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Exploratory Practice As a Way Of Enhancing Teacher Feedback And Student Writing

Ghizlene SAIDI¹

¹ Université d'Alger 2, Algérie

Abstract

In this paper, I shall report a study conducted at the University of Blida. The aim of this study is to examine the dialogue that took place between myself and a group of my students, through my written feedback to their writing and their responses to it within an Exploratory Practice (EP) framework. This dialogue involves the learners' written productions, the teacher's written feedback and the ongoing responses that result from this exchange. The view of feedback as a dialogical process, rather than as an evaluative one-way message entails the participation of both teacher and students in their attempt to reach a mutual understanding of the text-writing process. This is in accordance with the aims and practices of EP which promotes the idea of 'on-going' rather than experimental classroom research, minimal or no disruption to normal classroom teaching and learning, and the involvement of both teachers and students to work collectively and collegially for mutual development.

1. Introduction

This research is motivated by the desire to improve teacher written feedback practices and possibly to improve life in the writing classroom in general using Exploratory Practice as a research methodology. Exploratory Practice (EP) is a form of practitioner research in language education which promotes the idea of teachers and learners puzzling together about their language learning /teaching experiences, using "normal pedagogic practices as investigative tools" (Allwright 2003:127). I undertook an Exploratory Practice study to understand my puzzle which is how I can best respond to my student's writings. As an EFL writing teacher, I have always wondered why most of my students seem to misinterpret my written feedback and/or not know how to incorporate it into revision. Was it because my written feedback was not clear? Or was it because it does not correspond to their expectations? If this is case, what are their feedback preferences and expectations? What are their opinions and attitudes towards the written feedback I give them? Do students' understandings of teacher feedback match my intentions? How can I deliver a written feedback that helps them improve their writing abilities? How can this feedback meet their expectations and preferences? Reviewing the pertinent literature on teacher written feedback, it seems that most research (Cohen 1987, Cohen and Cavalcanti 1990, Fathman and Whalley 1990, Ferris 1997, Hyland 1998, Ferris 2003, Hyland 2003, Chiang 2004) reveals that teachers and students are constantly in tension regarding teacher written feedback. On the one hand, teachers can appropriate, overwhelm, discourage or mislead students through their

feedback. On the other hand, students pay little attention to the feedback teachers give. This, accordingly, leads to a mismatch between the way teachers construct their written feedback and the type of feedback students expect. To avoid a mismatch between what teachers do and what students expect, Goldstein (2004) suggested teachers and students communicating their written intentions and preferences.

When examining the relevant literature, it seems that most researches on teachers' written feedback on students' work has either investigated the effect of teacher feedback on students' revisions (Fathman and Whalley 1990, Ferris 2003 and Liu 2008) or the student writers' perception of teacher feedback (Cohen 1987, Goldstein 2006). The dialogic nature of teacher written feedback has not been fully studied, yet many factors can play an interactive role in how teachers comment, how students react to that commentary, and how students use such commentary in their revisions (Goldstein 2004, 2006).

With this respect, I firmly hold that a closer examination of how I construct feedback and how students perceive teacher feedback can be beneficial for both myself and students in a number of ways. First, encouraging dialogue between my students and myself offers students the opportunity to actively engage in the writing process, assigning the responsibility for the writing and revising process to the student. Second, creating opportunities for dialogue helps my students to consider writing as a social activity, highlighting the social nature of language use, and raising students' awareness of the reader/audience in their writing process. Third, encouraging students to reflect on their writing in relation to my written feedback allows students to be more aware of their opinions and attitudes towards my written feedback and thus their understanding improves. Fourth, providing students with an opportunity to express how my comments make them feel enables me to be more aware of how these comments effect students not only cognitively but also emotionally. In addition, an investigation of my students' responses invites me to review and reflect on my ways of responding and to assess its effectiveness. In the next section, I shall consider teacher written feedback as a dialogical process.

