needs some clarification:

By *grammar correction*, we mean correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a student's ability to write accurately.

This correction comes in many different forms, but for present purposes such distinctions have little significance, simply because there is no reason to think any of the variations should be used in writing classes, and there is considerable reason to think they are all misguided.

3.2.2. Grammar Correction Does Not Work

A large number of studies have attempted to show the effects (or lack of effects) of grammar correction. Their general logic is straightforward: The researchers compare the writing of students who have received grammar correction over a period of time with that of students who have not. If correction is important for learning, then the former students should be better writers, on average, than the latter. If the abilities of the two groups do not differ, then correction is not helpful. The third possibility, of course, is that the uncorrected students will write better than the corrected ones in which case, correction is apparently harmful.

3.2.3. Evidence against Grammar Correction

To begin with, there is a great deal of evidence regarding first language (L1) writing. Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) and Hillocks (1986) have done extensive reviews of this research (also Krashen, 1984; Leki, 1990). They looked at many studies, including research done with various types of students and many different types of grammar correction. They found that correction had little or no effect on students' writing ability. It made no difference who the students were, how many mistakes were corrected, which mistakes were corrected, how detailed the comments were, or in what form they were presented. Correction had no effect. The conclusion for L1, then, is clear: Correction is not helpful.

These studies on L1 learning certainly do not prove that correction is ineffective in L2 language learning; conceivably a technique that is not

helpful in the one case could be helpful in the other. But they certainly provide strong grounds for doubt; in view of their results, it would be folly to assume, without strong evidence, that correction is useful in L2 learning. In other words, the effect of the L1 research is to place the burden of proof firmly on those who would claim that correction is helpful.

So we turn now to the research on L2 learning. Can a case be made that correction works? In fact, the L2 evidence fits very well with that from the L1 studies; correction is clearly ineffective.

Hendrickson (1978) reviewed the available research and concluded that little was known. He claimed that learners should be corrected, but the work he reviewed did not support such a view. His own work (1978, and in more detail in Hendrickson, 1981) indicated that correcting all errors was no better than correcting only those that produced communicative problems. Neither method had any significant effects. A few more recent papers (Krashen, 1992; Leki, 1990; VanPatten, 1986a, 1986b) have briefly reviewed the evidence, all of them reaching the same conclusion: Grammar correction is ineffective.

Looking at the rest of the literature, one has no difficulty understanding these pessimistic assessments. Cohen and Bobbins (1976:50), for instance, examining the written corrections received by three students in an advanced ESL course, concluded that "the corrections did not seem to have any significant effect on students' errors". They found that the corrections were not well done; they believed that this was the real cause of students' problems, but offered no reason that better-done correction would have helped.

Semke's (1984) large, 10-week study of German students produced similar results. She divided the students into four groups, each receiving a different type of feedback. Group 1 received only comments on

content, with no concern for errors; Group 2 received only comments on errors. Group 3 received both types of comments, and Group 4 had their errors pointed out and were expected to make corrections themselves. Semke found no significant differences among the groups in the accuracy of their writing. In addition, Group 1 (comments on content only) was significantly better than all the others in fluency.

Thus, feedback on errors was not only unhelpful, but also harmful to learners. Those who received comments on content plus correction were significantly inferior to those who received only comments on content. Semke also found Group 4 (self correction) inferior to all the other groups. This is an evidence against the use of a technique frequently recommended (but always with little or no supporting evidence; e.g. Bartram & Walton, 1991; Hendrickson, 1978, 1980; Higgs, 1979; Hyland, 1990; Raimes, 1983).

Grammar correction's uselessness also showed in a study by; Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986). They used four very different types of feedback: (a) explicit correction, indicating the errors and the correct forms; (b) the use of a correction code to point out type and location of errors; (c) the use of highlighting to indicate the locations of errors without any explanation; and (d) a marginal tally of the number of errors in each line with no indication of what the errors were or where in the line they were located. In all four conditions, students were to rewrite their compositions, making the appropriate changes. At the end of the course, the authors found no significant differences in students' writing ability.

Robb et al.'s (1986) study could have been made clearer and convincing by the inclusion of a fifth group, which would have received no feedback of any kind. But the negative implications for grammar correction are reasonably clear nonetheless. For one thing, the amount

of information contained in the feedback varied so much among the four groups that one would expect significant differences among them if the information were at all valuable.

Grammar correction has no value since there were no differences. Moreover, the practical difference between the hypothetical fifth group and the actual fourth group would have been small. In fact, Frantzen and Rissel (1987) found that, even when told the exact location of an error, learners usually could not determine exactly what that error was; in view of this finding, it would be extremely surprising if the learners in the fourth group gained any insights from their much more limited information, so one can reasonably treat these learners as a control group. The lack of any contrast between them and the groups that received more informative feedback thus provides good evidence for the ineffectiveness of grammar correction.

More evidence of this ineffectiveness comes from Kepner (1991), who experimented with two forms of feedback in intermediate Spanish as a foreign language (FL) courses. Half the participants received comprehensive correction on sentence-level errors with brief explanations or statements of rules; the other half received comments on content instead, written in the target language. Kepner then checked their sixth assignment, written after 12 weeks of instruction, for grammatical accuracy, as measured by a count of all grammar and vocabulary errors. Kepner checked the quality of the writing's content by measuring the number of "higher-level propositions" it contained. Kepner found no significant differences in accuracy. However, students who had received content-oriented feedback were significantly superior in the measure of content. These results held for both high-verbal-ability and low-verbal-ability students, and there were no significant

interactions between the variables. Thus, once again grammar correction was not helpful.

Sheppard (1992) experimented with two different types of feedback in a writing class. One group received comprehensive responses to errors, using a correction code, and discussed their errors (and nothing else) in conferences with the instructor. For the other group, feedback and conferences dealt exclusively with the content of the students' writing. Thus, if error correction were helpful, the content group should have suffered on measures of grammatical ability.

However, Sheppard found no advantage for the error-correction group, the results actually favoring the content group. In accuracy of verb forms, there were no differences between the groups, both improving significantly. For accurate marking of sentence boundaries (through appropriate punctuation), the content group made significant gains, the error group did not, and the difference was significant. Finally, on a measure of the complexity of students' writing the relative frequency with which they used subordinate clauses the content group had no significant changes, although the error group got significantly worse (though there was no significant difference between the two groups on this measure). Sheppard attributed this latter result to an avoidance strategy on the part of the students who had been frequently corrected their fear of making mistakes led them to limit the complexity of their writing.

Thus Sheppard's (1992) work resembles that of Semke (1984) and Kepner (1991). Correction was not only unhelpful in these studies but also actually hindered the learning process.

Finally, a few additional studies are worthy of notice. Work by Steinbach, Bereiter, Burtis, and Bertrand (cited in Carroll & Swain, 1993) found that feedback on compositions had no benefits for students'

grammar, diction, or mechanics. Similarly, Van Patten (1986b, 1988) described two studies by Dvorak, one covering a full year, in which lack of correction did not affect students' accuracy. Dvorak's research was primarily concerned with oral correction, but apparently covered some written work as well.

3.2.4. Nonevidence for Grammar Correction

It is not enough, though, to show that many studies have obtained negative results. A number of additional studies are commonly presented as evidence favoring grammar correction; it is necessary to look at these as well. However, none of them contradict the negative findings described above, primarily because none of them actually address the present issue: Does grammar correction in writing classes make students better writers (better in any sense)?

First, it is not unusual to find vague references to works that seem, in the context of the discussion, to provide evidence that correction works, but actually do not even attempt to do so. Two examples will suffice: Higgs (1979) and Gaudiani (1981). The former is simply a detailed description of Higgs' preferred method of correction. Similarly, Gaudiani simply provided a design for a writing course along with guidelines for teachers who wish to implement it. Neither provided, nor claimed to have provided, evidence for the effectiveness of correction; they assumed that it is effective.

Another work sometimes cited as evidence is Kulhavy (1977). This paper is a review of research on feedback, but it is not about feedback in language classes. Kulhavy was concerned primarily with programmed learning in assorted content areas, a type of learning far removed from the process of acquiring literate skills in the use of an L2. There is no basis for generalizing Kulhavy's findings to language learning or, more specifically, to the improvement of accuracy in students' writing.

A number of other studies commonly cited in discussions of correction deal only with oral contexts and therefore have little relevance to the issue of correction in writing classes (e.g., Chaudron, 1977; Herron, 1981; Herron & Tomasello, 1988; Ramirez & Stromquist, 1979; Tomasello & Herron, 1988, 1989). In addition, this oral research's credibility is weakened by a number of other studies that found oral (or in some cases the combination of oral and written) correction ineffective (Euis, 1984; Felix, 1981; Holley & King, 1971; Lightbown, 1983a; Plann, 1977).

Fathman and Whalley (1990) studied the process of revision, having one group of ESL students revise their compositions with the benefit of comments from the teacher, while a second group did their revisions without such comments. Not surprisingly, the former group produced better final drafts than the latter. This result, though interesting and valuable, does not address the question: Does grammar correction make students better writers?

Fathman and Whalley have shown that students can produce better compositions when teachers help them with those particular compositions. But will those students be better writers in the future because of this help? Nothing in this study suggests a positive answer.

Lalande's (1982) work appears more relevant; it did look at the effects of correction procedures in writing classes and was concerned with effects beyond the particular composition being considered. But it too actually dealt with a question distinct from that being considered here. Lalande's purpose was to test a composition teaching method he developed, involving comprehensive correction by means of a special code, extensive rewriting based on the corrections, and the use of a table showing the type and frequency of the errors committed by each student throughout the course. The experimental group went through this

program, but the control group, this is the crucial point, was taught through what Lalande described as a traditional type of writing course, which included comprehensive correction and rewriting based on the corrections. Thus, Lalande did not compare the effects of correction with the effects of non correction, but rather with the effects of a different form of correction; as a result, he found his own version to be significantly better than the traditional alternative.

However, "better than" could just as well read "less harmful than". The significant difference between the two groups resulted more from an increase in the control group's error rate than from a decrease in the experimental group's. The latter, small effect, fell far short of significance. Lalande (1982) considered this small improvement a success, arguing that the students' use of increasingly complex structures through the term would have produced a substantial increase in error rates had it not been balanced by his correction-revision approach.

Nevertheless, the exact opposite may be true: that the student's exposure to the L2 and the additional writing experience they gained through the term would have significantly reduced their error rates had it not been for the harmful effects of the correction technique. Lalande's study provides no means to resolve the issue, so it is irrelevant to whether or not grammar correction is effective.

Another study with little or no relevance to writing is Cardelle and Corno's (1981), which found that students who received correction or a combination of correction and praise on their homework surpassed those who received only praise or no feedback at all. But the procedures and tasks used, especially the testing, involved very limited writing processes. Half of the homework consisted of grammar exercises. Moreover, each test was made up of grammar and vocabulary questions (multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank), along with translation problems,

involved only very short items. The tests did not include any essays or anything else resembling normal writing. If this experiment proves anything, it proves that students who receive correction on their grammar exercises become better at grammar exercises than students who do not receive correction. This says nothing about the effect of grammar correction on students' writing ability.

A final study claiming to support correction - by Carroll, Swain, and Roberge (1992) - is similar. The authors tried to teach individual learners certain aspects of French morphology, working with cards containing isolated sentences in which the relevant word was highlighted and translated into their L1. The testing was done in the same way. Again, this procedure is far removed from grammar correction in writing classes. If the study has any significance, it is best seen as evidence against grammar correction, not for it: the authors found correction helpful in the acquisition of lexical items but not grammatical rules.

To sum up, none of the studies that support the practice of grammar correction actually do so. A number of other studies have found no value for the practice. Clearly, grammar correction is not effective. *Perhaps future research will uncover some effective form of correction,* but obviously current approaches have not.

This conclusion fits well with classroom experience. Veteran teachers know there is little direct connection between correction and learning: often a student will repeat the same mistake over and over again, even after being corrected many times. When this occurs, it is tempting for the teacher to say the student is not attentive or lazy; however, the pervasiveness of the phenomenon, even with successful students, argues against any such explanation. Rather the teacher should conclude that correction simply is not effective.

3.2.5. Why grammar correction cannot work

a- Practical problems of grammar correction

The conclusion that grammar correction is ineffective can be reached on the basis of purely practical considerations. For a particular instance of grammar correction to be effective, a large number of requirements must be met; if any one of them is left unsatisfied, it will render the correction ineffective. There are many requirements for success and many things that can go wrong during the process (Woods, 1989).

First, the teacher must realize that a mistake has been made. The well-known problems involved in proof-reading show that this step cannot be taken for granted. Indeed, Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990), in their study of feedback in L2 writing classes, observed many cases in which teachers failed to notice errors. And for teachers who are not native speakers of the target language, obvious additional problems arise.

If teachers do recognize an error, they still may not have a good understanding of the correct use- questions regarding grammar can be very difficult, even for experts and someone who speaks or writes English well does not necessarily understand the principles involved. Indeed, the grammar explanations given to students (even if teachers are experts in grammar) often have only a limited relation to the actual grammar of English, simply because no one knows what that grammar really looks like. The best understanding of grammar which is available now is provided by current linguistic theories. But even the best theories are extremely incomplete, are constantly changing (even in fundamental ways), and are in many respects inconsistent with one another. It follows that the grammar explanations given to students have only a limited and uncertain connection to actual English grammar.

Thus, teachers may well know that an error has occurred but not know exactly why it is an error. If they do understand it well, they might still be unable to give a good explanation; problems that need explaining are often very complex. Even if capable of explaining the problem well, they still might fail to do so; busy teachers grading large number of written assignments have serious problems with time and patience, problems that can easily affect the quality of their comments. Cohen and Robbins (1976) and Zamel (1985), in fact, found serious problems regarding the quality of teachers' written responses to L2 compositions.

Even if teachers express the principles clearly, students may well fail to understand the explanation. This failure could occur for a number of reasons, one being that the explanations "fails to connect", because the teacher does not know why the student made this particular mistake, what was going on in the student's head that led to the error. And a learner who understands a comment- well enough even to rewrite the composition correctly- may not grasp the general principle involved and therefore may repeat the error later in other contexts (Leki, 1990).

These theoretical possibilities are supposed by evidence, cited by Knoblauch and Brannon (1981), Cohen (1987), Moxley (1989), and Leki (1990) that even L1 students often do not understand the correction they receive. The work of Hayes and Daiker (1984) is especially interesting, in that it involved corrections by a teacher who was reported to be doing everything right, according to current theory. Thus problems in understanding corrections appear general for L1 classes. And one would expect them to be no less general and no less serious for L2 students.

If students understand, they are likely to forget the new knowledge rather quickly, especially if the explanation is complex and especially if this is only one of many errors for which they are receiving correction.

This problem is compounded by the fact that, according to research findings, L2 teachers are generally not consistent or systematic in their correction (Cohen & Robbins, 1976; Zamel, 1985). This should not be surprising; it is extremely difficult for a busy teacher to be consistent and systematic, especially if dealing with many students and with many different mistakes. This inconsistency naturally makes it harder for students to understand and remember corrections.

There is yet another way in which the correction process can fail. Even if the teacher does give a good explanation and the student can deal with it, they may not be sufficiently motivated to do so; dealing with the teacher's corrections is not fun and is often not easy either, especially if there are many of them. In fact, some studies cited by Cohen (1987) concluded that L1 students often pay no attention to corrections. And, even if sufficiently motivated to look at and figure out the corrections, they may not be motivated enough to think about them in future writing.

Cohen's (1987) survey of mixed L1/L2 students found that, when they received corrections, students generally did nothing more than make a mental note of them. Moreover, students who rewrote their compositions (and they did so only when required to) generally did not make use of the corrections in their rewriting, even when they had no trouble understanding them. Radecki and Swales (1988) also found that ESL students were not particularly serious in the way they dealt with corrections and more often not reluctant to do any rewriting, many seeing it as a form of punishment. Similar results were obtained by Cohen and Cavalcati (1990) and by Saito (1994); through in the latter case they were more variable.

In addition, students who try to write in accordance with the corrections they receive may not maintain their motivation to do so for

long, as mentioned before. Once they have left that particular teacher's class and are writing for a different teacher with different concerns or different emphases, they may well abandon the original advice.

One might think that at least some of these problems could be greatly reduced if teachers selected a few important errors and consistently corrected them over a long period, ignoring other, less important errors. In that way, students would not be so overburdened and could more easily pay attention to the corrections they received and use them in the future. Besides, it would not be as difficult for teachers to be consistent in their responses.

In addition, this approach would remove much of the unpleasantness associated with comprehensive correction, making classes more pleasant (or at least less unpleasant) both for students, who would not have to confront so many criticisms, and for teachers, who would not be so snowed under unpleasant work. Not surprisingly then, selective correction seems to be the generally accepted approach these days (Bartram & Walton, 1991; Burt & Kiparsky, 1972; Byrne, 1988; Celce-Murcia & Hilles, 1988; Edge, 1989; Mings, 1993; Raimes, 1983)

However, the evidence is not encouraging on this matter. First, various studies on L1 writing, reviewed in Knoblauch and Brannon (1981), and in Hillocks (1986), found that it makes no difference whether corrections are comprehensive or selective. For L2, Hendrickson (1981) failed to find any difference between comprehensive correction and correction restricted to communicative errors. Thus, the evidence suggests that limiting the number of corrections is not the solution.

This result should be expected for a number of reasons: first, selective correction must be consistent with learner's developmental stages to be effective, but teachers currently do not base corrections on

these stages, and limited understanding of them makes it impossible to do so. As described before, even if the research were sufficiently advanced, enormous problems would occur. Teachers would have to attain and maintain a high level of knowledge about developmental sequences, and they would have to carefully monitor (and probably test) each individual student in regard to each of the grammar points in which they were interested. This process would add a large burden to teachers who already have little time to spare.

Second, as mentioned previously, it is often difficult for teachers to be consistent. This is especially true when they are dealing with large numbers of students, a disturbing common situation. Problems of time and patience can easily get in the way, as can proof-reading problems: busy readers are especially prone to overlook mistakes (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990, found many such cases). Furthermore, to consistently correct a given type of error, a teacher must be able to consistently identify errors of that type. But errors do not always fit neatly into one category or another, so the teacher often has the problem of deciding whether or not a particular error is of the type to be corrected- a far from trivial problem, in the view of the extreme complexity of grammar.

Thus, for selective correction to be consistent (an important factor in its effectiveness), the teacher must be able to find all the relevant errors, correctly identify them as the type chosen to correct, and avoid being overly inclusive (treating irrelevant errors as if they were the chosen type). There is good reason to doubt teacher's ability to do these things, so one should expect the average teacher to be inconsistent, an expectation borne out by the research cited above.

It can be concluded that one should not expect learners to benefit from grammar correction. Even if it could work in principle, it is too

inefficient to be of much use. In at least the overwhelming majority of the cases correction shows an unpleasant waste of time.

b- The harmful effects of grammar correction

The preceding discussion brings out some reasons why correction is not only unhelpful but even counterproductive. First, learning is most successful when it involves only a limited amount of stress, when students are relaxed and confident and enjoying their learning; but the use of correction encourages exactly the opposite condition. People do not like to be told that they are wrong, especially to be told repeatedly that they are constantly making mistakes. Even students who believe that correction is a necessary part of learning do not enjoy the sight of red ink all over their writing and probably find the experience extremely discouraging.