1. The dialogical characteristics of teacher written feedback: from a one-way message to a two-way process

A panel of researchers (Hyland and Hyland 2006, Goldstein 2004 and Goldstein 2006) argue that feedback is best conceptualized as a dialogical and contingent two-way process that involves coordinated teacher–student interaction as well as active learner engagement. This goes without saying that when it is dialogical, written feedback is more effective. This study examines written feedback from a dialogical perspective. This implies that written feedback to be effective must be embedded in dialogical contexts in which feedback activities are shared across teachers and students. This involves the participation of both teacher and students in the social construction of the text in which the teacher supports students' drafts with feedback (Hyland and Hyland 2006). Within the same line of thought, giving feedback is more than selecting a delivery technique or deciding the aspect of writing to focus on; it is embedded as Hyland and Hyland (2006:13) put it in “wider sociocultural beliefs and practices that selectively activate knowledge and prompt specific processes.” This implies that the way teachers construct their feedback is influenced by their experiences, backgrounds, beliefs and

understandings of teaching and learning. Whether teachers focus on form or content, favor praise or criticism is influenced by teachers' cultural background and educational experiences (Hyland and Hyland 2001). Likewise, students' attitudes and reactions towards teacher written feedback is influenced by their cultural backgrounds and learning experiences. Whether students accept or reject teacher's comments depends heavily on their opinions and views on how these comments should be constructed (Hyland and Hyland 2001, Goldstein 2004). Therefore, I believe that it is through dialogue as a social enterprise between the teacher's beliefs about written feedback and students' reactions to that feedback that an adequate understanding of feedback dialogue can be achieved. This is in harmony, as was said before, with the social nature of EP which sees research as a social enterprise and a collegial process leading to mutual development.

2. Theoretical underpinnings of EP

The concept of Exploratory Practice was developed principally through collaborative work at the Cultura Inglesa , Rio De Janeiro , involving Dick Allwright from the Linguistics Department at Lancaster University (England) and staff members at the Rio Cultura, principally Roza Lenzuen , the Manager of Teacher Training, Development and Research in Brazil (Allwright 2000). Specifically, it was developed in reaction to Action Research and traditional research. In the late 1990's, Action Research was widely proposed and adopted as the main vehicle for this new concept of classroom research (Wallace 1998, Burns 1999). However, Allwright realized that it was "thoroughly a misguided enterprise" (Allwright 2003:118) as it did not in itself bring academic classroom researchers back into direct connection with teaching. It was heavily parasitic on the normal working lives of teachers. In sum, it was based on some misconceptions. The aim of Action Research was to improve classroom teaching by isolating practical problems and solving them one by one. This improvement was best achieved by the practitioners involved i.e. the teachers solving their classroom problems using sophisticated teaching techniques. This implied that language teaching and learning can therefore be reduced to a relatively unproblematic and asocial activity (Allwright 2003)

This pessimistic view of Action Research pushed Allwright to rethink of a non-technicist view of practitioner research, a framework that addressed fundamental issues involved in the conception of practitioners investigating their own practices. It would then be possible to see EP as a form of rethought practitioner research whose aim is to develop understanding of what goes on in the language classroom, as opposed to focusing teachers' awareness on what they themselves do or think (as in Reflective Practice), or solving problems (as in Action Research). Instead, EP works with 'puzzles' to avoid the negative connotation of problem. This is not to mean that enhanced understanding may not lead to implementing change in practice; it means that understanding is prioritized. Moreover, it considers both teachers and learners as active practitioners in the process of understanding (Dar and Geive 2013).

In summary, the seven core principles of EP are as follows (Allwright and Hanks 2009:149-154):

1. Focus on quality of life as the main issue.
2. Work to understand it before thinking about improving it.
3. Involve everybody as practitioners developing their own understandings.
4. Work to bring people together in a common enterprise.
5. Work cooperatively for mutual development.
6. Make it a sustainable enterprise.
7. Integrate the work for understanding into existing curricular practice to minimize the burden.

In line with the above description of the principles of EP, Allwright (2000) identified six stages of EP:

1. Identifying the puzzle
2. Reflecting on the puzzle
3. Monitoring
4. Taking direct action to gather data
5. Considering outcomes
6. Moving on
7. Going public

However, EP is not without limitations. Indeed, the main criticism leveled against EP is the impossibility to apply EP findings and understandings in different contexts. The response to this criticism can be found in the dichotomy Allwright developed. This dichotomy deals with “local understanding vs. global principles” (Allwright 2003:115). This implies that thinking globally entails identifying fundamental EP’s principles, while acting locally means in the light of those principles ,practitioners attempt to understand a particular puzzle in a particular classroom context. In other words, all classroom puzzles are ‘local’ ones, and so require ‘local’ solutions, solutions that respect the uniqueness of particular classroom situations and all the participants (Allwright 2003). What can be generalized are therefore the procedures involved to achieve that local understanding. In this regard, Allwright (2003:121) argues that “Learning about the investigative procedures involved may be more useful to others than any particular findings. This may be the major value, for others, of local thinking”.