The effect occurred repeatedly in a number of the L1 studies reviewed by Knoblauch and Brannon (1981) and by Hillocks (1986): students who did not receive correction had a more positive attitude toward writing than those who did. The uncorrected students were not better writers as a result, but they wrote more, presumably because of their better attitude. If this tendency continued over the long term, it might well result in eventual superiority of the uncorrected students. One should not neglect the importance of attitude in itself. A class students enjoy is preferable to one they do not enjoy, and a good attitude toward writing is preferable to a bad one.

In L2 research, three studies mentioned earlier found grammar correction harmful rather than just ineffective. Semke (1984) found that uncorrected students wrote more and were superior on a final test. She also cited evidence (from Rinderer 1983) that correction harms ESL students' motivation. Kepner (1991) and Sheppard (1992) found that grammar correction significantly harmed the complexity of students'

writing; Sheppard's uncorrected students also showed a superior grasp of sentence boundaries.

The probable source of these problems is, again, the inherent unpleasantness of correction. Students shorten and simplify their writing in order to avoid corrections, they do not learn as well as uncorrected students because they have developed a less favorable attitude toward learning. On the surface, that students find correction unpleasant would seem to conflict with the frequent evidence that they want to be corrected. But there is nothing odd about people wanting things they find unpleasant; the only requirement is that they believe those things are helpful. Students obviously do think correction is helpful and even necessary, so one should not be surprised that they want it in spite of its unpleasantness. In this context, it is also not surprising that students who believe in correction are still unwilling to work in any serious way with the corrections they receive.

A further reason to think that correction is counterproductive is the time factor. Students who take correction seriously will have to spend much time reading, thinking about, and correcting their mistakes, time that could be much better spent on other more productive learning activities. (of course, this is only relevant for those students who are serious about dealing with their errors; for those who ignore corrections, the point is unsettled).

In L1 work, Hayes and Daiker (1984) found that students who did not immediately understand a written comment (a frequent occurrence) often spent a great deal of time trying to figure it out, frequently ending with a wrong conclusion that they incorporated in their next writing. In these cases, it would be an understatement to say that paying attention to feedback was a waste of time.

Time problem is even greater- In fact, much greater- for teachers. In a class with many students and many writing assignments, correction of grammar errors can absorb an enormous amount of teacher's time, time that could be spent more productively (and perhaps more pleasantly) on other things.

Thus, the time problem causes the attention of teachers and learners to be diverted from other aspects of writing, such as organization and logical development of arguments. Time spent on grammar correction is time not spent on these more important matters. This effect can be seen in a finding from Cohen's (1987) survey, that most students in writing classes had received a great deal of correction on grammar and mechanics, but relatively little on organization and content, even in advanced classes. It should not be surprising that so little attention is given to high-level aspects while enormous amount of time and effort is going into low-level feedback in these classes.

On the question of relative importance, Santos (1988) found that content-area instructors in the U.S tend to be reasonably tolerant of grammatical errors made by nonnatives, and much less tolerant of problems with content. Santos hence recommended that language instructors focus on skills that most directly affect the content of writing. Leki's (1991) finding that ESL students recognize this situation is also interesting. Among the students she surveyed, two thirds said that error-free writing was not important to their content-area instructors. Thus, concern with grammar correction is harmful if it diverts class from more appropriate tasks.

c- Unusefulness of correcting grammar errors

Perhaps the most important reason for the continued popularity of grammar correction is one that has never received any explicit discussion. Teachers and researchers commonly seem to believe that as

long as there is any possibility, however remote, that grammar correction could sometimes help learners, they should continue using it (and using it generally with all types of students and in all types of classes. Of course, no amount of research could ever remove all possible ambiguity about the ineffectiveness of a teaching practice, so such a view makes grammar correction immune to any challenge.

This view's logic is never explicit, but is the product of the doubtful intuition that correction simply must be effective. The strength and commonness of this intuition in turn results from the influence of the information-transfer view of learning, discussed before. Most people involved in language teaching are aware, at least in an intellectual sense, that learning is actually a much more complex process than that. But everyday thinking has strengthened the belief that what teachers tell students and what the students learn are directly connected (or should be). Tradition no doubt plays a role as well; there is a natural reluctance to abandon a practice that has always been a basis of teaching.

In addition to the burden of proof assumption, the literature reveals several arguments for continuing the practice of grammar correction.

Hendrickson (1978), dealing with the question of whether or not students should be corrected, based his affirmative answer partly on the argument that learners often cannot identify their own mistakes and therefore need a more knowledgeable person to point them out. Herron (1981) made the same argument for oral contexts. This is no doubt an accurate statement about students' limitations, but as an argument for correction it simply begs the question, making the groundless assumption that students will benefit by having their errors pointed out to them.

Another common argument for grammar correction involves claims about the dangers of fossilization. It assumes that students who are not

corrected eventually become stuck at a low level of grammatical skill, whereas those who do receive correction can avoid this problem. Calve (1992) displayed this perspective nicely in the title of his article, "To Correct or Not to Correct, That Is Not the Question". His logic is that students will develop fossilized bad grammar if they if they do not receive correction, so there is no need to ask whether one should or should not correct grammar errors; the only questions are about the details of the correction process.

This claim has some intuitive appeal (comparable to that of grammar correction in general), but little recommends it besides this intuition. The paper usually cited as evidence is by Higgs and Clifford (1982), who made strong claims but provided little support for them. They did not describe any specific studies that support their thesis, or give reference to any; nor did they offer any numbers or any analysis. Instead they gave their considered opinion as two veterans of the language teaching profession, based on their own experience. This opinion should be noted and can serve as stimulus for research, but as the basis for arguments on teaching practices it is hopelessly inadequate. There is little or no reason to believe that a lack of concern with grammar will lead to fossilization. The claim that grammar correction can prevent fossilization is particularly doubtful in view of the evidence presented above that correction is ineffective in general.

There are also writers whose support for grammar correction is based on a questionable assessment of the research literature, Omaggio (1986) offered a lengthy discussion of work related to correction and concluded that feedback helps in the development of grammatical ability. But her accompanying discussion does not justify this conclusion. She concluded some unsupported claims about fossilization (based in part on Higgs & Clifford, 1982), some theoretical views on the development of

interlanguage, extensive comments on the way native speakers react to errors, her evaluation of various types of correction, and brief mentions of Lalande (1982), Higgs (1997), Kulhavy (1977), and Hendrickson (1980)-none of whom offer any evidence that language learners benefit from grammar correction (or another type of feedback).

Perhaps the most interesting- and most disturbing- argument found in the literature is that because students want correction and believe it is helpful, we should continue the practice (Hendrickson, 1978; Leki, 1991; Walz, 1982). Plenty of evidence shows that students believe in correction (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Saito, 1994; and for oral contexts Cathcart & Olson, 1976; Chenoweth, Day, Chun, & Luppescu, 1983; Young, 1990), but this does not mean that teachers should give it to them. The obligation teachers have to students is not to use whatever form of instruction the students think is best, but rather to help them learn. And teachers can best do this by abandoning grammar correction.

When students hold an obviously false belief about learning, the proper response is not to encourage that belief, but to show them that it is false. In this case, that will mean educating them on the nature of the learning process, on the no value of correction, and on correction's harmful effects. Changing students' attitudes is not likely to be a trivial task. Most students come to classes with strong intuition about the value of correction. For most students who have taken previous language courses, these intuitions have been reinforced by consistent use of correction in those courses, creating additional difficulties for teachers at the higher level. Thus some transitional problems are likely to occur.

One easily overestimates the significance of such problems. In the various studies in which some students were corrected and others were not, the latter did not exhibit any harmful effects on learning or

motivation. On the contrary, in every case in which differences were found, they favored the uncorrected learners. If these students were upset about the absence of correction, they apparently got over it quickly and went on to make good progress. Thus, the transitional problems are by no means unmanageable. They certainly cannot justify the continuation of a counterproductive practice.

The issue raised by students' beliefs is not whether teachers should continue to use grammar correction, but how they best help learners adjust to its absence. Some writers have offered suggestions on this subject (Bartram & Walton, 1991; Leki, 1991), and further work could prove useful. But the decision to abandon grammar correction is in no way dependent on such work.

3.2.6. Conclusion: grammar correction should be abandoned

We begin with a presentation of the extensive research on grammar correction, concluding that it provides a great deal of evidence against correction's effectiveness and no evidence for it. This leaves the question of what teachers should do in writing classes. The answer is anything except grammar correction. Truscott's arguments have no implications for the teaching of other aspects of writing, except that abandoning grammar correction will allow teachers to devote more time and effort to them. So the recommendation to drop grammar correction should not cause any problems for teachers trying to decide what to do in their classes.

What about accuracy? If teachers cannot rely on grammar correction, how can students improve their grammar? Probably accuracy is improved through extensive experience with the target language-experience in reading and writing. But this point (whether or not one accepts it) is really not important- the question of whether or not there are techniques that can improve accuracy is simply not relevant to the

fate of grammar correction. Because correction does not help students' accuracy and may well damage it, simply abandoning correction will not have harmful effects on accuracy (or anything else) and might improve it.

In other words, teachers can help students' accuracy at least as much by doing nothing as by correcting their grammar; and by doing nothing teachers can avoid the harmful effects discussed above. So the alternative to correcting grammar is straightforward: Do not correct grammar.

Finally, it is appropriate to end with a small note of caution. The thesis that Truscott has argued is strong, because present evidence and present understanding of the learning process clearly and unambiguously favor such a view. However, current research and theory inevitably have their limits, so one cannot overlook the possibility that future development will dictate a weakening of his thesis. Future research on learner variables might show that certain subgroups of learners can benefit from correction under certain circumstances. Future research on developmental sequences could possibly furnish the knowledge to provide truly beneficial feedback. But for now, at least, these ideas are speculations. Thus, for the predictable future his conclusion stands: grammar correction has no place in writing classes and should be abandoned.

3.3. Dana.R. Ferris view concerning grammar correction

In 1996, Professor John Truscott published a review essay in the journal *Language Learning* called "The Case against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes." Because it was published in a major research journal and because Truscott took such a strong position-error correction is harmful and should be abolished-the paper immediately got a lot of attention and was the source of commentary and controversy at

conferences and in journal articles. As part of a colloquium on ESL grammar and writing issues at the 1998 TESOL Convention, Ferris presented a brief paper which offered a rebuttal to Truscott's strong stance. This conference paper was later published as an article in the *Journal of Second Language Writing* 13 (2004) 49–62 (Ferris, 1999).

Truscott claimed that the error correction research in L2 writing was conclusive in demonstrating that grammar correction was ineffective in facilitating improvement in student writing. In her denial, Dana Ferris argued that the research base was far from complete and conclusive on that question. She also argued that Truscott had overlooked or understated some potentially positive research evidence on the effects of grammar correction.

Finally, Truscott had made the observation in his 1996 article that although students clearly want grammar correction that does not mean teachers should give it to them. She offered the opinion in response that L2 writing students' strongly stated desires for error feedback which could not so easily be dismissed or ignored.

Truscott's (1999) response to her rebuttal essentially repeated his previous conclusions. Truscott and Ferris agreed on only two points (a) that the research base on error correction in L2 writing is indeed insufficient and (b) that the "burden of proof" is on those who would argue in favor of error correction (see also Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998). At that point, since both agreed that more research was necessary, Ferris decided to stop debating and go and do some more research! She attempted to articulate answers to two questions regarding research on grammar correction in L2 writing: (1) Where are we? (2) Where do we go from here?

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Teaching ESL Composition: Purpose, Process, & Practice (with John Hedgcock, Erlbaum, 1998/2004), Treatment of Error in L2 Writing Classes (Michigan, 2002), and Response to Student Writing: Implications for Second Language Students (Erlbaum, 2003), as well as a number of journal articles and book chapters on response to student writing and teacher error correction.

Since 1999, she did a considerable amount of both primary and secondary research work on the issues surrounding error correction in L2 writing (Ferris, 2002, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). In addition to completing two new studies of her own, she has critically re-examined all of the studies reviewed by Truscott (as well as other studies he did not discuss) and looked at new research which has appeared since the publication of Truscott's original review. This secondary analysis led her to three major observations: (1) the research base on the "big question" does error feedback help L2 student writers? Is inadequate; (2) the previous studies on error correction are fundamentally incomparable because of inconsistencies in design; and (3) existing research predicts (but certainly does not conclusively prove) positive effects for written error correction.

Ferris claims that the existing research base does not adequately address the big question:

Does error feedback help L2 student writers? At the beginning of his review of previous studies of written error correction, Truscott establishes evaluation criteria as follows:

The researchers compare the writing of students who have received grammar correction over a period of time with that of students who have not. If correction is important for learning, then the former students should be better writers, on the average, than the latter. If the abilities of the two groups do not differ, then correction is not helpful. The third

possibility, of course, is that the uncorrected students will write better than the corrected ones in which case, correction is apparently harmful. (1996: 329)

Research questions	Studies and findings
Do students who receive error correction produce more accurate texts than those who receive no error feedback?	Yes: Ashwell (2000), Fathman and Whalley (1990), Ferris and Roberts (2001), Kepner (1991) No: Polio et al. (1998) Unclear: Semke (1984)
Do students who receive error correction improve in accuracy over time?	Yes: Chandler (2003), Ferris (1995a, 1997), Ferris and Helt (2000), Frantzen (1995), Lalande (1982), Robb et al. (1986), Sheppard (1992) No: Cohen and Robbins (1976), Polio et al. (1998) Unclear: Semke (1984)

Table 4: Summary of research findings: What does the available research evidence demonstrate about the effectiveness of error correction in L2 writing classes?

This appears to be a straightforward assertion and a reasonable starting point for a review and an argument. But the surprising truth is that very few studies of error correction in L2 writing actually “compare the writing of students who have received grammar correction over a period of time with that of students who have not.” While there are a number of studies which compare the effects of different methods of error correction with one another, it is, in fact, extremely rare for researchers to compare “correction” versus “no correction” in L2 student writing.

The reason for that is likely obvious: Most teachers feel that they have an ethical dilemma. Unless they are already sure that error feedback does not help students and may in fact harm them, it feels unethical to refuse to give it to their students simply for research purposes. Add to that the fact that students most likely will rebel and complain and lose confidence in them if they do not give them feedback

on their errors, and it is hard to find many teachers who would consider participating in these types of research efforts.

To be more precise, in her own recent review of the literature, Ferris found only six studies (three of which appeared after Truscott's original review) that actually examine the "correction/no correction" comparison (Ashwell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Kepner, 1991; Polio et al., 1998; Semke, 1984), and only two of the six (Kepner, 1991; Polio et al., 1998) make the comparison over "a period of time". Six of those studies, three clearly report evidence in favor of the helpfulness of error correction (Ashwell, 2000; Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Ferris & Roberts, 2001); one finds positive evidence for error correction but curiously interprets it as negative (Kepner, 1991); one is inconclusive because of missing information (Semke, 1984); and one provides support for Truscott's thesis by reporting no advantage for error correction (Polio et al., 1998) (see Table 4).

What can be observed here is that the studies in the research base are fundamentally incomparable because of inconsistencies in design. Both before Ferris 1999 response to Truscott and afterwards, Ferris was struck by how different the various error correction studies were from one another. They varied on just about every research parameter imaginable subject characteristics (for instance, American college foreign language students versus ESL students versus EFL students), size of samples and treatment groups, duration of treatment or study period, types of writing being considered, types of feedback being given, who was providing the error feedback, how errors were defined and how accuracy and improvement were measured.

In Truscott's (1999: 114) response, he countered that this observation strengthened, rather than weakened, his argument:

“. . . generalization is most reasonable when similar results are obtained under a variety of conditions”. The anonymous reviewer similarly noted, “this . . . actually strengthens Truscott’s argument. Replicating research in different contexts is a good thing”. Though both comments are true, in Ferris view, both miss the point in this particular instance. First, as discussed above, “similar results” were not reported in the studies reviewed by Truscott (1996) or by her (Ferris, 2002, 2003).

The brief discussion of the six studies outlined in Table 1 provides an illustration of this assertion. If it were indeed true that many dissimilar studies pointed to the same result, Truscott would have an excellent point. But it is not. Not only do they report dissimilar findings, but they are not even asking the same questions to begin with.

Second, none of the studies constitute “replication” of others by any stretch of the imagination. If similar designs (as to the types of writing being considered, the types of errors being addressed, and the ways in which improvement were measured) had been employed across a variety of contexts and learners, then we might be able to make some reliable generalizations, but this is not the case.

A brief comparison (see Table 5) of several often-cited studies may be helpful here as an example. The four studies summarized in Table 2 (Kepner, 1991; Lalande, 1982; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986; Semke, 1984) are almost comparable in that they were all longitudinal (ranging from 10-week to a nine-month academic year), had respectable numbers of subjects (ranging from 60 to 141), and examined foreign language students rather than ESL students (German and Spanish foreign language students in U.S. universities; EFL students at a Japanese university).

However, the designs of the studies differ substantially in other ways: (1) the types of student writing being considered (free-form

journal versus expository essays); (2) whether or not there was a requirement for student revision after corrections were given; (3) who gave the error feedback (the researcher versus one instructor versus several different instructors); (4) how the error feedback was given; (5) whether or not particular error types were specified and operationalized for the research; (6) whether or not there was a control group; (7) whether or not there was a baseline or pretest measure; and (8) the nature of the posttest measure (e.g., a 10-min free write versus a journal written at home versus a complete essay).

Further, the findings are different in each case: (1) Kepner (1991) found that students who received error feedback on their journal entries made 15% fewer errors than those who received "message related" comments only; (2) Lalande found that both treatment groups (direct versus indirect feedback) improved in accuracy over time but that the gains of the "indirect" group were greater; (3) Robb et al. found that all four groups (receiving four different types of correction) improved in accuracy over time but that the differences between groups were not statistically significant; and (4) Semke found no significant differences in accuracy across four treatment groups on a posttest measure but did not report on improvement over time (though reference is made to a pretest/posttest design, the pretest data are not provided). Thus, returning to Ferris earlier point, we cannot say that this group of studies either reports "similar findings" or constitutes "replications of research in different contexts."

Study	Kepner (1991)	Lalande (1982)	Robb et al (1986)	Semke (1984)
Number of subjects	60 (two groups)	60 (two groups)	134 (four groups)	141 (four groups)
Duration of study	One semester	One quarter	Academic year	One quarter
Context	Spanish FL students at U.S. university	German FL students at U.S. university	EFL students at Japanese university	German FL students at U.S. university
Main research question	Differences between groups receiving error correction or message-related comments	Differences between groups receiving direct or indirect correction	Differences across groups receiving four types of error correction	Differences across groups receiving four types of comments/corrections Control (no error feedback)
Control group (no error feedback) used?	Yes	No	No	Yes
Pretest/posttest design?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Type of student writing studied?	Journal entries	Essays	Essays	Journal entries/free writing
Type of posttest measure?	Journal entry written at home	Posttest	Essay written in class	10-min free writing in class
Who provided error feedback?	Researcher	Four classroom instructors	Two classroom instructors	One instructor, spot-checked by researcher
What type of error feedback was provided?	Not specified	Direct versus indirect	Direct and three different types of indirect	Direct and indirect
Were error types or categories specified?	No	Yes	No	No
Was revision after correction required?	No	Yes (experimental group only)	Yes	Yes (one group only)
Major finding	Error correction group made 15% fewer errors than other group; progress over time not measured	Indirect feedback group made more progress in accuracy over time	All groups improved over time; no major differences across treatment types	No significant differences in Accuracy across treatment groups; progress over time not measured

Table 5: A comparison of four studies (Ferris 2004: 49–62)

Recent second language acquisition (SLA) research on Focus on Form (in both written and spoken language) strongly suggests that adult second language acquirers in particular need their errors made salient and explicit to them so that they can avoid fossilization and continue developing linguistic competence (e.g., Doughty & Varela, 1998; Doughty & Williams, 1998; Ellis, 1998; James, 1998; Lightbown, 1998; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Tomasello & Herron, 1989).

In studies of error correction in second language writing, there is positive evidence to be found on this question in three lines of research:

1. Studies which compare the accuracy of texts of students who received error correction with the texts of students who did not (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Kepner, 1991)

2. Studies which measure the progress of students in linguistic accuracy over time (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1995b, 1997; Ferris, Chaney, Komura, McKee, & Roberts, 2000; Frantzen, 1995; Lalande, 1982; Robb et al., 1986)

3. Studies of student views on error feedback (e.g., Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Leki, 1991).

Critics of error correction research have dismissed the first line of (quasi-experimental) research because it is not longitudinal, saying that the fact that students could successfully edit their texts in the short-term does not demonstrate that any such progress would stand up over time.

However, it can be argued that the cognitive investment of editing one's text after receiving error feedback is likely a necessary, or at least helpful, step on the road to longer term improvement in accuracy. Again, SLA research is instructive here. Many researchers examining the effects of both grammar instruction and error feedback (e.g., in the form of recasts, which are an oral correlate of written error correction) report on both immediate, post-treatment student performance as well as

delayed effects (i.e., retesting the subjects a month or two after the treatment).

It is assumed that both measures are important the former because it helps to assess student uptake of corrections received and the latter because it provides evidence as to whether the input has been not only comprehended on the spot but acquired as part of the learners' developing competence in the L2. Though the longitudinal piece, the assessment of the delayed effects of the feedback, is lacking in many studies of error feedback in L2 writing, this does not mean that examination of students' ability to edit from one draft to the next after receiving feedback is useless or irrelevant, but merely that our designs to date have mostly been incomplete.

The same critics similarly dismiss the second line of (longitudinal) research because typically no control group (receiving no error correction) is included, saying that measured improvements in accuracy over time could result from other factors besides error correction.

Empirically speaking, this is a legitimate concern and certainly exposes a major gap in the research base. However, at minimum it can be said that if the existing longitudinal studies do not reliably demonstrate the efficiency of error feedback, they certainly do not prove its uselessness, either. Thus, strong claims either for or against the helpfulness of written error correction over time are, as Ferris has written previously, premature. However, in the absence of compelling evidence in either direction, predictions from the existing evidence can arguably justify the continued investigation of the issue and the continued use of error feedback in the classroom while we follow these questions empirically.

As to the third line of research, student views on error correction, Ferris has noted elsewhere (including in her 1999 response to Truscott)

that studies of student opinions about error feedback are very consistent in reporting that L2 student writers value error feedback from their teachers and consider it extremely important to their success.

As Truscott correctly notes (1996, 1999), this finding does not in itself argue for the continuation of error correction by L2 writing teachers. Students are not, after all, always the best judges of what they need most. However, from an affective viewpoint, students' strongly held opinions about this issue may influence their success or lack in the L2 writing class. Thus, the existing research on student views predicts that the presence of error feedback may be beneficial and its absence may be harmful.

To sum up, due to the lack of studies that are both controlled and longitudinal, the evidence on the question of "Does error feedback help?" is scarce (and some would argue nonexistent). If anything, the published debate between Truscott and Ferris may mislead some into thinking that we are a lot further along in our investigation of this issue than we in fact are. The truth is that we have barely gotten started.

Though there have been a number of studies on this topic over the past two decades, researchers have essentially been operating in a vacuum: There have been no attempts to investigate questions surrounding error correction in L2 writing in a sustained, systematic, replicable manner that would allow for comparisons across either similar or different contexts and student populations. Many of the studies have been extremely haphazard in their design and/or their reporting. We need to start virtually from the beginning and be a lot more careful in the future.

Although we are far from arriving at any conclusions about error correction in L2 writing classes, the previous research base does allow

us to articulate some predictions that can be useful in designing future research.

These predictions, drawn from SLA research, L2 writing research, and student survey research, include the following:

1. Adult acquirers may fossilize and not continue to make progress in accuracy of linguistic forms without explicit instruction and feedback on their errors.
2. Students who receive feedback on their written errors will be more likely to self correct them during revision than those who receive no feedback, and this demonstrated uptake may be a necessary step in developing longer term linguistic competence.
3. Students are likely to attend to and appreciate feedback on their errors, and this may motivate them both to make corrections and to work harder on improving their writing. The lack of such feedback may lead to anxiety or resentment, which could decrease motivation and lower confidence in their teachers.

So, where are we?

In terms of carefully designed research that gets directly at the most pressing questions, we are virtually at Square One. But as to positive indicators that error feedback may not only be helpful but necessary, from the vantage point of acquisition and affective variables, we have learned some things that justify the use of error correction in the meantime (for teachers and students who are favorably disposed towards it) and certainly that emphasize the urgency of more and better research on this topic.

Where do we go from here?

We need controlled longitudinal studies on “the big question”- whether or not error feedback helps students to improve in written accuracy over time. It is worth noting that researchers interested in this

question find themselves in something of a methodological “Catch-22”: If an experimental study with a control group is done (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris & Roberts, 2001), it is criticized for not being longitudinal. (“Sure, students edit more accurately from one draft to the next of the same paper, but how do we know correction has any effect over time?”) However, when a longitudinal study is done, it is criticized for not being controlled enough “other factors besides correction could have caused students’ improvement in accuracy”.

Despite these methodological dilemmas and the ethical ones (using students as guinea pigs for research that could harm them) referred to previously, it is imperative for the progress of our knowledge about this issue that the absence of comparative longitudinal studies on the helpfulness of error correction in L2 student writing be somehow addressed.

Researchers need to think creatively about ways to approach this question. For example, two intact classes taught by the same instructor could be compared over a term. In one class, the teacher could simply provide summary end notes about students’ grammar problems but no in-text corrections, while in the other, texts could be marked at the point of error. Students in the “control” group would still be receiving feedback of a sort (addressing the ethical dilemma), but a clear comparison could be made between feedback and no point-of-error feedback. Another alternative approach would be finely tuned case studies which follow the progress of student volunteers receiving different treatments.

We need studies that are comparable in design and that are reported clearly enough to be replicable, specifically studies that carefully (a) report on learner and contextual characteristics; (b) define operationally which errors are being examined; (c) provide consistent treatments or

feedback schemes; and (d) explain how such errors were counted and analyzed systematically. Then these studies should be replicated across a range of contexts and learner types. Table 3 outlines the various parameters that should be considered in designing error correction studies in the future; see also Ferris (2003: Chap3) for a more detailed discussion of these parameters and a detailed critical analysis of the existing research base across these variables.

We also need finely tuned studies on specific issues surrounding the treatment of error.

Part I: Basic parameters

Subject (students and teachers) characteristics: SL/FL, language majors or non-majors, L2 proficiency, background in writing (process vs. product), formal grammar knowledge

Sample size (including the size of treatment groups into which subjects were divided)

Duration of instructional treatment and/or data collection

Part II: Instructional procedures

Type of writing considered (e.g., free writing or journal entries vs. multiple-draft compositions; in-class vs. out-of-class)

Larger instructional context: Were students given grammar instruction or resources for processing error feedback? Did they follow their progress, and were they given increasing responsibility for self-editing?

The nature of error feedback: Who provided it? What linguistic issues were addressed? What mechanisms (direct/indirect feedback, codes, etc.) were used for giving feedback?

Part III: Research design

Was an appropriate quantitative design employed (control group, pretest/posttest, accurate statistics, confounding variables accounted for)?

Were multiple raters or coders used, were inter-rater reliabilities calculated and reported, and was it clear to what those reliability coefficients referred?

Figure 11: a framework for analyzing and designing error correction studies (Ferris 2003: 45)

In our study we focused on one big question: Does error feedback help, yes or no? But, as Ferris has argued elsewhere (Ferris, 2002), teachers' error correction is only one piece of an overall approach to the "treatment of error" in L2 student writing. In assessing whether or not error correction or error treatment "works," we should also consider and investigate a number of related questions:

1. Is there a difference in student progress in accuracy if students are allowed or required to revise their papers after receiving feedback?
2. Does supplemental grammar instruction (especially if it is tied to the concerns or error categories addressed in teacher feedback) affect student progress?
3. Does charting of written errors help students to engage cognitively in error analysis and facilitate long-term improvement?
4. Are certain types of errors (lexical, morphological, and syntactic) more open to treatment than others?
5. Does the relative explicitness of teacher feedback (direct, indirect, location, labelling, etc.) have an impact on student uptake and long-term progress?

Though there is some preliminary evidence on these questions (see Table 4), none of them has to date been examined adequately or systematically enough.

Research question	Summary of previous findings
Part A: Error correction options Do direct and indirect feedbacks have different effects on accuracy?	Yes: Lalande (1982), Frantzen (1995), Ferris et al. (2000), Ferris and Helt (2000) No: Semke (1984), Robb et al. (1986)
Do students respond better to feedback on certain types or categories of error?	Yes: Chaney (1999), Ferris (1995a), Ferris et al. (2000), Ferris and Helt (2000), Frantzen (1995), Frantzen and Rissel (1987), Lalande (1982), Sheppard (1992) No: Chastain (1990)
Is there a difference in outcome depending upon whether indirect feedback is coded or uncoded?	Yes: Sheppard (1992) Maybe: Ferris et al. (2000), Ferris & Roberts (2001) No: Robb et al. (1986)
Part B: Supplementing error feedback Does revision after correction help student accuracy?	No: Polio et al. (1998), Frantzen (1995) Maybe/unclear: Cohen and Robbins (1976), Semke (1984), Sheppard (1992)
Does maintenance of error logs lead to improvement in accuracy over time?	Yes: Lalande (1982), Ferris (1995a), Ferris and Helt (2000), Unclear: Roberts (1999)
Does supplemental grammar instruction (along with error correction) make a difference in student accuracy?	Yes: Lalande (1982), Frantzen and Rissel (1987), Ferris (1995a) No: Frantzen (1995), Polio et al. (1998)

Table 6: Questions to consider in researching error feedback

(Ferris 2003: 64, 142)

What do we do in the meantime?

Ferris paper criticized most or all of the previous research and essentially argue that we need to start from the beginning. Obviously, it could be years, even decades, before we have trustworthy empirical answers to some of the questions we need to consider so what do we (teachers and teacher educators) do in the meantime?

When the research base is inadequate as it is in most areas of applied linguistics, TESOL/ L2 composition we clearly cannot afford to stop teaching and wait for the researchers to tell us how it should be done. So we must, in the meantime, rely on the research evidence that

does exist, our own experience and intuitions, and the desires of our students to inform and guide us, but at the same time remain humble and avoid rigidity, knowing that, as a research and teaching community, we are still shaping the knowledge and discourse of our discipline. With these parameters and caveats in mind, I offer my own “best guesses” as to the ways to approach error treatment in L2 writing classes (see Table 5).

Teacher preparation Grammar for ESL teaching Practice in identifying written error and giving feedback Practice in developing and presenting mini-lessons on grammar and editing strategies
Error treatment Teacher feedback that is sensitive to student needs and instructional context Consciousness-raising about importance of accuracy and editing strategies Strategy training Mini-lessons Practice and responsibility

Table 7: Treatment of error in second language student writing: major issues (Ferris 2002).

First, teachers must prepare themselves to effectively treat students’ written errors. This preparation may need to include taking classes or obtaining a library on grammar issues especially relevant to L2 writers. It should also include practice in identifying and responding to errors in students’ texts. Finally, it should include the opportunity to develop and teach narrowly focused mini-lessons on most important grammar points and on editing strategies.

Second, once teachers themselves are prepared, the effective treatment of students’ written error must include a variety of carefully integrated components. The most obvious is teacher-provided error feedback. Providing error feedback that will help students and not distract or discourage them involves some careful decision-making on the part of the teacher which considers the students’ needs and backgrounds and the instructional context. There is a variety of options

for error feedback from direct correction of error to some fairly indirect and less informative approaches from which the teacher must choose, again bearing in mind the needs of the students and goals of the writing course and task.

Third, error feedback is not the only approach to the treatment of errors. Students may need some consciousness-raising about why linguistic accuracy and editing skills are important. They may need some grammar instruction, and they will undoubtedly need some strategy training. And they need practice, accountability, and the opportunity to engage cognitively in editing as a problem-solving process.

To summarize, these three generalizations about the treatment of error lead to six practical suggestions:

1. Error treatment, including error feedback by teachers, is a necessary component of L2 writing instruction. We must prepare ourselves to do it competently, we must plan for it carefully in designing our courses, and we must execute it faithfully and consistently.
2. In the majority of instances, teachers should provide indirect feedback that engages students in cognitive problem-solving as they attempt to self-edit based upon the feedback that they have received. (Exceptions may include students at lower levels of L2 proficiency, who may not possess the linguistic competence to self-correct.)
3. Different types of errors will likely require varying treatments. Students may be less capable, for instance, of self-editing some lexical errors and complex, global problems with sentence structure than more discrete morphological errors.
4. Students should be required to revise (or at least self-edit) their texts after receiving feedback, ideally in class where they can consult with their peers and instructor.

5. Supplemental grammar instruction (in class or through individualized self-study materials recommended by the instructor) can facilitate progress in accuracy if it is driven by student needs and integrated with other aspects of error treatment (teacher feedback, charting, etc.).
6. The maintenance of error charts, ideally by the students themselves with guidance from the instructor, can heighten student awareness of their weaknesses and of their improvement.

At the end, Ferris concluded that further research is necessary. Though it may be difficult for the ethical and methodological reasons which he has already described, we need to think of ways to carry out longitudinal, carefully designed, replicable studies that compare the writing of students receiving error feedback with that of students who receive none, as well as comparing and controlling for other aspects of error treatment. As already noted, there is positive evidence from various lines of research SLA studies, short-term experimental studies of error correction in L2 writing, longitudinal studies of improvement, and reactions and views of students themselves lending support to the argument that we cannot dismiss error correction's potential out-of-hand. But in the end he agreed with Truscott that this evidence will only be suggestive, not conclusive, unless a more systematic research program of longitudinal designs is conducted.

It is important to note that focus on form in writing does not assume negligence of content or fluent writing. Recently, Chandler (2003) reported a long-term effect of grammar feedback in writing. Her students improved accuracy in writing without changing fluency over one academic semester. Thus, teachers should realize the need to help and encourage students to pay more attention to accurate forms in order to communicate effectively. Students frequently have a hard time

expressing exactly what they think due to the lack of linguistic knowledge. Ferris (1995: 18) stated:

Though students may be much better at invention, organization, and revision than they were before, too many written products are still riddled with grammatical and lexical inaccuracies.

No matter how interesting or original a student's ideas are, an excess of sentence-and discourse-level errors may distract and frustrate instructors and other readers).

Emphasizing attention on the form of language, Eskey (1983: 319) stated: "The achievement of some level of communicative competence does not automatically entail the achievement of an equal grammatical competence". He also mentioned that the development of fluency does not guarantee that of accuracy because L2 learning differs from L1 acquisition. According to Skehan (1996), ESL students can succeed in catching meaning if they appropriately use communicative strategies that assist comprehension of meaning.

However, repeated overuse of these kinds of communicative strategies might lower students' motivation to learn correct form because they achieve their communicative goals without explicit attention to form. In the long run, it might prevent their interlanguage system from developing and cause fossilization of errors.

In addition, other researchers also recognize that L1 and L2 writing instruction should be different, since L2 learners who are non-native speakers, are still in the process of developing interlanguage, and frequently make grammatical errors (Butler, 1980; Leki, 1990). Butler (1980) pointed out that L2 learners who had been exposed to less English grammar and rhetoric structure had more trouble correcting their own errors than did L1 learners when they were asked to read their writing aloud without a teacher's intervention.

As Leki (1990) points out, compared with L1 learners, L2 students confront more difficulty in writing classes. They have to learn how to

write well in terms of organization and content while struggling with their linguistic limitation such as a lack of knowledge about vocabulary and grammar. They also experience difficulty in using language appropriately in context. That is, it is hard to learn appropriate language use even though the students already know the grammatically correct forms. Therefore, many researchers have begun to reexamine the role and effectiveness of error feedback in the writing class.

According to "the variables that determine the importance of grammar" identified by Celce-Murcia (1985), the degree of importance of the form is different depending on learner variables such as age, proficiency level, educational backgrounds, as well as instructional variables including skill, register, and need or use. That is, a focus on form is considered more important for students who are adults and at an advanced level, literate and well educated. As for instructional variables more attention on form is required in writing than speaking, in formal registers, and for professional needs or uses.

Therefore, ESL teachers who teach writing to college-based adult students need to recognize students' need for accuracy. They should help their students use correct forms either by error feedback or by a short grammar mini-lesson as Ferris (2002) suggested. Thus, error feedback might be one possible solution for helping students.

Although some scholars hold negative views regarding the effectiveness of grammar feedback, most researchers have reported that feedback on errors can help students improve grammatical accuracy in composing and editing (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1995c, Frantzen, 1995; Hendrickson, 1984). L2 learners often fail to precisely convey what they think because it is difficult to express it in written English with a limited lexical and grammatical knowledge. Therefore, L2 writing teachers need meet students' needs by offering them appropriate feedback.

Particularly, error correction is likely to be more beneficial to EFL and international students who learned English only in a formal setting. Because these students usually depend on the teacher's feedback as their main source of input, teachers may need to address error correction in order to help these students.

To sum up, the process/product debate continues: should teachers focus on the writing process in the classroom or emphasize the importance of a correct final product in student writing?

Related to this controversy is the debate over teacher feedback on content and form. While the debate continues over where the focus of feedback should be (Horowitz, 1986; Silva, 1988; Zamel, 1988), nearly all researchers agree that attention must be paid to both content and form (Taylor, 1981; Krashen, 1984). Raimes (1983) suggests that teachers should look at content as well as errors in structure and focus on linguistic features after ideas have been fully developed. In keeping with these trends, many current textbooks lead teachers to focus first on content during the drafting stages and finally on form during the editing stage.