3. The Study

In order to explore the dynamic dialogue between myself and a group of my students through my written feedback and students' reactions and attitudes towards this feedback, the following research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What is relationship between my personal conception of feedback and students' perception of that feedback?
2. What is the relationship between my feedback practices and my students' feedback preferences?
3. What is the effect of my written feedback on students' revision?
4. To what extent can Exploratory Practice promote dialogue between teacher and students in matters of feedback?

The Educational Context:

The present work was conducted within the English Department of Saad Dahleb University of Blida. It was undertaken in the second semester of the writing course in which students were introduced to paragraph writing.

My Role as a Teacher and Researcher

In this study, I had two roles – as the teacher and as the researcher. As the teacher of the writing class being investigated, my role was to help my students develop their writing abilities whereas my role as a researcher was two-fold: to gain a deeper understanding of my feedback practices and to assess the extent to which EP helps me and my students achieve that situated understanding.

The students' Sample

Ten first year students took part in the study. They were selected randomly from a population of 60 students. These students were already familiar with the term 'feedback'. The small sample can be explained by the fact that most researches investigating writing matters involve small case studies as these latter have proven to be more effective (Hyland and Hyland 2001). In EP's terms, learners are regarded as having a key role in developing practitioners. This entails that "Learners are both unique individuals and social beings who are capable of taking learning seriously, of taking independent decisions, and of developing as practitioners of learning (Allwright and Hanks 2009:15).

Data collection

Four research tools were used to collect data: students' drafts, students' diaries, teacher self-report and student questionnaire. These are described below.

- Description of Students' Drafts

The collection of the students' drafts started in February and ended in June. Throughout the semester, students were required to produce five well-structured and coherent paragraphs, each one illustrating a specific type of discourse

i.e. narration, description, comparison/ contrast, cause/effect and argumentation. Students were provided with the following topics:

- "Describe your friend's hometown" or "describe your hometown" (descriptive paragraph)
- "Contrast life in the city with life in the countryside" or "compare / contrast two countries of your choice" (comparison / contrast paragraph)
- "Why do some students study abroad?" Or "what are the negative effects of alcoholism?" (cause and effect paragraph)

Students were asked to keep a notebook containing their drafts of three types of discourse: description, comparison/contrast and cause/effect. In order to enhance their involvement in the writing task, they were given two writing prompts for each type of discourse. Twenty drafts (2 drafts written by each participating student), were then selected for the study.

These compositions ranged in length between 80 to 120 words each. As soon as students wrote their first drafts, I collected them and corrected them at home. Their notebooks, containing their drafts with my feedback, were handed back to students again in the following session. These latter were asked to read my feedback and revise their work at home and submit it at the next meeting. The final drafts were collected again by myself and checked for students' mistakes. Students' drafts were exploited to trace students' revision, teacher written feedback types and delivery technique as well. As for the analysis of students' revision, I used Faigley and Witte's Taxonomy of Revisions (1994) (see appendix1). I first compared students' first drafts with the final drafts. Then I coded revisions according to the aforementioned taxonomy. As for the analysis of my comments, I followed the categories described in Conrad and Goldstein's study (1999) (see appendix2).

- Description of students' diaries

In order to obtain useful insights into my students' opinions about written feedback, students were asked to keep a diary of the writing and feedback processes. The students were asked the following questions:

1. Do you think that the teacher's written feedback can help you improve your writing ability? Why?
2. What do you like/dislike in teacher written feedback?

Students were instructed to answer each question in a form of a paragraph. Once completed, the paragraphs were collected and analyzed using content analysis. The content analysis of a diary requires the creation of content areas in which similar content units can be grouped together. The interpretation of a sample of content unit causes regularities and patterns to arise (Hyland 1996).