Currently, many scholars take a more eclectic position of looking at form versus meaning, while not overemphasizing either. Therefore, a balanced approach that focuses on both form and meaning is supported by more writing teachers. This concept is also applied to feedback. Even though some researchers insist that content feedback is more worthwhile than grammar feedback, students may need a combination of both types of feedback to compose better. As a result, those who treat form lightly may need to recognize that form itself cannot be acquired automatically without a teacher's input or instruction, whether explicit or implicit (Larsen-Freeman, 1991).

There remain many unanswered questions regarding form and content. Researchers continue to test new hypotheses while teachers try new ways of responding to student writing in the classroom. Disagreement continues over how and when teachers should correct errors and comment on content.

Conclusion

The act of writing is never easy to define. Arndt (1987) says that writing can have two different meanings depending on how we use the term. What do we really want to talk about when we say we are writing? Are we referring to the product of composition - text; or are we referring to the act of composing itself? This question gives rise to the two major paradigms of writing pedagogy: the product-focused approach and the process-oriented approach.

The former approach focuses on the end product of the writing process, with its major emphasis of surface-level mechanics. The latter concentrates on how a product is produced, with its major concern on content and discourse as a whole. While the product approach reminds us that grammar and syntax are also important features of writing which cannot be eliminated for writing proficiency. We should not treat the two approaches as two polarizing dogmas of two extreme beliefs. They are, in fact, two sides of the same coin.

Moreover, the two paradigms cannot be divorced from each other since composing is a language problem as well as a rhetorical problem. Only by combining the two approaches can the aim of teaching writing be achieved: to “free [our students] from the pressure of having to produce accurate, standard English at the same time as they are generating and exploring ideas in writing” (Stewart, 1988). There is always a need to integrate the two views into one unified theory in

which student writers and teacher-readers can explore meaningful discourse together.

In this way, summative and formative (form vs. content) feedbacks become necessary and inseparable components of ESL writing instruction and are complementary to one another. Finally, the two kinds of feedback, if adopted into the writing classroom, can be genuinely incorporated as a unified pedagogical ESL writing feedback system, embracing the advantages of the two kinds of writing approaches. However, before we can reach that goal, first we need to “examine the (present) classroom authority structure and perhaps even redefine the purpose for the composition class (Onore, 1989).

The goal of combining process and product orientation will have profound effects on writing revision practices in the composition classroom. One of the most important consequences is the collaborative effort between teacher and students in making writing a joint contribution of both parties. In this orientation, both parties will be considered active participants in sharing ideas, making suggestions and doing revision in the process of composing. Student writers are given total freedom in controlling their own prose in making choices and in giving solutions to rhetorical problems.

The teacher’s response to student writing becomes a real communication from a reader and not from an instructor identifying and correcting mistakes. Comments from the teacher are reassuring to the students and the focus of comments is meaning-centered, which urges the students to think of themselves less as students and more as writers (Sommers, 1989). Errors are now treated not as something to be penalized but as a necessary by-product of language use. In this way, everything said and written in the comments encourages the student writer to take over the responsibility of writing himself/herself or assists

the student to express his/her ideas and meaning in the written discourse. A friendly relationship is established between teacher and students.

Thus, the psychology of positive reinforcement can be applied in the writing instruction and become an essential resource for teaching writing. There is no fear of whether the student is able to cope psychologically with the large amount of red markings or negative comments or the fear of an external agent prescribing every detail for the learner in the writing lesson. In this way, a better teacher-pupil relationship will be enhanced and the two parties can gain a deepened appreciation of writing and greater satisfaction with their work. As a result, the teaching of writing can become more humanistic and less authoritarian. Moreover, the unified pedagogical ESL writing should be facilitated and how marking and editing should be implemented. It also gives an answer to the question of 'curing' grammatical mistakes and the creation of a reader-based written discourse in one theory.

Chapter four

Chapter Four: Methodology

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Introduction

This study investigates the effects that content feedback could have on students' performance in writing. In this chapter we will introduce the research design and the methodology used in order to test the effects of feedback on writing outcomes. An experimental design was implemented. Through this quantitative study we intend to explore whether content feedback has a positive effect in improving students' writing. The quantitative data from a control group and an experimental one were collected and analyzed.

4.1. Context and research design

Hampton (1995:293) said: "Writing is a meaning-making process that is both complex and intellectually demanding. It requires thoughtfulness, precision, and time. It takes place on the blank page within the mind of the writer. As it creates meaning for the reader, it deepens understanding for the writer. It is a primary means of knowing"

Current theories of learning say that people learn while doing something or even by doing it. Scholars continuously argue that writing is not only a communication skill but also a way of learning and developing. Actually, most writers, skilled and unskilled, have only a partial notion of what they want to say when they begin to write, and their ideas develop in the process of writing. Silva (1990) maintains that the process approach to writing is a meaning-centered approach, in other words, content, ideas, and the need to communicate determine form. All the teaching practices that constitute this process: brainstorming, free writing, self-generated topics, multiple drafting, considering the errors only in the last stage, small groups activities, teacher-student conferencing. All these help students to generate and discover ideas, plan, order and revise their compositions. The teacher intervenes in the students' composing process, emphasizing on the

process itself rather than the product, and responds communicatively, focusing on meaning to each draft.

The process-centered approach to writing has barely been tried in some EFL writing classes in Algeria; however, even in classrooms where process writing is adopted, two problems can be noticed: (1) although writing is a recursive process, many teachers still treat it as linear; and (2) too much emphasis is placed on expressive writing, thus certain genres are overlooked. Therefore, using process writing creatively with other methods is a good tool for developing both fluency and accuracy. The key to good process instruction is that it must be built on a good understanding of the writing process and good diagnosis of developing writers' problems and needs. Although teachers of English in Algeria adopt the process approach in teaching writing, they still focus on the final product. When correcting learners' written productions, they give importance to grammatical accuracy rather than content, organization and style.

Many methods to improve students writing exist, and research shows that they are being used successfully by teachers, though on a limited basis. Thus, in the EFL contexts, where exposure to English is extremely limited, more effective approaches to writing should be applied. Such approaches include mainly writing workshops, encouraging multiple drafts of a text, and fostering peer review (Hampton, 1995). Moreover, to make writing more meaningful and productive, a balance between form and content should be maintained. In order to help Algerian EFL university students become more active learners, writing teachers need to encourage students to experience diverse types of feedback. Teachers should make students change the way they perceive feedback to turn to be an interesting stage in the writing process rather than a black worthless step pointing their

shameful errors. It should point out areas of confusion or incongruity, and include a mixture of praise and criticism.

Feedback should lead to learners' progress in learning a foreign language. That is why we opted for coded feedback which helps students to think about their mistakes and try to correct them.

As these problems are taking place in our classrooms. We decided to examine the effects that coded feedback could have on students' performance and improvement in writing. We would focus on content rather than grammatical accuracy since we adopted the process approach. In the present study, we opted for a action-researcher approach.

Throughout this study, we played a dual role in the classroom, being at once an instructor and a researcher. As the instructor, we designed the course and taught it. As the researcher, we designed the study, collected data from the students and observed them doing writing tasks. Thus, in this study we acted as a researcher and a participant, i.e., someone who participates in a social situation but is personally partially involved, so that he can function objectively as a researcher.

4.2. Choice of the method

There are methods and designs to conduct research; including research in education, the choice of the most suitable method is the job of the researcher, and it depends on many factors like the nature of the issue, the aim of the study, the targeted objectives, the kind of the data needed, and of course the sample involved.

This study investigates the effects of coded-feedback on learners' performance in writing. In order to test our hypothesis we opted for the experimental method.

Why the experimental method precisely?

The experiment is a means of collecting evidence to show the effect of one variable upon another, and is carried out to reveal cause and effect relationship between these variables; this relationship means that any change in the dependent variable is due to the influence of the independent variable.

The independent variable (I.V) has levels, conditions or treatments. We may manipulate conditions or measures and assign subjects to conditions, supposed to be the cause.

The dependent variable (D.V) measured is the effect or result.

In the present study the independent variable is the use of coded-feedback in teaching writing, we will test the effectiveness of this technique of providing feedback; examine students' reaction to it and we will see whether it is sufficient or not. The dependent variable is the development of students' performance in writing. We will focus on content and not on grammatical accuracy since we will follow the process approach in teaching writing.

4.3. The investigated population and sampling

4.3.1. Students

Conducting an empirical research on the entire population of the department of English at the university centre of Khenchela, i.e., a total number of (699) is practically very difficult and renders our attempt no more than an ambition since we can not meet our aims because of the obstacles hindering our research. Thus, most researchers prefer sampling, which is working with more limited data from a sample or subgroup of the students in a given population. Only then can data be sufficiently and practically collected and organized. Different types of research require different types of sampling. Difficulties arise when selecting the appropriate sample representative of the population meant by the study and on which research findings will be generalized.

Samples are commonly drawn from populations for language studies by random sampling.

In the present study two groups or samples are needed, an experimental group and a control group. The subjects are randomly assigned to each group to guarantee every individual in the population an equal chance of being chosen.

The samples will be drawn according to a table of random numbers from the population of the second year students of the English department at the university centre of Khenchela. Thirty students are assigned to the control group and thirty students to the experimental one to receive the experimental treatment, what makes a total number of sixty students out of (156) i.e.38.46% students registered in the second year. We have taken into consideration variables such as age, place of origin, and sex to insure the representativeness of the two samples. Students age range from 19 to 21.

It is worth to mention that the department of English, like the other departments in the faculty of human sciences, is characterized by female over-representation 543 out of 699 students in the department of English are girls i.e. 77.68% against 22.31%.

Since our population (second year students) contains more females than males, that is, 106 out of 156.i.e. 67.94% against 50 i.e. 32.05%, our sample is a representative one. Hence the findings of the research can be generalized for all the population.

Why second year students?

We opted to work with second year students because they are neither beginners nor advanced learners. Moreover, they have acquired enough background that enables them to write in English. Besides, second- year writing courses introduce students to the requirements of paragraph and essay writing, and place emphasis on the different types (narrative,

descriptive, expository, argumentative...) and methods of development (examples and details, cause and effect, classification, analogy,...). Whereas other aspects related to writing such as punctuation, types of phrases and clause, types of sentences are taught in the first year.

4.3.2. Teachers

The total number of teachers teaching in the department of English at the university centre of Khenchela is 38 teachers and it includes:

- a- **Permanent teachers:** officially recruited teachers. These are (14)
- b- **Associated:** Permanent teachers in other institutions than the university centre of Khenchela and working as part-time teachers in the department of English. Their number is (14)
- c- **Vacataire:** Part-time teachers in the department of English without being necessarily permanent teachers in other institutions. These are (10)

Given the number of teachers is 38 and among these teachers only four (04) of them are teaching writing, no sampling has been made; the whole population was taken as respondents.

4.4. Data gathering tools

To get the necessary data about the progress of students' writing after providing them with feedback on content, we relied on learners' written productions and the scores they got before and after the experimental treatment. We made use of a pre-test for the two groups before the experimental treatment under the same conditions, then it was followed by a post-test, after that a T-test was conducted to provide evidence for treatment's effect, hence to prove our hypothesis.

In addition to tests, we made use of questionnaires directed to both teachers and students to have more information about their opinions, attitudes and personal perceptions.

Our permanent presence in the department, as a permanent teacher, facilitated the task. This provided easy access to teachers and students as well, and enabled continuous contact with them and thus made the data-gathering process easier.

We also made use of observation grids during the experiment to observe the learners while performing the designed activities.

4.5. The field work

4.5.1. Stage one: the pre-test

From the beginning of the study, we established a classroom environment in which the students were prepared to experience coded feedback. The students were informed and trained to use a group of codes. The same codes will be used by the students along the experimental treatment. Other techniques were used with coded feedback such as teacher- student conferencing as well as peer feedback.

For the pre-test the students in the two groups were asked to write a paragraph about the cause that made them choose to study English.

During the experimental period, the teacher paid attention that all the session of both groups were programmed in the morning to avoid tire and boredom since students showed more motivation and activity.

4.5.2. Stage two: the experimental treatment

During a period of three months the students in the experimental group wrote several assignments and benefited from teacher feedback throughout the different stages of the writing process: generating ideas, planning, editing, and revising.

a. Topic selection

Students met in pairs to think and share ideas to suggest topics to the teacher. At the end the students would have a set of topics then the teacher organized a vote to choose one topic. The topics were carefully selected with regard to the motivating interest they could trigger within the students since we

have respected students' preferences. On the other hand, we have taken into consideration students' level and background knowledge. Students were asked to complete short narratives, to write essays about illegal immigration, and essays about environment protection. During this period, the students have written five essays concerning different subjects (narrative, descriptive, expository) in order to develop the different writing skills.

b. Generating ideas: This stage took 15 minutes.

One of the hardest tasks in writing is getting started. Even the most fluent writers in their own language need time to generate ideas and to plan what they are going to write about. Students are no different. If we are going to ask them to write anything more substantial than instant writing, we have to give them the opportunities to think. This is especially true for more formal tasks such as narrative writing, offering opposing views on a topic, report writing, formal letters. In academic writing, when teachers set assignments, a first step in pedagogy could be to encourage students to work in pairs and arrive at an understanding of the task by questioning and clarifying the meaning of key expressions and selecting the information needed to fulfil the task. Collaboration makes generating ideas more enjoyable and productive.

In the general EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom, when tasks are set for practice purposes, the teacher has the responsibility of helping students get their ideas together. White and Arndt (1991) make a useful distinction between guided techniques in which prompts such as questions are used, and unguided techniques in which students generate ideas by themselves.

Both guided and unguided techniques demonstrate the help that teachers can give while students think about a topic, discover a purpose, and decide on a perspective in the early stages of writing. Notice that

these activities show how writing can be stimulated by students working interactively. Such interaction has the value of providing student writers with an audience on whom to test out the selection of content. However, we need to keep in mind the solitary nature of most writing and move students gradually towards the independent position of a writer engaged in real writing tasks. For this goal we use different ways such as: brainstorming technique, the Spidergram, Spaghetti note making.

c. Planning: This stage took 10 minutes.

Given that we know successful writers plan their writing in very different ways, this needs great care. Many teachers now take the view that the best help they can give is to provide students with ideas for planning in the early stages and to let them take up those that they find individually useful and attractive. At the same time, it is essential to communicate the flexible nature of plans, which ideally should change and be adjusted as the writing progresses and generates alternative ideas and structures.

There are a lot of ways of helping students to organize their ideas: Through planning in groups, asking strategic questions by the teacher, organizing points in a hierarchy of importance for presentation, highlighting essential information, sequencing given information, and sorting and matching ideas. The advantage of mind maps such as “brainstorming” as a planning strategy for example, particularly for descriptions, is that all the aspects of a topic can be easily seen in relation to each other and possible links between sections of the composition suggest themselves.

d. Drafting: this stage took 20 minutes

We can refer to the first version of a piece of writing as a draft. This first “go” at a text is often done on the assumption that it will be amended later. As the writing process goes on into editing, many drafts of the same topic may be produced on the way to the final version.

e. Revising: This stage took 15 minutes

Revision is not something that clearly exists in product writing, as the assumption is that the provided model has been followed. Process writing, in contrast, requires that a degree of analysis be undertaken. After the students have written their work, it needs to be revised and evaluated. Learners who are unused to process writing will view revision as a sign of failure if handled poorly by the teacher. As with revision, evaluation is often viewed negatively, mostly due to the traditional technique of merely highlighting the errors in a learner’s work. The teacher’s task is to provide evaluation that will lead the learners into reflecting on their work. (Simpson 2002).

Many teachers now hold the view that the traditional procedure of taking work in, marking it, and returning it to students when the writing experience is no longer fresh in their minds, has serious disadvantages. This is especially the case if little work is done in class on revising as it gives students the impression that the teacher is primarily responsible for improving the quality of their written work.

A variety of procedures are now used to support revision, and these need to be evaluated against what we know of how good writers go about the process. (Hedge 2000:313).

A popular procedure is conferencing. As the class writes, the teacher can talk with individual students about work in progress. Through careful questioning, the teacher can support a student writer in getting ideas together, organizing them, and finding appropriate language. Keh (1990) suggests an elicitation procedure with focusing questions such as «who are you writing to?» and «how have you organized your points?»

Conferencing is a useful technique during the earlier stages of composition when writers are still thinking about content and organization. A popular device at a slightly later stage is the use of checklist. It is for individual use. The contained questions may focus on the overall content and organization, and its appropriateness to purpose and audience. Other types of checklist can be used when students exchange drafts of comment. For example, a checklist on paragraphing could contain the questions:

- * does the composition divide naturally into several parts?
- * do the paragraphs reflect those parts?
- * does each paragraph have a topic sentence with a main idea?
- * does each paragraph have an effective concluding sentence?

Reformulation is a useful procedure when students have produced a first draft and are moving on to look at more local possibilities for improvement. It has the particular advantage that it provides students with opportunities to notice any differences between the target model and their own production and thus to acquire language forms. Reformulation (Allwright 1984) proceeds through the following stages:

1-All the students carry out a guided writing task. The task is guided to ensure that the content and organization of their writing is similar. Indeed, collaborative work could be used at the planning stage.

2-Each student writes a first draft and hands it to the reader.

3-The teacher marks the work by indicating problems by means of underlining or highlighting.

4- The teacher chooses one student's essay and reformulates it, following the ideas closely but improving the expression in terms of accuracy and appropriacy.

5- The original and the reformulation are copied so that students can compare them.

6-the class work in pairs and groups, identifying the changes in the reformulation and discussing the reasons for them.

7- The teacher, with the class, discusses the changes and gives a rationale, inviting comments and questions.

8- Students then go through their own first drafts and revise them in the light of any useful information they have gained.

The advantage of reformulation is that it allows discussion of such aspects as how ideas are developed, how a range of structures, vocabulary, or connecting devices can be used, and how the style needs to be appropriate to the readers.

The revision strategies described before have the same aim of encouraging students to see writing as something that can be improved, and they train learners in looking for areas for improvement.

It is good for every teacher to ensure that a variety of techniques are used to encourage this essential activity in the writing process.

f. Providing feedback

When the students finished their drafts, they submitted their papers. Then, the teacher read them and provided feedback on content following coded feedback.

It is worth to mention that the codes were used to indicate errors related to content such as organization, development and style.

Here is the list of some codes used in this study:

Code	Meaning
?	Not clear
V	Something missing
X	Omit this
R	Rewrite it
WW	Wrong word

Table 08: the list of codes used in the present study

After that, the students were given back their papers to revise and rewrite them based on the teacher's feedback.

g. Activities for the control group

Along the experimental period the students in the control group were writing the same topics following the same stages but were not provided with feedback. Their papers were corrected and marked (see results section).

h. The role of the teacher

When teachers give feedback on students' written performance, they are called to play a number of different roles. Chris Tribble (1997) suggests that at one extreme they will be seen by students as the examiner.

Almost all teachers will set class tests or mark practice papers for the public exams their students are taking. The students will justifiably

expect some kind of objective evaluation of their performance. This role contrasts strongly with the teacher's potential as the audience, responding to ideas and perceptions that the students have written about. Between these two extremes the teacher may act as an assistant (helping the students along), a resource (being available when students need information or guidance), an evaluator (saying how well things are going so far), or an editor (helping to select and rearrange pieces of writing for some kind of publication- whether in or beyond the classroom).

When looking at learners' work, the teacher is supposed to take on three distinct roles, that of reader, writing teacher and language expert.

1. Reader

This involves interacting with the written work and reacting to the content and ideas as a simple reader or interested party. It might include comments such as "I've seen that film as well and I didn't like it either"; "Something similar happened to me last year when I was on holidays in Oran" etc.

2. Writing teacher

This obviously involves helping students grapple with the writing skill as a whole and with its different sub-skills such as focusing on genre, working on text organization and coherence, helping with discourse makers and linking words, grammatical skills, etc.

Remember that we cannot take for granted that students are good writers in their own language. Neither can we forget that the writing sub-skills, strategies and styles may not be the same over different languages. Even on the occasion that they are, it is not always easy to make the jump and apply these successfully in a foreign language.

3. Language expert

Here the teacher is in a more traditional role, helping the learners with lexis, grammar, spelling, etc and correct any problems or other language errors that they might find.

Students are often inclined to see the teacher as an examiner more than anything else. This is hardly surprising since it is generally teachers who make tests and make decisions about final grades. It is therefore important to show that this is not the only role we can fulfil as teachers.

4.5.3. The post-test

After the experimental treatment, again under the same conditions (in the morning, the same time, and the same topic) a post-test was held for the two groups (control and experimental group). The test took 45 minutes. The students were given a short story to complete. Then, the papers were corrected by the teacher using coded feedback (see results section).

4.6. Important points

Strong commitment to creating a successful writing workshop environment relevant to the requirement of the process approach was evident throughout the study, despite the fact that these classroom procedures have little in common with the way the participating EFL students were taught to write in their previous years of instruction. In a setting in which there are different expectations of teaching and learning, frustration and resistance may be present, especially in the early days of introducing such innovative practices. Consequently, we had to: (1) answer and balance different needs and interests of the students; (2) motivate them to develop their language skills; and (3) give them the tools to become autonomous learners.

Engaging students in the classroom activities was the most important challenge we encountered. Keeping students on task, helping

them to achieve intended goals, and raising their awareness were a priority. Four principles were adopted:

- 1- Forming relationships
- 2- Making choices for experiences
- 3- Fostering self-direction
- 4- Stimulating insightful reflection

An attempt was made to develop relationships with the students, and among them, so that they get involved in the process of providing feedback. Crucial to student willingness and ability to try a new learning experience was trust in the teacher. Consequently, the role of the teacher-researcher was one of manager who could be counted on for help when it was needed, and who could give guidance to ensure adherence to the process rather than to some preset rules of success. Students had another sense of safety by being members of the same group where the experiment was taking place, going through the same process and working toward the same goal raised students' motivation and competitiveness.

Given trust and assistance, the students change from spectators into active participants. They took responsibility illustrated by initiative, and were responsible for its direction. Students felt reassured that the teacher was listening and that their choices were respected. These practices were intended to create interdependence, responsibility, and accountability. Through the gradual reduction of instruction, students were given the opportunity to direct their own learning. They were excited about the opportunity to prove themselves worthy of the trust placed in them by showing their competence. They became highly productive and struggled to complete the work in time.

Within such a framework, the teacher acted as a facilitator and guide rather than a knowledge transmitter, and the students were approached

as thinkers and constructors of knowledge rather than consumers. They were encouraged to think, explore ideas, interact and negotiate meaning. This experience also helped to give the teacher an insight about learning and make plans for future teaching.

It is worth to note that man levels of balancing were needed in the evaluation. Allowing students to put forth their pinions and to be heard worked well, to reduce their anxiety and ad more student involvement to the process, though it was very time-consuming. Moreover, the ability to separate subjective emotion from objective elements of evaluation was a difficult process. Nevertheless, it was rewarding to be part of such powerful and positive change. The project created an opportunity for students to learn by doing something new and exciting. This increased the involvement of the students from passive to active learners, and gave them a new vision of the role of the teacher and also how to write in EFL.

Conclusion

This chapter has primarily described in detail the different steps undertaken to carry out the present study, the training phase, the pre-test, the experimental period and the post-test. It has provided full descriptions of the process of implementing feedback, the activities preceding and following feedback, the role of the teacher, and the activities for the control group and some important points. In the next chapter, procedures for data analyses and results of this study will be reported and lengthily discussed.

Chapter five

Chapter Five: Results and Discussion

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Introduction

In this chapter we present the findings provided by the data collected from the experiment. First, procedures used for data coding, scoring, and analysis are presented. Then, the general findings regarding what effect content feedback activities had on the quality of students written productions are reported. Finally, the obtained results will be discussed extensively.

To determine the impact coded feedback on improving student writing, we used a pretest-posttest control group design. The experiment was based on a control group and an experimental one; this work investigated the effects of coded feedback on writing quality. Thus this study is quasi-experimental in design, in that a treatment was administered to one group, and its performance was compared with another equivalent group, similar in abilities and attitudes, which had received a different treatment type.

In the experiment we managed to meet most criteria for acceptable research conditions: to make it carefully designed and controlled, as follows: (1) involving a treatment over some period of time leading to a post-test; (2) making use of a writing quality grid applied to samples of writing; (3) exercising minimal control for teacher biases by teaching both control and experimental groups simultaneously; (4) controlling linguistic differences between groups of students by statistical analysis, and determining attitude differences by questionnaires; and (5) coding compositions to assure blind evaluation across treatment, time (pre-test or post-test), and individuals (high or low achievers), which would assure validity and reliability.

After students in the experimental group received training on how to participate effectively in the process of feedback. Students in both groups were asked to write compositions on the same topics following

the same stages. Then, students in the experimental group were asked to read teacher's comments and rewrite their productions. After a period of three months a post-test was organized for the two groups again under the same conditions. Then, data were collected and analyzed. The teacher scored and analyzed all the drafts.

5.1. The evaluated mistakes

The number of errors in the five categories (organization, development, style, interactive communication, task achievement) occurring in students drafts were counted and normalized for comparison.

Organization (O)

Is the piece of writing organized? Does it respect the principles of writing (paragraph or essay) Does it follow a certain order (time order, space order, order of climax, from general to specific, from specific to general...)? Is it coherent? Are the details following an order?

Development (D)

Does the piece of writing contain enough information to do justice to the idea expressed in the topic sentence or the thesis statement?

Style (S):

Does the writer use any kind of imagination that makes the piece of writing more beautiful?

Task achievement (T.A)

Does the piece of writing fulfil the objective designed by the teacher?

Interactive Communication (I.C)

Does the piece of writing succeed to raise the reader's interest and convey the message? Is there any sense that the writer is trying to negotiate meaning?

5.2. Results of the pre-test for both groups

Experimental Group							Control Group						
N	O	D	S	T.A	I.C	Σ	N	O	D	S	T.A	I.C	Σ
01	01	02	01	02	02	08	01	03	03	02	03	03	14
02	02	02	01	03	02	10	02	02	01	01	02	02	08
03	03	03	03	03	03	15	03	03	03	02	03	03	14
04	02	02	01	01	02	08	04	01	01	03	02	02	09
05	01	02	01	02	01	07	05	02	03	02	02	02	11
06	02	02	02	02	01	09	06	02	02	02	02	02	10
07	01	02	02	02	01	08	07	02	02	02	02	01	09
08	03	03	03	02	03	15	08	01	02	02	02	01	08
09	01	02	02	03	02	08	09	02	03	03	02	03	13
10	03	03	03	02	03	15	10	03	03	03	03	03	15
11	02	02	02	03	03	10	11	01	02	01	03	02	09
12	01	02	01	01	01	07	12	02	01	01	02	02	08
13	03	04	02	02	03	14	13	02	02	02	03	02	11
14	03	03	02	02	03	13	14	01	01	01	01	01	05
15	02	02	01	02	02	09	15	03	03	03	03	03	15
16	02	02	01	02	02	09	16	01	01	01	02	02	07
17	01	02	01	02	02	09	17	02	03	02	03	03	13
18	03	03	03	03	03	15	18	01	01	02	02	02	08
19	02	02	01	03	02	09	19	01	02	01	02	02	08
20	03	03	02	02	03	13	20	02	03	03	03	02	13
21	01	02	01	02	02	08	21	01	01	02	02	01	07
22	01	02	03	02	02	10	22	02	02	02	01	02	09
23	02	02	01	01	01	07	23	01	02	02	01	02	08
24	02	02	02	02	01	09	24	03	02	01	02	02	10
25	03	02	03	03	03	14	25	03	02	03	03	03	14
26	01	01	02	01	02	07	26	01	01	02	02	01	07
27	02	02	02	01	02	09	27	03	01	02	02	01	09
28	02	01	03	01	01	08	28	01	02	02	01	02	08
29	03	02	02	03	03	13	29	01	02	03	01	02	09
30	01	03	02	01	02	09	30	01	01	02	01	02	07
Σ N	ΣO	ΣD	ΣS	ΣT.A	ΣI.C	ΣX	ΣN	ΣO	ΣD	ΣS	ΣT.A	ΣI.C	ΣY
30	59	67	56	61	63	305	30	54	58	61	63	61	304
	O	D	S	T.A	I.C	X		O	D	S	T.A	I.C	Y
	1.96	2.23	1.86	2.03	2.1	10.16		1.8	1.93	2.03	2.1	2.03	10.13

Table 09: Individual Scores of both groups (experimental and control group) in the pre-test

This table represents the scores of both groups in the pre-test concerning organization, development, style, task achievement and interactive communication. The mean of each category was calculated in addition to the global mean.

Here is the list of codes used in the table:

N= number of subjects

$\sum X$ = the sum of the scores of the experimental group

\bar{X} = the arithmetic mean of the scores of the experimental group

$\sum Y$ = the sum of scores of the control group

\bar{Y} = the arithmetic mean of the scores of the control group

O=organization

D= development

S= style

T.A= task achievement

I.C= interactive communication

\bar{O} = the mean of the scores of organization

\bar{D} = the mean of scores of development

\bar{S} = the mean of scores of style

$\bar{T.A}$ = the mean of scores of task achievement

$\bar{I.C}$ = the mean of scores of interactive communication

5.2.1. Analysis and interpretation

The table contains the scores of the two groups in the pre-test concerning the five categories. When we compare the scores of the two groups we notice that they are nearly similar (305 Vs 304).

The tables show that the students in the experimental group made a total number of errors (mean = 10.16), whereas the students in the control group made a total number of errors (mean = 10.31). This means that there is a slight difference (0.15) between the two groups in the pre-test scores. That can be deduced from the difference of the standard deviations as well (2.79 Vs 2.76).

tests groups	Pre-test scores
Experimental group	10.16
Control group	10.31
Difference in the means	0.15

Table 10: means of scores on the pre-test of both groups

The table representing the pre-test means of scores reveals that the experimental group recorded numerically little bit higher than the control group (the difference in the means is only **0.15**. This insignificant over scoring put us in a position to claim that the writing proficiency level is almost the same. Hence, any further over scoring in the coming tests will be due to the experimental treatment.

5.2.2. Frequency distribution

Any statistically based research requires picturing how the subjects performed on each test by means of “descriptive statistics” and “graphic representations” of all the performances. It is an attempt to “understand the logic behind experimental research in which the researcher makes claims about an entire population based on data obtained from a sample of that population” (D. Nunan 1999:28)

To start with, then, it is necessary to calculate the frequency (it indicates how many students achieved the same score in the same task). Frequency distribution of the pre-test (the arrangement of score values from high to low and the frequency of each score value) is displayed in the following table.

Experimental group		Control group	
Score (Xe)	Frequency (F)	Score (Xc)	Frequency (F)
07	03	07	05
08	06	08	06
09	08	09	06
10	03	10	02
11	00	11	02
12	00	12	00
13	03	13	03
14	02	14	03
15	04	15	02
ΣF	30	ΣF	30

Table 11: Frequency distribution of both groups' score value in the pre-test

This table is extracted from the global scores of the students in the pre-test for both groups. Students having the same score were calculated to know the frequency.

The following points can be deduced from the table:

* The score value range from 07 to 15

- 17 scores > 10 - 12 scores < 10	}	The experimental group	}	- 17 scores > 10 - 12 scores > 10	}	the control group
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To represent the frequency distribution of the pre-test's score values in a form of a graphic representation, a histogram form can be used.

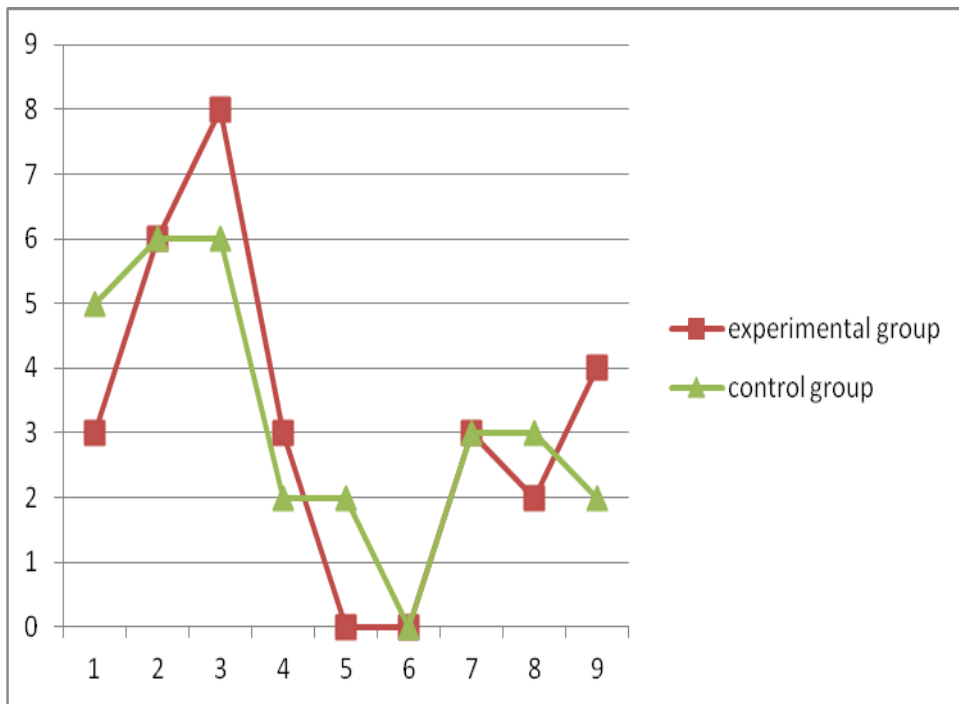


Figure 12: frequency polygon for the pre-test of both groups

The frequency histogram clearly indicates how the values of scores 10, 13, 14 and 15 are more frequent in the experimental group, while the control group recorded 7, 8, 9 and 11 as the more frequent scores in the pre-test.

We can notice that the two lines nearly follow each other because the two groups have nearly the same scores.

Now, let's have a look at the frequency distribution of score values in the post-test.

5.2.3. A detailed comparison of the score values of the two groups

Here is a detailed comparison of the score values of the two groups in the pre-test

Organization (O)

Experimental group		Control group	
Score (O)	Frequency (F)	Score (O)	Frequency (F)
01	10	01	13
02	11	02	10
03	09	03	07
ΣO	30	ΣO	30

We calculated the frequency of organization for both groups. We can notice that the two groups scored nearly the same concerning organization.

Development (D)

Experimental group		Control group	
Score (D)	Frequency (F)	Score (D)	Frequency (F)
01	02	01	10
02	20	02	12
03	07	03	08
04	01	04	00
ΣD	30	ΣD	30

After calculating the frequency of development for both groups, we notice that the degree of development in the experimental group scored higher than the control group (students having 02 marks were 20 Vs 12).

Style (S)

Experimental group		Control group	
Score (S)	Frequency (F)	Score (S)	Frequency (F)
01	11	01	07
02	12	02	16
03	07	03	07
ΣS	30	ΣS	30

When we calculate the frequency of style for both groups, we notice that the control group scored higher than the experimental one (students having 02 marks were 16 Vs 12)

Task achievement (T.A)

Experimental group		Control group	
Score (T.A)	Frequency (F)	Score (T.A)	Frequency (F)
01	07	01	06
02	15	02	15
03	08	03	09
$\Sigma T.A$	30	$\Sigma T.A$	30

After calculating the frequency of task achievement for both groups, we notice that the students in the two groups achieved the objective designed by the teacher.

Interactive communication (I.C)

Experimental group		Control group	
Score (I.C)	Frequency (F)	Score (I.C)	Frequency (F)
01	07	01	07
02	13	02	16
03	10	03	07
Σ I.C	30	Σ I.C	30

After calculating the frequency of interactive communication for both groups, we notice that the students in the two groups conveyed the message and were understood by the teacher, this means that they succeeded in communicating with the others through their writings.

For more illustration a histogram was used to clarify the results of each group.