- Description of my self-report narrative on written feedback As far as I am concerned, I wrote a personal narrative about

the aspects of writing I most emphasized. The analysis of my narrative not only informed me about my actual feedback practices, but also revealed my inherent beliefs, opinions and attitudes towards feedback. I asked myself and answered the following questions related to my feedback philosophy and my feedback practices:

Questions investigating my feedback philosophy

1. What is my philosophy or approach to responding to my students' writings?
2. How has this philosophy or approach been formed? Has it changed over time?
3. What do I think of my written feedback?
4. How do I think my students perceive the feedback I give them?
5. Why do I deliver feedback to my students' compositions?
6. What effects does my feedback have on my students?

Questions investigating my feedback practices

1. How frequently do I comment on the student' writings?
 2. What is my delivery mode for written feedback?
 3. What aspects of writing do I focus on most?
 4. What form does my written commentary take, statements or imperatives?
- Description of students' questionnaire

Students were also asked to complete a questionnaire containing partly open-ended and partly closed items. The aim was to elicit their feedback preferences and attitudes. A quantitative method was used to analyze students' responses to closed questions by doing a frequency count of all similar responses. Whenever there was an answer, either negative or positive, it was counted up as '1'. Any absence of a response was counted up as '0'. A qualitative method was used to analyze the students' responses to open-ended questions using content analysis which were reported verbatim in the analysis and interpretation.

- Description of students' interview

A 15- minute semi-structured interview was conducted in June, at the end of the second semester in order to obtain a clearer understanding of the dialogue initiated by the written feedback between myself and my students. The interview was meant to probe more elaborated and detailed data on the students' interpretation, expectations, and opinions of the feedback they received over the second semester that could not be elicited through the questionnaire. For the sake of not distorting the data, I took notes of the students' responses on separate sheets while interviewing them, and analyzed them using a key word analysis to generate categories.

4. Presentation and discussion of the results

Comparing my feedback practices and philosophies with students' perceptions of that feedback

The results obtained from the different research tools indicate that my students and I agree on the importance of giving and receiving feedback. However, when the results were scrutinized, it seemed that students expressed both positive and negative opinions and reactions towards teacher written feedback. This confirms the results of earlier studies on students ambivalent attitudes towards teacher written feedback (Cohen 1998, Radecki and Swales 1988, Cohen and Cavalcanti 1990, Leki, 1991, Enginarlar 1993, Hyland 1998, Mahfoudh 2011, Setrallah 2012)

- Students' positive opinions of teacher written feedback Regarding students' perceptions of feedback, the results

confirm the claim made by Cohen(1987), Cohen and Cavalcanti, (1990), Fathman and Whalley, 1990 and later on by Hyland (1998), Hyland and Hyland (2006) and Baker and Montgomery (2007) that students overwhelmingly do have strong positive opinions about teacher written feedback even when they do not understand it completely. Effectively, the results of the questionnaire explicitly indicate that almost all participants stated that they reflected deeply on my written feedback, they attended to my remarks and comments and scrutinized their drafts carefully. Many of them found my commentaries useful and tried to take them into consideration whenever rewriting their final drafts. The majority said that they incorporated all of my comments and remarks they received into their further writings. It is interesting to note that even when they did not understand all of my comments, some students still attempted to revise their compositions, specially their formal mistakes. For eg:

S7: "of course, I take into consideration my teacher's comments in order to ameliorate my writing skills"

S8: "yes, I think my final draft is better with the useful comments because it helps me to correct my mistakes"

S10: "the teacher feedback is always useful for me because they help me to correct mistakes"

The analysis of the students' responses to the interview questions has also revealed that my written feedback was viewed as a means of scaffolding their learning and as a powerful teaching tool . For eg:

S3: "I mean I learn from my mistakes. Sometimes, I remember the last comment and I try to correct the mistake before the teacher corrects it again"

S1: "I acquire new ideas and respect grammatical rules."

Students' strong favorable opinions about the importance of my written feedback were further confirmed with the writing assignment results. Indeed, an examination of the students' improved drafts reveals that a total of 87 comments were made, 76 of which were responded to and processed by the participating students and only 11 comments were ignored. In other words, 87% of my written feedback was used to revise the drafts. In other words, a large proportion of my written comments provided to the students' the first drafts were taken into account , which may confirm the results of the questionnaire, interview and diaries that the students did read and attended to my written comments to improve their work.

- Students' negative opinions about my written feedback However, the results of the interview and the questionnaire

indicate that some students expressed negative attitudes towards my written feedback. They showed dissatisfaction towards my written comments. Some confessed that they did not expect certain comments. Others said they did not understand the meaning of some of my remarks and comments. Still other students expressed their frustration and disliked my feedback comments written in red on their paper , or when they felt their ideas were changed and that I was appropriating their ideas.