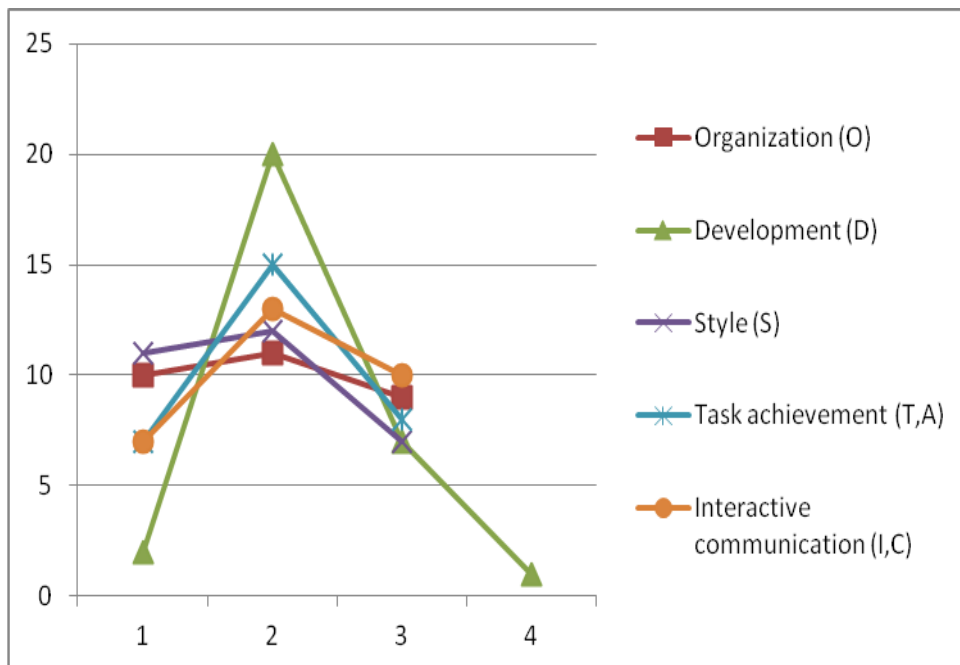


Figure 13: frequency polygon for the pre-test of the experimental group

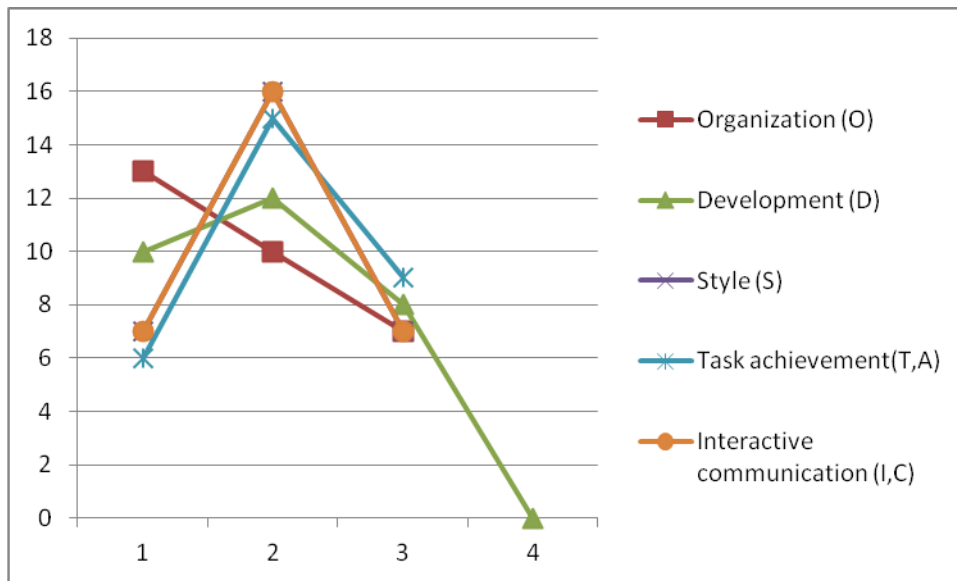


Figure 14: frequency polygon for the pre-test of the control group

We can notice that the two figures nearly resemble each other, because students' scores in both groups concerning organization, development, style, task achievement and interactive communication are nearly similar.

5.3. Results of the post-test for both groups

Experimental Group							Control Group						
N	O	D	S	T.A	I.C	Σ	N	O	D	S	T.A	I.C	Σ
01	03	02	02	03	02	12	01	03	03	02	03	03	14
02	02	02	03	03	02	13	02	02	01	01	02	02	08
03	04	03	03	03	03	16	03	03	03	02	03	03	14
04	03	02	02	02	02	11	04	02	02	02	02	02	10
05	02	02	02	02	02	10	05	02	03	02	02	02	11
06	03	02	02	02	03	12	06	02	02	02	02	02	10
07	02	02	02	02	03	11	07	02	02	02	02	02	10
08	04	04	04	02	02	16	08	02	01	01	02	02	08
09	02	02	03	03	02	12	09	02	03	03	03	02	13
10	03	02	03	04	04	16	10	03	02	03	03	03	14
11	03	03	02	03	02	13	11	02	02	02	02	02	10
12	02	03	02	02	03	12	12	02	02	02	01	02	09
13	02	04	04	03	02	15	13	02	02	02	03	02	11
14	03	02	02	03	04	14	14	01	01	02	02	01	07
15	02	02	03	02	02	11	15	03	03	03	03	03	15
16	03	03	02	02	02	12	16	01	01	02	02	02	08
17	02	04	02	03	02	13	17	02	02	02	03	03	12
18	04	02	03	03	04	16	18	03	01	02	02	01	09
19	03	03	02	02	02	12	19	02	01	03	01	02	09
20	02	03	03	03	04	15	20	03	03	02	02	03	13
21	03	02	02	02	02	11	21	02	02	01	01	02	08
22	03	03	02	02	03	13	22	02	02	03	02	01	10
23	02	02	02	02	02	10	23	02	02	02	01	01	08
24	02	03	02	03	02	12	24	02	03	02	02	01	10
25	04	02	03	03	03	15	25	02	03	03	03	03	14
26	03	02	02	02	02	11	26	01	02	03	01	01	08
27	02	02	02	04	02	12	27	02	02	02	02	02	10
28	02	02	02	02	02	10	28	02	02	02	01	02	09
29	03	03	02	02	03	13	29	02	02	02	02	02	10
30	03	02	02	02	02	11	30	02	01	02	02	01	08
	ΣO	ΣD	ΣS	ΣT.A	ΣI.C	ΣX	ΣN	ΣO	ΣD	ΣS	ΣT.A	ΣI.C	ΣY
30	81	75	72	76	75	380	30	63	61	64	62	60	310
	O	D	S	T.A	I.C	X		O	D	S	T.A	I.C	Y
	2.7	2.5	2.4	2.53	2.5	12.66		2.1	2.03	2.1 3	2.06	02	10.33

Table 12: Scores of both groups (experimental and control group) in the post-test

This table represents the scores of both groups in the post-test concerning organization, development, style, task achievement and

interactive communication. The mean of each category was calculated in addition to the global mean.

When we compare the scores of the two groups we notice that they are different (380 Vs 310).

The tables show that the students in the experimental group made a total number of errors (mean = 12.66), whereas the students in the control group made a total number of errors (mean = 10.33). This means that there is a significant difference (2.33) between the two groups in the post-test scores.

That can be deduced from the difference of the standard deviations as well (1.90 Vs 2.27).

tests groups	Pre-test scores
Experimental group	12.66
Control group	10.33
Difference in the means	2.33

Table 13: means of scores on the post-test of both groups

The table representing the post-test means of scores reveals that the experimental group recorded numerically higher than the control group (the difference in the means is **2.33**). This significant over scoring put us in a position to claim that the writing proficiency level is higher in the experimental group. Hence, this over scoring in the experimental group is due to the experimental treatment.

5.3.1. Frequency distribution

Experimental group		Control group	
Score (Xe)	Frequency (F)	Score (Xc)	Frequency (F)
07	00	07	01
08	00	08	07
09	00	09	04
10	03	10	08
11	06	11	02
12	08	12	01
13	05	13	02
14	01	14	04
15	03	15	01
16	04	16	00
ΣF	30	ΣF	30

Table 14: Frequency distribution of both groups' score value in the post-test

This table is extracted from the global scores of the students in the post-test for both groups. Students having the same score were calculated to know the frequency.

The following points can be deduced from the table:

* The score value range from 07 to 16

- 00 scores > 10	} The experimental group	- 12 scores > 10	} the control group
- 30 scores < 10		- 18 scores > 10	

To represent the frequency distribution of the post-test's score values in a form of a graphic representation, a histogram form can be used.

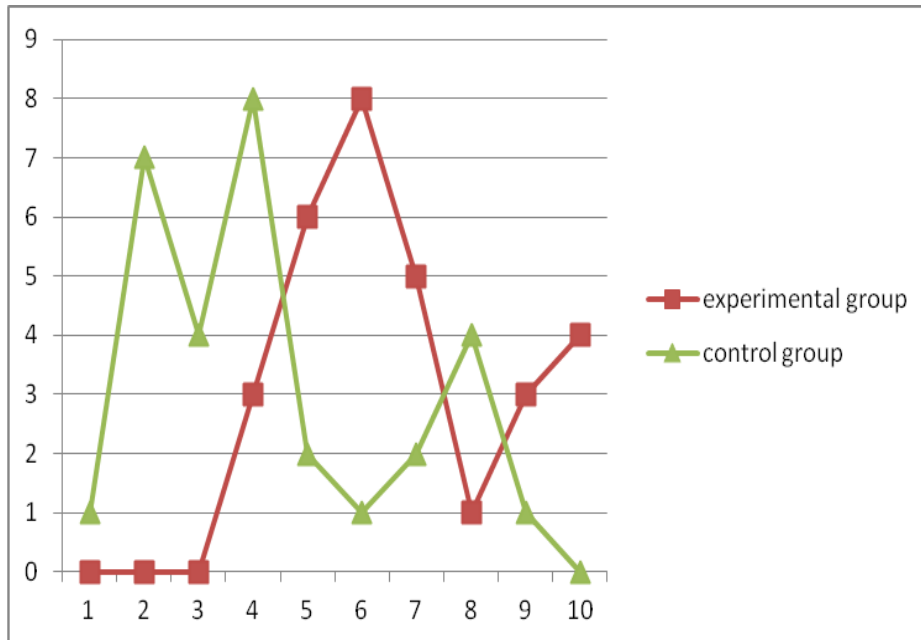


Figure 15: frequency polygon for the post-test of both groups

If we compare the two histograms of both pre-test and post test, we will notice that there is a big difference because the students in the experimental group have higher scores in the post-test.

5.3.2. Comparison of post-test score values

Organization (O)

Experimental group		Control group	
Score (O)	Frequency (F)	Score (O)	Frequency (F)
01	00	01	03
02	13	02	21
03	13	03	06
04	04	04	00
ΣO	30	ΣO	30

After calculating the frequency of organization for both groups , we can notice that the score value range from 02 to 04 for the experimental group, the students in this group scored higher than the control group, this means that their mistakes of organization decreased.

Students who scored 03 were 13 Vs 06, and students who scored 04 were 04 against 0. From this we can deduce that students in the experimental group learned how to organize their composition due to teacher's feedback.

Development (D)

Experimental group		Control group	
Score (D)	Frequency (F)	Score (D)	Frequency (F)
01	00	01	07
02	18	02	15
03	09	03	08
04	03	04	00
ΣD	30	ΣD	30

Following these results we can notice that the score value for the experimental group range from 02 to 04, whereas it ranged from 01 to 03 for the control group.

Students in the experimental group scored higher than the control group:

02----- 18 Vs 15

03----- 09 Vs 08

04----- 03 Vs 00

This means that students knew their mistakes and corrected them. Their compositions were more developed due to teacher's feedback they received.

Style (S)

Experimental group		Control group	
Score (S)	Frequency (F)	Score (S)	Frequency (F)
01	00	01	03
02	20	02	20
03	08	03	07
04	02	04	00
ΣS	30	ΣS	30

Again, we can notice that the score value ranged from 02 to 04 for the experimental group whereas it ranged from 01 to 03 for the control group.

Students who scored 02 were 20 Vs 20, those who scored 03 were 08 Vs 07; and who had 04 were 02 Vs 0.

Students in the treatment group improved their writings when they chose the correct words and used the suitable expressions and this is due to teacher's guidance and advice.

Task achievement (T.A)

Experimental group		Control group	
Score (T.A)	Frequency (F)	Score (T.A)	Frequency (F)
01	00	01	06
02	16	02	16
03	12	03	08
04	02	04	00
$\Sigma T.A$	30	$\Sigma T.A$	30

Concerning the frequency of task achievement, students who scored 03 were 12 Vs 08, and those who scored 04 were 02 Vs 0

Students in the experimental group shared with the teacher a part of the work and took the responsibility to fulfil the set objectives.

Interactive communication (I.C)

Experimental group		Control group	
Score (I.C)	Frequency (F)	Score (I.C)	Frequency (F)
01	00	01	07
02	19	02	16
03	07	03	07
04	04	04	00
Σ I.C	30	Σ I.C	30

Out of these results we can conclude that students in the experimental group learned how to make their writings legible for the reader. Hence, they conveyed the message and reached the first aim of writing which is the communicative end.

For more illustration a histogram was used for the scores of each group:

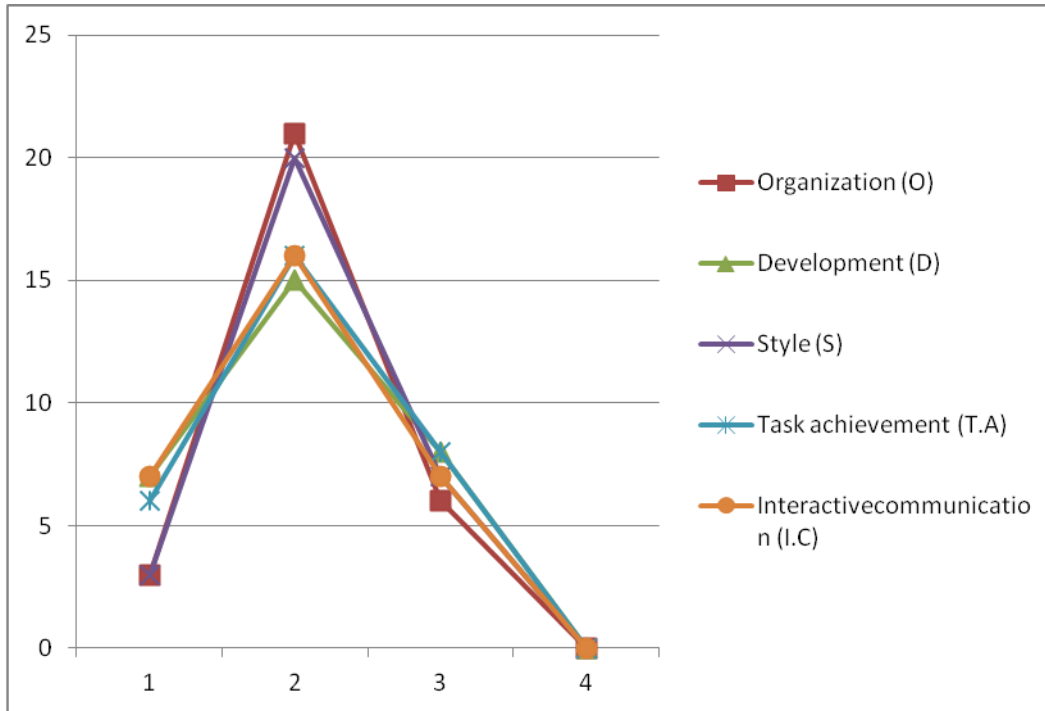


Figure 16: frequency polygon for the post-test of the experimental group

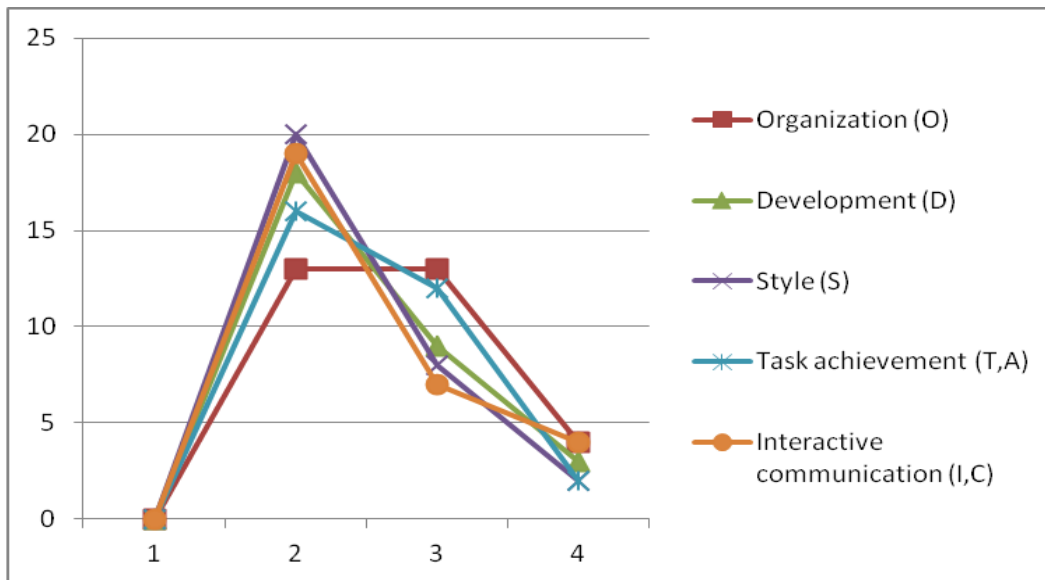


Figure 17: frequency polygon for the post-test of the control group

We deduce from the two figures that the experimental group scores in the five categories are higher than the control group's. This means that the students' writing in the experimental group progresses due to our treatment.

5.4. Setting up statistical considerations

In order to determine the differences between the experimental and control group in a detailed statistical picture, certain procedures should be taken which are those related to the mean, standard deviation, degree of freedom, observed statistics, critical values and hypotheses testing. We do so to see “to what extent the data are similar and the degree to which data differ” (Nunan1999:28)

5.4.1. Necessary Calculations

1. The mean

The mean is the most frequently employed measure of similarity. It is symbolized in writing by \bar{X} . The formula of this statistic is as follows:

$$\bar{X} = \frac{\sum Fx}{N}$$

\bar{X} : mean **Fx**: score frequency N: number of scores Σ : the sum

2. The standard deviation

The standard deviation **SD** measures the dispersion (the extent to which a set of scores varies in relation to the mean). The formula of this statistic is as follows

$$SD = \sqrt{\frac{\sum Fx^2 - \bar{X}^2}{N}} \text{ (The square root of the variance } S \text{)}$$

The calculation of the mean and standard deviation of the pre-test is presented below.

Control group

	O	D	S	T.A	I.C	ΣGS
N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Mean	1.80	1.93	2.00	2.10	2.03	9.86
USD	0.80	0.78	0.69	0.71	0.66	2.76
SEM	0.14	0.14	0.12	0.13	0.12	0.50
Median	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.00

Here, we calculated the mean and the standard deviation of the control group in the pre-test. The calculations concern the five categories in addition to the global scores.

Experimental group

	O	D	S	T.A	I.C	ΣGS
N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Mean	1.96	2.23	1.86	2.03	2.10	10.16
USD	0.80	0.62	0.77	0.71	0.75	2.79
SEM	0.14	0.11	0.14	0.13	0.13	0.51
Median	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	9.00

We calculated the mean and the standard deviation of the experimental group in the pre-test as well. The calculations concern the five categories in addition to the global scores.

In order to have a clear idea about the differences between the two groups' descriptive statistics, the following table shows the comparison between them.

Descriptive statistics	Experimental group	Control group	The difference
Mean	10.16	9.86	0.3
Standard deviation	2.79	2.76	0.03

Table 15: comparing the means and standard deviation of both groups in the pre-test

The table shows that there is a slight difference when we compare the mean and the standard deviation of both groups. This means that the two groups have nearly the same level in writing.

Let's have a look at the results obtained by the two groups in the post-test.

Experimental group

	O	D	S	T.A	I.C	Σ GS
N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Mean	2.70	2.50	2.40	2.53	2.53	12.66
USD	0.70	0.68	0.62	0.62	0.62	2.27
SEM	0.12	0.12	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.41
Median	3.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	12.00

Control Group

	O	D	S	T.A	I.C	Σ GS
N	30	30	30	30	30	30
Mean	2.10	2.03	2.13	2.06	2.00	10.33
USD	0.54	0.71	0.57	0.69	0.69	1.90
SEM	0.10	0.13	0.10	0.12	0.12	0.34
Median	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00	10.00

Here, we calculated the mean and the standard deviation of the control group in the post-test. The calculations concern the five categories in addition to the global scores.