S1: "yes sometimes I think I work well and the teacher fills my paragraph with comments that I do not expect."

S3: "...add the comments with red pen bothers me sometimes" S8: "sometimes the teacher does not transmit the feedback clearly. Sometimes, she uses ambiguous and vague comments such as "irrelevant" "rewrite it" and I do not know how to deal with it"

S6: "sometimes the teacher intervenes in my ideas. I do not like the teacher to change my ideas because I think in French and then I translate in English, so when she changes the word the meaning changes"

The results of this study seem to suggest that responding to students' writings can affect greatly students' motivation and self- esteem. Students can be devastated by too much criticism but also heartened by praise. Responding to student writing implies more than deciding whether to focus on form or on content; rather it involves delicate social interactions that can enhance or undermine the effectiveness of the comment and the 'fragile intimacy of the teacher- student relationship' (Hyland and Hyland 2003:207).

When asked whether my written feedback creates any conflict, most students argued that there is no conflict between themselves and the teacher as long as the feedback is fair and does not involve too much criticism which can lower their spirits For eg:

S3: “it depends on the teacher. Sometimes the teacher uses tough advice or criticism that will affect students self-confidence and some teachers give concise and precise advice in a gentle way”

S7: “there is no conflict between the teacher and students; if she does not give you feedback it means she does not care about you.”

While the students interviewed held both positive and negative opinions of my written feedback, there is a deep belief, on my part, that providing students with written feedback is pivotal as this latter helps students develop their writing abilities in the short and long term and in a significant way. Feedback can help students take more responsibility for their writing progress. In my self-report narrative of my written commentary, I strived to supply students’ drafts with adequate feedback to ensure appropriate revision. While commenting on the students’ paragraphs, I paid equal attention to both meaning- related and form-related issues and did not consider them separately.

The relationship between my feedback practices and students’ feedback preferences

From a close examination of the results, it became apparent that the findings of this study corroborate those of earlier research (Cohen 1987, and Cohen and Cavalcanti 1990, Leki 1990), which suggests a mismatch of two kinds:

- a mismatch between the written feedback I provided to my students and the feedback they preferred
- a mismatch between my own delivery techniques and those delivery techniques the students preferred

Indeed, in my self-report narrative and analysis of my commentary, I stated that I focused on all aspects of writing as they occurred in the students’ compositions. While this is the most recommended way of responding to students’ writings, not all participating students have liked to receive written feedback on both grammar and content. Some students preferred to have feedback on structure and text organization, but I focused on content; others had feedback on structure and content whereas they preferred receiving feedback on the structure, the organization and the content of their paragraph. Others wanted to receive feedback on content only whereas I focused on both. Still other students who received feedback on organization and vocabulary wanted feedback on organization only.

On the other hand, regarding my feedback delivery techniques, some students participating in the study did not appreciate what the technique I used, that is, direct correction, and they said their preferred method for feedback provision is making suggestions to improve an aspect of writing.

- **The shape of my written feedback**

With regard to the shape of teacher commentary, most of my comments are text specific. According to Goldstein (2004) text specific comments indicate the nature and the location of students' problems and show the teacher's involvement in students' compositions. It appears that the most used form to convey teacher written comments are Wh-questions. But there is no clear-cut evidence as to the best ways of forming ones' comments since the results of the researches which examined the relationship between comment form and the effectiveness of student revision are mixed. In Conrad and Goldstein's study (1999), for example, the syntactic structure of comments (whether they were questions, declaratives or imperatives) did not play a significant role in how effectively their participants revised using their teacher's feedback. The results of the present study show that 67 comments provided strategy for revisions while only 20 comments did not provide students with revision strategy. Conrad and Goldstein's study (1999) demonstrated that the type of problem identified needing revision was strongly related to how successful students revised their compositions. In addition to the syntactic form of my commentary, the results of this study indicate that all the comments I made were mostly indirectly stated.

- **The content of my written feedback**

As far as the content of my commentary is concerned, the results show that I gave feedback on both meaning and form-related issues as they occurred and did not consider them separately. I gave 33 comments on mechanics and 48 comments on coherence and cohesion. Therefore, I adopted an integrated approach to my feedback. Looking carefully at the results, it seems that the type of problem students were mostly asked to revise was cohesion and coherence. For example, in contrasting life in the city with that in the countryside, student 6 wrote in the first draft the following statement:

“Country side and side are contrasting in many ways. First city is very large. It has many population located in the central of the city. Moreover, city has many movements of people and cars that why caused many traffic and the most dangerous for that is the pollution spread in all the city.”

As can be seen, the above statement is not coherent. Therefore, for the sake of coherence, the teacher provided a direct correction and the result was as follows:

“Country side and city are different in many ways. The city is very large in that many people live there. Besides, the air, in the city, is not clear as many cars reject smoke.”

Then comes the problem related to lexical choice which represents 12 interventions. For example, in one paragraph which compared life in the country with life in the city, one participating student stated “life in the city is superior”. As the word “superior” is not relevant here, the teacher substitutes it with “sophisticated”.

As for the students' problems dealing with development, the results indicate that two types of development were addressed in my comments. The first type of comments asked students to develop their compositions further by adding examples, facts, or details. For example, when

comparing life in the city with life in the country side, student 8 wrote “the city provides many services and facilities of living”. Therefore, for the sake of clarity I asked her to give some examples of these services and facilities. In the final draft, student 8 provided the following examples “...such as malls, theaters”

The effect of my teacher written feedback on students’ revision

The results of this study indicate that my written feedback exerted a significantly important influence on student’s revision which led to text improvement. Indeed when writing the second draft (i.e. after pointing out errors and offering suggestions for improving students’ compositions), less written comments were provided compared to the first drafts. Statistically speaking, in the first drafts (10 paragraphs), there were a total of 83 comments; however, after receiving my written feedback, this statistics changed dramatically and the number of comments in the final draft decreased to 29. This finding supports Cohen(1978)’s, Hyland (1998)’s and later González (2012)’s studies which demonstrated that teacher written feedback helped student writers to improve their writing in subsequent drafts. With reference to the comments in their diaries, they stated that not only my written feedback allowed them to enhance their linguistic abilities, making fewer errors each time, but also enabled them to produce coherent paragraphs. Below are some examples of the students’ statements:

S5: “feedback aide me using simple language and using the suitable words structure”

S6: “teacher written feedback improves my writing; for example, it helps me to simple my ideas and makes them coherent”

S4: “teacher written feedback is very helpful in writing paragraphs and essays in the future.”

The benefits of using EP as a research methodology

The results brought about by the present study allow us to argue that EP as conceived and used for this study can help both actors, students and teacher, enhance the quality of life of the writing classroom. Although the students’ misunderstandings of my feedback were fairly important, stemming from various sources, it was found that through EP’s principles and steps, I was able to create adequate conditions for my students and myself to reach a mutual understanding of feedback preferences and practices. Therefore, the cooperation of all the participants in this dialogue as one of the most important requirements of EP created a positive spirit of complicity stemmed from involving all parties in a constant dialogue on my written feedback. This contributed to a better understanding of my feedback philosophies and practices on the one, hand and students’ feedback attitudes and preferences on the other hand.

I believe that EP can offer both the teacher and students the tools to understand each other. In this way, the gap that used to exist between the teacher and students is replaced by mutual respect and mutual understanding

As this research revealed a mismatch between the way I constructed my written feedback and the way students wishes to receive feedback, we engaged into an open written and oral dialogue with students on feedback in order to find out their feedback preferences in the aim

to understand them. The written dialogue consisted of the written feedback exchange between myself and a group of my students, questionnaire and students' diaries while the oral dialogue took the form of an interview with each student.

This open discussion allowed me to achieve an adequate understanding of students' feedback preferences and perceptions. I then understood that almost all students want to receive direct feedback in which all the comments are clearly written in complete sentences. They also asked the teacher to avoid writing vague comments such as "irrelevant" and more importantly to avoid text appropriation. In short, they prefer to receive text-specific feedback which clearly states the type of revision. Instances of their statements are given below:

S2: "Specify how the sentences should be written and avoid the red pen"

S5: "I want the teacher to show the correctness beside the mistake and avoid the red pen"

S7: "specify how the sentences should be written" S8: "I want the teacher to improve her handwriting"

S10: "well, I want her to avoid using not clear comments such as "express this alternatively" "not clear" "rewrite it"

I then attempted to tailor my written feedback accordingly. This means that a positive dialogue on feedback enhanced the quality of life of the teacher and students in the writing classroom. Interestingly, I noticed that students appreciated the efforts, the intentions and the means that were employed to generate better conditions for feedback effectiveness. They expressed their satisfaction towards the cooperation among the participants testifying the complicity between them and me to reach mutual feedback understanding. In this regard, S6 confessed that she was happy and astonished at the same time as this was the first time a teacher cares about their opinions on matters of learning and teaching. In sum, EP establishes a human relationship between the teacher and learner in terms of interpersonal trust.