The results obtained by the two groups in the post-test are demonstrated in the above tables. From a simple comparison between them we get:

Descriptive statistics	Experimental group	Control group	The difference
Mean	12.66	10.33	2.33
Standard deviation	2.27	1.90	0.37

Table 16: comparing the means and standard deviation of both groups in the post-test

According to the results revealed in the above table, one can argue that the provided feedback (the treatment which the experimental group experienced) gave its expected results. The difference in the means of

the post-test (2.33) is an evidence of the experimental group better performance. The difference of (0.37) in the standard deviation confirmed the assumption which claims that the good results obtained by the experimental group are due to teacher's feedback.

Here is a detailed comparison of the means and standard deviations of the two groups in the pre-test and post-test focusing on the different tested categories.

Organization (O)

	Experimental group					Control group				
	N	Mean	USD	SEM	Median	N	Mean	USD	SEM	Median
Post-test	30	2.70	0.80	0.14	2.00	30	2.10	0.80	0.14	2.00
Pre-test	30	1.96	0.70	0.12	2.00	30	1.80	0.54	0.10	2.00
Difference	/	0.74	0.10	0.0	1	/	0.30	0.54	0.04	00

When we compare the means of both groups concerning organization in both tests, we notice that there is a significant difference 0.74 for the experimental group and 0.30 for the control one. Hence, we deduce that teacher's feedback had a positive effect in helping students to organize their written productions.

Development (D)

	Experimental group					Control group				
	N	Mean	USD	SEM	Median	N	Mean	USD	SEM	Median
Post-test	30	2.03	0.71	0.14	2.00	30	2.50	0.68	0.12	2.00
Pre-test	30	1.23	0.78	0.13	2.00	30	2.93	0.62	0.11	2.00
Difference	/	0.80	0.03	0.01	00	/	0.57	0.06	0.01	00

Again when we conduct a comparison between the means of the two groups in both tests focusing on development, we can observe that the experimental group reached a difference of 0.80, whereas the control one made a difference of 0.57. From this we can say that the treatment group benefited from teacher's comments and guidance in developing their writings and this is what made the difference.

Style (S)

	Experimental group					Control group				
	N	Mean	USD	SEM	Median	N	Mean	USD	SEM	Median
Post-test	30	2.40	0.77	0.14	2.00	30	2.13	0.69	0.12	2.00
Pre-test	30	1.86	0.62	0.11	2.00	30	2.00	0.57	0.10	2.00
Difference	/	0.53	0.15	0.02	00	/	0.13	0.12	0.02	00

Concerning style, we notice that the difference calculated by the experimental group is 0.53, whereas the control group reached a difference of 0.13. This let us deduce that teacher's feedback had a strong positive effect in guiding students to refine and make their writing more acceptable and readable for a wider range.

Task achievement (T.A)

	Experimental group					Control group				
	N	Mean	USD	SEM	Median	N	Mean	USD	SEM	Median
Post-test	30	2.53	0.62	0.11	2.00	30	2.10	0.69	0.13	2.00
Pre-test	30	2.03	0.71	0.13	2.00	30	2.06	0.71	0.12	2.00
Difference	/	0.50	0.08	0.01	00	/	0.14	0.02	0.00	00

Concerning this point, students succeeded to fulfil the objectives designed by the teacher when they followed and respected his guidelines, and this can be shown in the difference calculated by the treatment group 0.50 Vs 0.14 for the control one.

Interactive communication (I.C) :

	Experimental group					Control group				
	N	Mean	USD	SEM	Median	N	Mean	USD	SEM	Median
Post-test	30	2.53	0.75	0.13	2.00	30	2.00	0.69	0.12	2.00
Pre-test	30	2.10	0.62	0.11	2.00	30	2.00	0.66	0.12	2.00
Difference	/	0.43	0.13	0.02	00	/	0.00	0.03	0.00	00

Students in the treatment group reached the communicative end which is the most important goal of writing. They succeeded in making their pieces clear and fulfilled the aim of conveying the message to the audience due to teacher's feedback, comments and advice. This is deduced from the difference calculated by the two groups 0.43 for the treatment group against 0.00 for the control one.

Global scores (Σ GS)

	Experimental group					Control group				
	N	Mean	USD	SEM	Median	N	Mean	USD	SEM	Median
Post-test	30	12.66	2.79	0.51	12.00	30	10.33	2.76	0.50	10.00
Pre-test	30	10.16	1.90	0.34	9.00	30	9.86	2.27	0.41	9.00
Difference	/	2.50	0.89	0.17	3	/	0.47	0.49	0.09	1

The differences of means and standard deviation in the different tested categories are again another statistical evidence to claim that providing students with necessary feedback resulted in better outcomes of writing performances regarding organization, development, style, task achievement and interactive communication.

5.5. The t-test

To check our assumption, the appropriate testing and statistical procedure is the **t-test** which is considered to be the most suitable test to compare two means. To calculate the **t** value, the following formula needs to be applied:

$$\begin{aligned}
 t_{N_1 + N_2} &= \frac{(\bar{X}_1 - \bar{X}_2)\sqrt{(N_1 + N_2 - 2)N_1N_2}}{\sqrt{(N_1S_1^2 + N_2S_2^2)(N_1 + N_2)}} \\
 &= \frac{(10.71 - 9.92)\sqrt{(30 + 30 - 2)30 \times 30}}{\sqrt{(30 \times 1.90^2 + 30 \times 2.29^2)(30 + 30)}} = \frac{0.79\sqrt{58 \times 900}}{\sqrt{(108.3 + 157.2)(60)}} \\
 &= \frac{0.79 \times 228.47}{\sqrt{265.5 \times 60}} = \frac{180.49}{126.21} = 1.73
 \end{aligned}$$

t=1.73

Degree of freedom

Following (J. D. Brown 1995:167), “the degree of freedom (*df*) for the t-test of independent means is the first sample size minus one plus the second sample size minus one”. It helps to find the critical value for “t”.

$$df = (N_1 - 1) + (N_2 - 2)$$

$$= (30 - 1) + (30 - 1) = 58$$

$$df = 58$$

Alpha decision level

“The language researcher should once again set the alpha decision level in advance. The level may be at $\alpha < .05$ or at the more conservative $\alpha < .01$, if the decisions must be more sure” (Brown 1995:159).

In this statistical test, we decided to set alpha at $\alpha < .05$ which means only 05% chance of error can be tolerated. The test is directional (tailed) because there is a theoretical reason and a sound logic to expect one mean to be higher than the other (feedback treatment).

Critical value

Since alpha is set at $\alpha < .05$ for a one-tailed decision, $df = 58$ and the corresponding critical value for “ t ”, in Fisher and Yates’ table of critical values, is **1.69**, then we get $t_{obs} > t_{crit}$ (1.73 > 1.69).

5.6. Hypothesis testing

Now, we have collected the necessary information for testing our hypothesis.

Statistical hypotheses: $H_0 : \overline{X}_E = \overline{X}_C$

$$H_1 : \overline{X}_E > \overline{X}_C$$

Alpha level: $\alpha < .05$, one-tailed (directional) decision.

Observed statistics $t_{obs} = 1.73$

Critical statistic: $t_{crit} = 1.69$

Degree of freedom: $df = 58$

Figure 18: Necessary information for hypothesis testing

Since the observed statistic is greater than the critical value (1.73 > 1.69), the null hypothesis is rejected. Having rejected the null

hypothesis, then the alternative hypothesis H_1 is automatically accepted. This means that there is only 05% probability that the observed mean difference: $\overline{X_E} > \overline{X_C}$ (12.66)10.33) occurred by chance, or a 95% probability that it was due to other than chance factors.

The interpretation of results should have two parts: significance and meaningfulness. The results revealed that the two means in the post-test are significantly different : $\overline{X_E} > \overline{X_C}$ (12.66)10.33). The null hypothesis H_0 is rejected at $P < .05$ which means that we are 95% sure that the relationship between the dependent variable “D” (writing test’ scores) and the independence variable “I.D” (feedback instructional treatment) did not occur by chance. It was due to the role of feedback which contributed in developing and improving experimental group subjects’ writing skill.

Students' questionnaire : Results and analysis

Questions	Frequency	Percent
1. How much do you enjoy writing in English ?		
So much	59	59%
Little	39	39%
Don't enjoy		
No answer	02	02%
2. How often do you write ?		
Sometimes	75	75%
Always	22	22%
Never	02	02%
No answer	01	01%
3. Do you have to write in English because of ?		
Work	02	02%
Study	81	81%
Hobby	15	15%
Pastime	01	01%
No answer	01	01%
4. In English classes you have taken before, have you ever learned any English grammar or tenses ?		
Yes, a lot	42	42%
Sometimes	28	28%
Very little	24	24%
Never	01	01%
Not sure	02	02%
No answer	02	02%
5. What sort of writing activities have you done in the past ?		
Short paragraphs	61	61%
Short stories	17	17%
Essays	10	10%
Letters	03	03%
Others	06	06%
No answer	03	03%
6. How do you feel about your English grammar ?		
Serious problem	39	39%
Not serious	25	25%
Other issues more important	13	13%
Not sure	23	23%
7. Has an English teacher told you that you have problems with any grammar rules ?		
Nouns-plural endings	00	00%
Verb forms	08	08%
Subject-verb agreement	02	02%
Articles-verb tenses	26	26%
Word choice ; sentence structure	50	50%

None	10	10%
No answer	04	04%
8. In your opinion, what problems do you have with using English grammar in your writing ?		
Nouns-plural endings	02	02%
Articles	20	20%
Verb forms	09	09%
Subject-verb agreement	05	05%
Word choice	18	18%
Verb tenses	22	22%
Sentence structure	19	19%
None	02	02%
no answer	01	01%
don't know	02	02%
9. How do you prefer that the teacher correct your written work ?		
Don't correct	17	17%
Correct the most serious errors	22	22%
Circle the errors but don't correct	34	34%
Correct all the mistakes	27	27%
10. What do you do with your written work when you get it back from your teacher ?		
Make a careful note of the corrections	75	75%
Look at the grade and not worry about any of the comments	21	21%
No answer	04	04%
11. Would you like the other students look at your work and give you some comments ?		
Yes	65	65%
No	33	33%
No answer	02	02%
12. Do you prefer that your teacher concentrate on ?		
Form	19	19%
Content	75	75%
Both	06	06%

Table 17 : Students' responses

To have a clear view about students' attitudes, perceptions and opinions concerning different things turning around feedback a questionnaire was administered for them. One hundred second year students answered the questionnaire.

One hundred respondents filled the questionnaire which examines their grammar knowledge and attitudes toward feedback on writing.

The results summarized in table (18) show that the majority of students (59%) enjoy writing in English. (75%) of the respondents claim that they do write sometimes in English. (81%) of the respondents write in English because of their studies, whereas (15%) write because it is their hobby.

Forty two percent of the students have learned English grammar or tenses. Most of the students (61%) write short paragraphs whereas (17%) are able to write short stories.

Concerning grammar, the majority of students (42%) claim that they received prior grammar instruction “a lot”, (28%) “Sometimes” and 24% of the respondents claim that they had « very little » or “never” (01%) had grammar instructions before.

More than one third of the respondents say that their teachers point out errors in the four grammatical categories (verbs, articles, wrong words and sentence structure). These grammatical categories are identified by half of the students as problem areas. Unlike other error categories, only (02%) of the students respond that their teachers identified noun ending errors in their compositions.

Some students (39%) claim that they have serious grammatical problems which cause major problems in their writings. On the other hand, (25%) of the students state that grammatical problems are “not serious” in writing and (13%) say that other issues such as content and organization are more important than grammar ,i.e., (38%) of the respondents consider grammar not important.

Figure (17) shows that a significant majority of students (34%) respond preferring coded feedback (underlining errors with codes),

followed by (27%) of students who prefer global correction and (22%) are for selective correction.

Almost all students (83%) respond that they want their teachers to correct errors occurring in their compositions either directly or indirectly. Only (17%) of the students say that they do not want to receive feedback from their writing teachers.

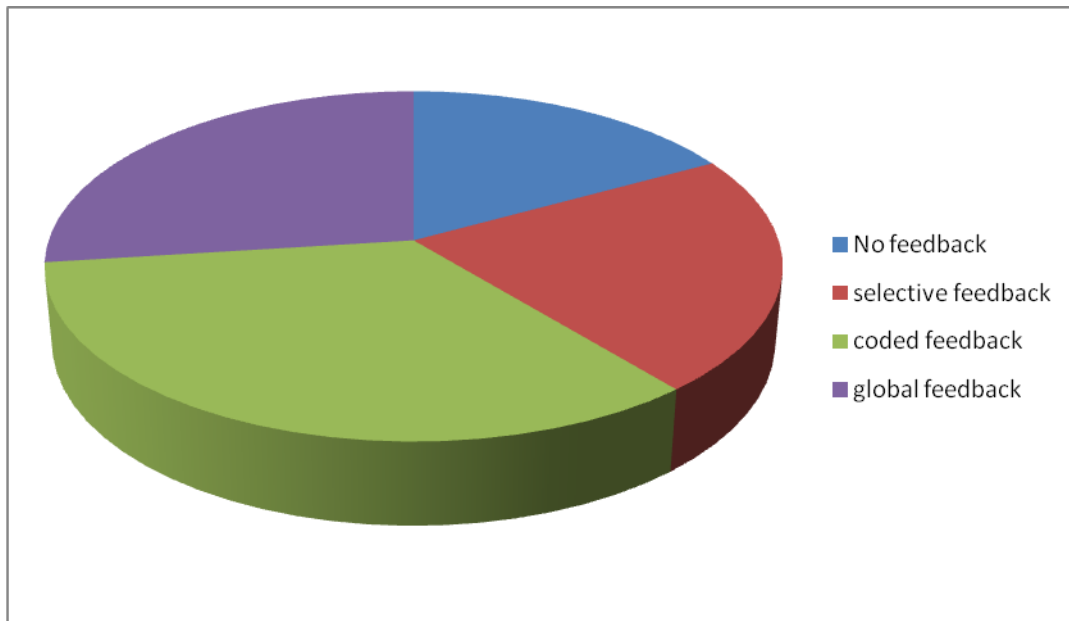


Figure 19: Students' preferences for feedback types

The majority of students (75%) claim that they have a high concern about content. They claim that it is the first priority, whereas form or grammatical accuracy comes as a final stage when they come to refine their piece of writing (the final draft).

Ninety percent of the respondents focus on grammatical accuracy or form, and only (06%) give importance to both.

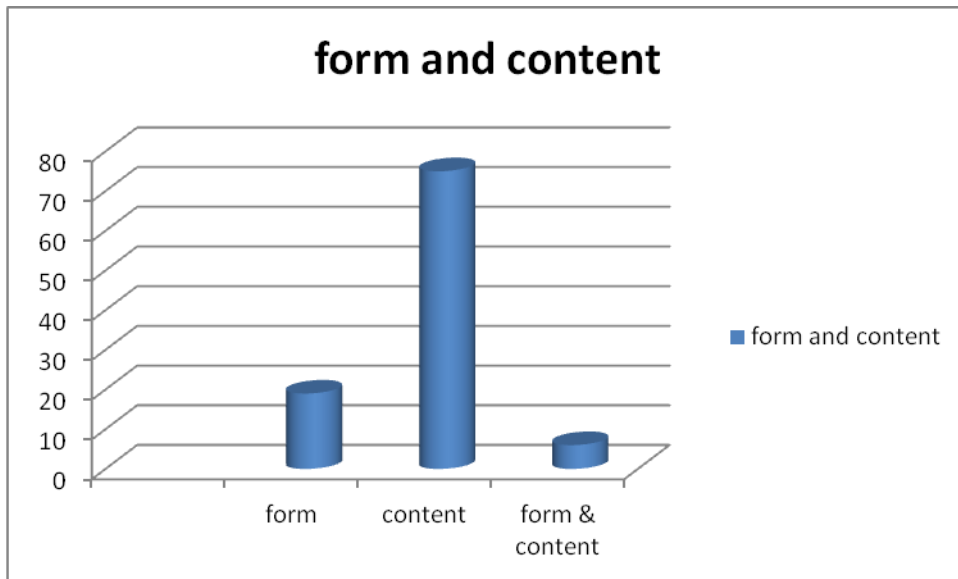


Figure 20: Degree of concern about form and content

Most of the students (75%) make a careful note of the corrections made by the teacher, whereas (21%) look at the grade and not worry about any of the comments made by the teacher.

Thirty percent of the respondents do not like the other students to look at their works and give them comments, whereas in the other side (65%) of the students cooperate with the others in peer correction, and only (02%) did not answer the question.

From the previous results, we can deduce that the majority of the students want their teachers to correct their compositions. They prefer to have feedback.

Either in selective or global feedback students prefer coded feedback because it helps them to think about their errors and correct them. Therefore, they learn from their errors.

Students consider grammar not important and other issues such as content and organization as a priority.

Teachers' questionnaire: Results and analysis

In order to have an idea about teachers' views, perceptions and attitudes about the writing process and feedback mainly, and to know about their practices in the classroom a questionnaire is administered to teachers of writing.

Unfortunately, there exist only four teachers of written expression in the department of English at the university centre of Khenchela. Three teachers are permanent whereas one of them is a part-time teacher.

Our teachers have an experience of about seven to ten years in teaching English as a foreign language.

Questions	Number	percent
1. What type of feedback do you apply when you correct your students' writings ?		
Give the write answer	00	00%
Underline the errors without any explanations	00	00%
Circle the errors and label the type of errors	01	25%
	02	50%
Don't correct and let the students discover their errors and correct them		
2. Do you correct ?		
All the mistakes	02	50%
Concentrate on a specific aspect or point	02	50%
3. Do you apply peer feedback?		
Yes	01	25%
No	00	00%
Sometimes	03	75%
4. When do you correct ?		
While the students are writing	02	50%

Correct the final draft	02	50%
5. Do you respect your students' preferences concerning writing ?		
Yes	00	00%
No	00	00%
Sometimes	04	04%
6. How much importance do you give to grammatical accuracy ?		
Very important	02	50%
Little	00	00%
Consider it as a last stage	01	25%
Not important	00	00%
7. Do you give importance to ?		
Form	00	00%
Content	00	00%
Both	04	100%

Table 18 : Teachers' responses

Two out of four teachers prefer to not correct the errors and let the students discover their mistakes and correct them. Whereas one teacher prefers to circle the errors and label the types of errors, i.e, using coded feedback. One other teacher answered that the type of feedback he uses depends on the activity itself.

Two teachers out of four correct all the mistakes (global correction) whether the other two teachers prefer to concentrate on a specific point or aspect (selective correction).

Two teachers out of four prefer to correct while the students are in the writing process, whereas the other two prefer correcting the final draft.

All the teachers sometimes respect learners' preferences concerning writing in selecting the topics.

Two teachers out of four consider grammatical accuracy very important, whereas one of them places it in the last stage after content and organization. One teacher answers that the importance of grammatical accuracy depends on the underlined objectives of the activity.