As we have already explained, the notion of the classroom as a co-production between teacher and learners where the significance of the role of socialisation is fully acknowledged. In this regard, both protagonists bring to the classroom setting a set of values including personal histories, life experiences and learning/teaching expectations. These values interact with each other within the classroom as they attempt to negotiate their classroom behaviors to reach a social harmony.

5. Implications of the study: some recommendations

In this final section, some recommendations are made regarding the improvement of teacher feedback practices based on EP methodology.

: Recommendations to improve teacher feedback practices

- Communicate with one's students about one's written feedback
- Ensure that students know the rationale behind feedback provision

- Educate students about one's feedback practices.
- Raise students' awareness about the importance of revision.
- Diagnose students' feedback preferences and needs
- Reflect on one's written feedback practices
- Provide text-specific comments
- Provide clearly written comments
- Provide comments with revision strategy
- Include praise and constructive criticism
- Avoid text- appropriation

Recommendations for the effective use of EP as a methodological framework to understand classroom settings:

- Work for mutual understanding of the life of the language classroom
- Strive to improve the quality of life of the language classroom
- See yourself/ myself as an initiator of practices rather than as a consumer of pre-determined methods.
- Work with puzzles not with problems.
- Integrate research into pedagogy Conclusion:

This Exploratory Practice - based study was conducted to explore the written feedback dialogue which focuses on the dynamic exchange between the teacher feedback and students' perceptions of this feedback. It was also to investigate the extent to which teacher feedback allows for dialogue between students and teacher of a kind that promotes thinking and reflection and reach mutual understanding. The dialogue initiated by the teacher written feedback has allowed students to communicate their feedback preferences, needs

,difficulties and at the same time has enabled me, the teacher and researcher, to articulate and reflect on my feedback conceptions and philosophies. Therefore, teachers should be encouraged to constantly observe and 'notice' what is going on in their classroom setting, and in case something puzzles them, they should undertake an Exploratory Practice- based study to try to explore their practice, that is to understand and reflect on their own learning and teaching practices in order to improve them.

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Appendices

Appendix1: Faigley and Witte's Taxonomy of Revisions (1994)

Surface changes		Text-based changes	
Formal changes	Meaning preserving changes	Microstructure change	Macrostructure change
Spelling , tense and modality Abbreviation Punctuation Format	Addition Substitution Deletion Permutation Distribution consolidation	Addition Substitution Deletion Permutation Distribution consolidation	Addition Substitution Deletion Permutation Distribution Consolidation

Appendix2: Features coded for written comments. (Adapted from Conrad and Goldstein's, 1999)

Category	Meaning
Intended function of the comment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Asking for information 2. Making a request. 3. Giving information 4. Praise 5. Criticism

<p>formal characteristics of the comments</p>	<p>1.text specific comments included not included</p> <p>2. Syntactic Form: Declarative 2.2. Question Imperative. Single words Phrases</p> <p>3. Semantic/Pragmatic Content. Declaratives a. State an opinion b. Need to characterize the text c. Suggestion</p> <p>questions : a.yes/ no b.WH questions c.either /or</p> <p>4 Delivery methods 4.1.direct correction 4.2.using symbols and codes</p> <p>5 Directness: Direct Indirect</p> <p>6 Hedges: 6.1.hedged 6.2.not hedged</p> <p>7 Revision Strategy : included not included</p>
<p>Type of Revision Required</p>	<p>1 Coherence/Cohesion 2 Paragraphing 3 Content</p>

	<p>4 Purpose</p> <p>5 Lexical Choice</p> <p>6 Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Type One <p>Add Examples</p> <p>Add Facts</p> <p>Add Details</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Type Two <p>State/Address Explicitly</p> <p>More Depth</p> <p>Explain/Analyze</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• grammar/mechanics
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