Teachers prefer to let the learners discover the errors for themselves. As a way to help and guide them, teachers circle the errors and use codes. This method will help the learners concentrate on the errors, explore them, correct them and learn the rules.

Some teachers see that feedback should be given during the writing process as a means to guide the learners while revising their drafts.

Grammatical accuracy and content are equally important according to teachers' point of view. Grammatical accuracy importance depends on the underlined objectives of the activity and can be left to the refining stage.

Teachers respect learners' preferences concerning topic selection as a way to trigger their motivation. They also use peer feedback as a means to make their students help each other to discover the errors and correct them, besides changing the reader who was always the teacher. Changing the audience breaks the routine and creates a good learning atmosphere in the classroom. It makes the writing class a pleasant one.

Conclusion

In this chapter we presented and discussed the results of the present study and both questionnaires as well. During the three months of the experimental treatment, our second year students received feedback on content mainly in their writings in a serious attempt to enhance their writing skill. The progress of the experimental group in all the tests has proved the effectiveness of feedback as an instructional tool in improving students' level of writing proficiency. The statistical validity of tests' results put us in a better position to confirm the hypotheses set for the research study which claim that providing students with the necessary feedback can significantly be a real language experience that helps EFL learners at the university level to develop and reinforce their writing skill.

General Conclusion

1. Summary of the research findings

This study examined how content feedback affected EFL students' writing. Participants were 60 second-year students at the university centre of Khenchela. The experiment was carried out through multiple stages over three months. Additionally, multiple methods were used for data collection, including observations, essay writing and questionnaires. The collected data were compared and analyzed to examine the effects of content feedback on students' performance in writing.

In the training stage, which lasted for two weeks, questionnaire results revealed students' attitudes toward different modes of feedback on their writing, among which are content feedback and coded feedback. It also revealed some problems students face when writing. Thus this stage of the research did not only help in directing the research questions, but it also revealed the needs of these students.

In this stage, after both groups have written a multiple-draft pre-test paragraph, the experimental group received extensive training and modeling on how to deal with coded feedback on content. On the other hand, the students in the control group were instructed using a traditional model of instruction on the same activities. The same teacher-researcher taught both groups simultaneously.

During the implementing stage the students were required to write multiple-draft essays about different topics, and then the teacher provided them with feedback on content using coded feedback after that the papers were returned to the students to rewrite their pieces after correcting the mistakes on the light of teachers' feedback. The students found it enjoyable. Growth in their writing over time was clear as they

continued to write and receive feedback and guidance over the experiment. Finally, a post-test was conducted and the results of both pre and post test were compared. The comparison showed that students' writing in the experimental group highly improved and the number of mistakes decreased due to content feedback. $t = 1.73$ i.e. the null hypothesis was rejected and our hypothesis that the use of content feedback would improve students' writing was clearly proved.

2. Issues and challenges

This research was conducted because the teacher researcher was dissatisfied with teaching and learning environment, but this research became the means to develop a new understanding of students' involvement in their own learning and of the teacher's role in creating that opportunity. While this study was carried out some challenges rise on the top among these we can cite:

- 1- Helping students reconceptualize their role as active, constructive learners who take responsibility for their learning.
- 2- Dealing with students' resistance resulting from learners expectations for greater teacher authority and direct learning.
- 3- Changing students' passive approach to learning
- 4- The brevity of the semester to develop comfort with the practice, time to plan the activities, to cover the programme.
- 5- Like good teaching assessment also requires continuous alternations and refinement; the ability to evaluate effectively takes time and practice to develop.
- 6- Large sized classes
- 7- Problems associated with lighting (inappropriate lighting)
- 8- Classes temperature (i.e too hot or too cold)
- 9- The lack of appropriate classrooms (i.e. size, availability)
- 10- Noise

This list is by no means exhaustive, but highlights many issues and challenges that have significant implications for the introduction of the content feedback activities in EFL writing classrooms.

Fostering student engagement and self-reflection were key practices to overcome these challenges. At the first place, we promoted the development of four principles crucial to student engagement in the content feedback process.

The first step is developing a trusting relationship between teacher and student, and subsequently between student and student. In this safe environment, students were then willing and able to participate in the second step, which was decision making. Students made decisions within the structure that the teacher –as-a researcher provided. As their confidence with the process improved, self-direction developed. Students began to take initiative as their own vision and sense. The final stage of engagement was insightful reflection which was necessary for raising student awareness.

During the study we preferred “guidance” rather than direction or control; accordingly, in managing the process of content feedback, it was necessary to constantly tread the line of balance between guidance and abandonment, allowing students to learn from their mistakes. It was in such a setting to allow mistakes as a choice and relationship became more important to them than marks. What was important was the ability to guide rather than to tell, to be part of the process rather than to be in control of it. Many times during the process, it was necessary to determine what level of teacher involvement was appropriate in managing the classroom.

The mission of the teacher was to help the student to come up with the best decisions to correct his/her mistakes. The teaching goals became more learner-centered, and the teaching roles became more

varied as they decentralized the teacher's place in the classroom, moving from information provider to facilitator, coach, and fellow collaborator to name few. More simply we achieved a point of readiness where alternative pedagogies, such as coded feedback, became more attractive with its ability to increase student responsibility, and make learning more meaningful.

For students, it became clear that the most valuable purpose of learning is not marks, but rather learn how to become a more independent learner, and ultimately to be able to function independently according to one's values, based on thoughtful decision making.

During this teaching experience, we met many incidents that fostered reflection on classroom practice and change in the teaching and instructional philosophy. These events produced outcomes that accelerated development in teaching.

3. Pedagogical implications

According to this study teachers should review their perceptions of teaching methods and principles as writing teachers. They should give more importance to content and not put accuracy (form) as the main aim and neglect meaning (content). Since error feedback proved to be harmful and fruitless then it should be abandoned (Truscott, 1996) and since it has no effect in improving students' accuracy (Semke, 1984; Zamel, 1985), so why teachers still keep practicing it?

Teachers should also use the process approach in their writing classes instead of evaluating the paper as a final draft, teachers can evaluate multiple drafts and provide feedback which help the student to refine his/her writing gradually and learn from his/her errors.

Based on the empirical evidence from this study, it seems that students could better correct their mistakes when the teacher provided (coded) feedback on content. This result helps EFL writing teachers see

the need to consider the effect that their written feedback may have on students' ability to self-correct although whether or not successful self-correction could lead to acquisition is not dealt with in this study. Furthermore, the need for teacher feedback arises from the students' responses. As shown in the questionnaire results; most of the students wanted to receive feedback from their writing teachers.

From questionnaire results 34% of students preferred coded feedback. Providing coded feedback to students writing requires more time and effort but it is fruitful and raises students' self-correction ability.

However, based on these results which were obtained from a short-term experimental design, it is not possible to speculate whether coded feedback helps ESL students to edit their mistakes by themselves or to improve their interlanguage development over the long-term. Depending on students' proficiency levels and the types of mistakes made, coding could be a valuable method to implement in writing classes. This issue needs to be examined in further research.

Self-correction provides students with an opportunity to correct their own mistakes. Chandler (2003) reported that self-correction has a positive long-term effect on improvement of accuracy in writing. Teachers can offer a self-correction opportunity for their students by providing indirect feedback on students' mistakes.

In fact it is questionable whether students go over the feedback that the teachers provide while investing time and effort to directly correct all the errors. When the papers are returned to them, sometimes students only care about their grade, not teacher feedback. Therefore, it is important for teachers to have their students review their errors with the help of teacher feedback on multi-drafts before the final paper is graded.

Giving indirect feedback to students is considered more effective than either not correcting errors or directly fixing them. Direct correction is very tedious and time consuming though for teachers. However, many students prefer this method because it is fast and accurate for them in making corrections (Chandler, 2003). Also, less proficient students might be too cognitively challenged when they are asked to self-edit their mistakes without teacher's help. For these students, teachers can provide the location of errors, requiring that students correct the errors by themselves. This self-correction seems to be easier than self-editing. Therefore self-correction technique can be an intermediating process which leads to self-editing and helping students become more independent writers.

Self-correction has another important implication in light of students' perspectives. Students' responses in the questionnaire suggested that they preferred their errors to be treated in an indirect way so that they could also participate in the error correction process (Chandler, 2003). As Makino (1993) discussed, a self-correction task benefits L2 students because it enables them to have responsibility for learning.

As shown in the results of students' questionnaire, most of the students (83%) wanted to receive feedback. Also, they preferred to receive coded feedback. One possible reason why EFL students like coded feedback is that it is quick and easy indicator in helping them to correct their errors. In addition, they might feel it is less risky when correcting their errors in writing if codes are provided.

EFL writing teachers should not ignore their students' desire because correcting grammatical errors is a tedious work and the effect of feedback is sometimes questionable. Why did teachers practice error

correction if the result is nothing besides the effort and time spent when doing that? Here the answer is content feedback using coded feedback.

Even though teachers have a strong rationale for not correcting grammatical errors, it is not easy for them to defend themselves in front of students who expect grammar correction in class. The students commonly have high expectations of teachers. Leki (1991) pointed out how students' initial expectations of language classrooms were different than what they were actually provided with, and this cause conflicts between teachers and students as mentioned earlier. Teachers should listen to their students so that they can more effectively design their instruction to satisfy the students' needs.

Since studies done by Lalande (1982), Frantzen (1995), Ferris et al. (2000), Ferris and Helt (2000) proved that coded and non coded feedback have different results on students' accuracy, teachers are invited to revise their teaching methods and apply coded feedback since it has a powerful effect on students' ability to locate mistakes in a text.

4. Suggestions for further research

The results of this study may be applicable to adult, EFL students who are attending writing classes. However, the findings of this study cannot apply to ESL children and immigrant students because these learners have different characteristics and needs concerning accuracy in writing. Further research examining those populations needs to be done.

The findings of this study do not indicate long-term effects of teacher feedback on students' self-correction. To solve this issue, a longitudinal study needs to be designed including multiple essays as data over a longer period of time. In this way, the effects of different kinds of feedback on students' long-term interlanguage development can be examined. An analysis from multiple drafts enables researchers to distinguish errors from mistakes.

A final suggestion is that further research need to clearly distinguish between self-correction and self-editing when designing their studies. Furthermore, coded feedback might have a different effect on students' self-editing than on self-correction. Therefore this issue should be examined in further studies.

To conclude, this study is useful not only for students participating in this study, allowing them to improve their writing, but also it become personally meaningful because it gave me the opportunity to think deeply in the teaching and the leaning process as well.

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APPENDICES

GLOSSARY

To provide the reader with ready and brief access to understand this work and to avoid ambiguity, key terms, and concepts appearing throughout this study are listed below.

Activity: a sequence of action associated with a particular task goal.

Draft: “a version of the text which the writer knows he or she will improve on” (Brooks & Grundy 1990: 02).

English as a Foreign Language (EFL): a term designed to assist individuals whose native or dominant language is other than English.

Feedback focus: refers to aspects of composition attended to (grammar, content, organization, vocabulary, and mechanics).

Feedback type: refers to the method or “modality” (Hedgock & Leftkowitz 1994) employed to give feedback on writing (use of symbols, error correction, conferencing, written phases, peer review, and revision)

Global revision: a complete recreation of a piece of writing in which the focus is on issues of audience, purpose, content and organization (Trimmer 1995).

Journal: a personal text that records the thoughts, ideas and reactions of students to circumstances ongoing around them.

Peer review: a process whereby the students use each other as sources of feedback, “ in such a way that they assume roles and responsibilities normally taken by a formally trained teacher in commenting on and criticizing each other’s drafts in both written and oral formats in the process of writing” (Rollington 2005: 23)

Process writing: an instructional model that focuses on the stages of planning, drafting, and revising, as a part of a recursive, non-linear, sequence, rather than on the final product only. In this approach,

students are expected to write multiple drafts of a paper and make changes in their paper based on the feedback they receive.

Revision: “a series of strategies designed to re-examine and re-evaluate the choices that have created a piece of writing” (Trimmer 1995: 05) in planning and drafting. Revision is much more than a simple correction of errors; it is true rethinking of ones writing.

Revision is a two-stage process; during the first stage, global revision, the writer uses various reading strategies to rethink, reorder, and rewrite substantial portions of the first draft. Satisfied with this stage, the writer focuses on the second stage, local revision, and begins repairing individual sentences and words.

Training: “to drill and instruct in, or for, some particular practice. The targeted outcomes are very particular; training is clearly skill oriented” (Topping & Ehly 1998: 04)

Writing quality: based on the evaluation of the students’ writing, the higher is the earned score, the better is the quality of writing.

Self-editing: refers to a technique that allows students to identify and correct their own errors by reviewing them.

Self-correction: indicates that students correct their errors marked by teachers. It means that self-correction is part of a whole editing process.

Questionnaire for students

Dear students you are kindly invited to answer a set of questions. This questionnaire is a data gathering tool for a research conducted to get the doctorate degree. The research is entitled "*Effects of Feedback on Students' Writing Case study of second year students in the department of English at the university centre of Khenchela*". Thanks

1- How much do you enjoy writing in English? So much little don't enjoy

2- How often do you write?

Sometimes always never

3- Do you have to write in English because of?

Work Study Hobby Pastime

4- In English classes you have taken before, have you even learned any English grammar or tenses? Choose **one** answer.

Yes, a lot Very little Not sure

Sometimes Never

5- What sort of writing activities have you done in the past?

Short paragraphs short stories essays letters others

6- Please choose **one** statement which **best** describes how you feel about your English grammar.

*My English grammar problems are very serious and really hurt my writing.

*Although I don't know much about English grammar, it's not a serious problem for me.

*English grammar is not really a serious issue for me. Other writing issues are important.

*I'm not really sure whether English grammar is a problem for my writing.

7- Has an English teacher ever told you that you have problems with any grammar rules?

Please choose any specific problems that a teacher has told you about.

None nouns-plural endings articles, verb tenses

Verbs forms subject-verb agreement word choice; sentence structure

8- In your opinion, what problems do you have with using English grammar in your writing?

Choose all problems that you think you have.

None nouns-plural endings articles verb tenses

Verb forms subject-verb agreement word choice sentence structure

don't know

9- How do you expect your teacher to correct your written work?

Don't correct. Let me try to correct my errors myself

Only correct the most serious errors.

Circle my errors, but don't correct them for me.

Correct all my errors.

10- What do you do with your written work when you get it back from your teacher?

Make a careful note of the corrections

Look at the grade and not worry about any of the comments.

11- Would you like the other students look at your work and give you some comments?

Yes No

12- Do you prefer that your teacher concentrate on? Form content

Questionnaire for teachers

Dear teachers you are kindly invited to answer a set of questions. This questionnaire is a data gathering tool for a research conducted to get the doctorate degree. The research is entitled "*The Effects of Feedback on Students' Writing, case study of second year students in the department of English at the university centre of Khenchela*". Thanks in advance

Situation: part-time teacher Permanent

Grade: MA MC

Experience: years

1- What type of feedback do you apply when you correct your students' writings?

- Give the right answer
- Underline the errors without any explanation
- Circle the errors and label the type of errors (use codes)
- Don't correct and let the students discover their mistakes and correct them

2- Do you correct?

- * All the mistakes
- * Concentrate on a specific aspect or point

3- Do you apply peer feedback?

Yes No Sometimes

4- When do you correct?

- * While the students are writing
- * Correct the final draft

5- Do you respect students' preferences concerning writing?

yes No Sometimes

6- How much do you give importance to grammar accuracy?

- Very important
- Little
- as a last stage
- Not important

7- Do you give importance to?

Form content both

Television is one of Communication instruments which through it we can send the picture and the voice together to the world in the same time. Its disadvantages appear mostly on children, It may represent programs have no relation with their ages and it causes changing in their life style, the bad thing is when they finish watching, they start trying these things at home or with someone else. In addition, it effects on children sight. here children life insurance become influenced by t.v watching programs. Consequently, of these t.v programs their life became empty like if there is no tomorrow except t.v programs. Finally, children remain the first victims of t.v. programs. and its disadvantages. ~~are~~ them.

television is one of communication aspects, through it we can send the picture and the voice together to the world in the same time.

Its disadvantages appear mostly on children and may represent programs which do not have relation with their age, it ~~causes~~ leads children to waste their time, the bad thing is when they finish watching, they start trying these things at home or with someone else, In addition, it reduces from children sight.

children become influenced by watching because of these t.v programs their life become empty as if there is no tomorrow except those programs. Finally, children remain the first victims of t.v and its disadvantages.

Appendix three: Students' productions

A process paragraph about mother' day before having content feedback

Every year people celebrated the mother's day on 21 March. For me every year I prepare a (delicious) big party for my mother whom I love her very much. In this party I prepare a delicious cake, drinks, and I ^{buy} bought flowers, I write a very nice card for her, and I ^{also} bought for her a very nice surprise. then everyone ^{for} in my family ^{bring} brought with them ^{this a present} surprise for her, then they kiss her, therefore we celebrate ^{this day} together. This day is special for me, in addition, to prophet peace be open him recomanded us to respect our mothers.

Mother's day

Every year people celebrated mother's day on 21 March. For me every year I prepare a big party of for my mother whom I love her very much, In this party I prepare a delicious cake, drinks, lunch, and I buy many things for instance, flowers, surprises then I write a very nice card for her. Then every one in my family bring with them their gifts, then they kiss her. Otherwise, we celebrate this day together. This day is special for me, besides, I hope peace be open him recomander us to respect our mothers.

Appendix five: Students' productions

A narrative paragraph before having content feedback

When he arrived at London station, he find the lawyer waiting for him and said: « Welcome to London », they went together to the Hotel for relaxing, next day The lawyer came to Mr. King to explain a letter, he said: « When your uncle died, let a lot of money and comcaries for you; because you know your uncle has not children, so there is no sons there was an heir, this is why gave you a wealth ». When Mr. King listen to the news he surprised, the lawyer said: « your uncle wish to be careful of that wealth ».

Finally, Mr. King felt sad and happy on the same time. He decided to stay in London because he have a responsibility.

When he arrived at London station he find the lawyerSM waiting^R him in the hotel for releasing^R and proposing, than the next day he came to him for told himSM the contentSM the letter and he start to explain, he said: "When your uncle he died, he let a lot of money and companies for you; because you know your uncle hasn't children, this is why he give you a wealth." Mr. King when listen^{to} the news he shoke but your uncle wish you take care for the companies and the wealth." the lawyer:

Finally, Mr. King feel sad and happy in the same time. and he decided to stay in London because he has a responsibility. In the last way the uncle sleeping with a piece.

Immigration is one of the main of the third world countries, especial Algeria.

There are two kinds of immu
The brain brain immigration a
the poor people immigration.

The brain brain people immu
to find their real places, when
they are really encouraged.

The poor people immigrate,
of the lack of jobs, housing pro
and the life which is becoming
and more expensive.

These young jobless people d
find what to do to survive, &
the solution, they find is to s
for best life behind the sea. 7
don't care about the results. 7
are not aware of what kind of
they will find there and the pro
they will face.

They are not conscious about