EFL Learners' Attitudinal Perceptions of Corrective Feedback on Their Academic Writing Outcomes

المواقف الادراكية لمتعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية للتغذية الرجعية على نتائج كتاباتهم الأكاديمية

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Abstract: This paper examines the extent to which teacher-based (implicit/explicit) written-feedback informs English as foreign language learners' writing-practices at university. The study focuses mainly on some of the challenges that writing-learners are apt to encounter. A mixed methods design was adopted. To elicit the research data, a questionnaire was designed and distributed to a randomly chosen sample of 60 third-year-undergraduate participants (out of 123). The results reveal inconsistent views concerning the feedback type. Learners' attitudes ranged from those who highly favour direct-feedback, those who prefer indirect-feedback, to those who adopted a position of neutrality.

Keywords: English as a foreign language writing-learners; academic writing; challenges; written-feedback.

ملخص: يبحث هذا المقال مدى فعالية التغذية الراجعة الكتابية (الضمنية/ الصريحة) للأستاذ تجاه العمل الكتابي باللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية لطلبة الجامعة. وتتناول الدراسة بالأساس بعض التحديات التي يواجهها هؤلاء الطلبة في التعبير الكتابي. ولتحقيق أهداف البحث، اعتمد ت الدراسة علي منهج بحث مختلط الأساليب. اذ تم جمع البيانات اللازمة من خلال تصميم استبيان وتوزيعه

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عشـوائيا علي عينة تتكون من 60 مشـاركا (من اصل 123)-طلبة السـنة الثالثة. وأفرزت النتائج المحصل
عليها بعد تحليل البيانات تباين في مواقف الطلبة فيما يخص صنف التغذية الراجعة. فأنحصرت
مواقفهم ما بين من اسـتحسـن التعليقات المباشـرة، الى من يفضل الضمنية منها، والبقية اتخذوا
موقف الحياد تجاه القضية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: متعلمي الكتابة بالانجليزية كلغة أجنبية؛ الكتابة الأكاديمية؛ التحديات؛ الملاحظات
المكتوبة.

1. Introduction

The issue of feedback is by all accounts a common academic concern. As a starter, we will adopt the suppositional statement that composition and correction/critical feedback interweave. Of such mutual interactive practices is one occurring between teachers and their respective learners' written products. In here, the relationship becomes, thus, that of the writer student and the reader instructor. Nonetheless, this point had been raising a sharp dispute among some scholars. On that ground, corrective feedback is still a topical issue (see e.g. Bozorgian & Yazdani, 2021 ; Cunynghame, 2020; Ferris, 1997, 1999; Truscott, 1996; Wei, W., & Cao, Y., 2020). This paper, in the first place, attempts to cast light on some of the students' views about the role of assessment to academic writing expositions. The purpose, henceforward, is to disclose whether feedback process is a useful contributory factor for learners' writing production; hence, it basically seeks to find answers to two main questions: Which sort of feedback (direct or indirect) is more applicable? How do writing learners perceive corrective feedback to their production?

2. Literature Review

The efficiency of error correction on students' practice for academic writing has consistently been a state of divergent debates among educators in specific terms and researchers in general. May it go without doubt, in recent times, a considerable number of expert researchers (see Bransford, J., Cocking, R. R., & Brown, A. L., 2000; Chickering, A, & Gamson, Z., 1987; Semke, 1984; Shute, 2008; Sommers, 1982; Stiggins, 2002; Truscott & Hsu, 2008) have explored the issue of whether instructive feedback is a useful factor for language students generally, and for foreign language writers specifically. Since it makes well common sense to assume that, as a rule of thumb, composing is a demandingly tiring task, it is a perchance legitimate judgment to claim that a foreign language student writers' language is likewise never more exciting than when they get things wrong. When they produce proper

sentences they may not uncover much about what is happening in their minds as well as the respective consequential output of their academic writing. But, in the other way around, when an error is made, some effort of investigation will focus on its typical nature attempting to figure out why it was made. Errors can hold essential indications of information about the way of the composing process.

Research findings (e.g. Leki, 1991; Narciss and Huth, 2004) have put on a display that providing students with constructive remarks about their mistakes, and involving fruitful comments can reliably assist them to enhance their performance, i.e. readings have affirmed that making error analysis and contrastive analysis can encourage and facilitate learning and help students enhance their written work towards a better production (Ferris, 2010; Hattie, 2011). Instructors have affirmed that feedback— more often than not—yielded positive outcomes.

It is a reliable standard that instructor's correction always stands as a referential implementation that grants to learners the appropriate treatment strategies that help improve their creativity. In the recent decades, a number of researchers (e.g. Ferris, 2010; Truscott, 1996; Williams, J., 2003) investigated the importance of corrections to a large number of student writers with respect to a wide range of mistake assortments. Their analyses yielded abundant positive findings stemming out from students' reactive attitudes to correction preference, and afterward draw up the right choice— basing on them to cure their composition deficiencies—to refine their written work weaknesses once more. At a time, learner students themselves, rigorously, maintain determination to advocate mistake rectification as a successful implement that helps much for enhancing the academic writing style and stimulate inspiration (Hoska, D. M., 1993; Reid, 1994; Muranoi, 2000; Nicol and Macfarlane• Dick, 2006)

Among the leading accountabilities that should be taken into consideration are constructive feedback and assessment the teacher marks on the student's submitted papers. Raimes, A. (1988) has set down some procedural modes instructors have to bear in mind as a primary concern when it truly matters to remark on students' written work: 'Correcting' the mistakes by denoting the wrong components; 'reminding' learners to recall or reconsider specific features; 'questioning' in particular the sense of interrogative inquiry keeping in mind the target determination to raise students' consciousness and build up their basic critical shrewdness; assessing learners' progress, for example, doing different exercises, activities,

tasks and provide feedback remarks; emoting like 'praise' (nice, good, excellent, and so forth) to express recommendation and appreciation.

3. Data Collection and Methods

As a starting point, from the presupposition that the writer students are almost always going through several dynamic challenges which are encountered upon their academic writing assignments, the successional evaluation process plays a crucial role in that regard. Thereupon, the instructor's evaluative written-feedback——to promoting students' writing achievements——is, indeed, one fundamental critical component that seizes a significant part in this aspect. The investigation, therefore, revolves around writer-students' reflections in relation to the teacher's written-feedback.

To set out an appropriate direction for the study, there must be a guiding research design. In this regard, the mixed methods research design is the most suitable tool for exploratory studies (Gay, L. R., Mills, & Airasian, 2009; Mertens, 2010). A research of that type is apt to provoke some issues of deep importance; particularly that it explores the students' own beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions in relation to the instructor's provisional corrective feedback.

3.1 The Research Sample

The study at hand tends to be a quantitative research. That said, the framework reasonably adopted a survey design aiming at gathering the possible descriptive data—— concerning the elemental perceptions that writer-students have ascertained towards the ongoing writing challenges they face all along. Written-Feedback for instance, is at the lead of such course of action. To accomplish this task, a random sample survey appointed under investigative lens. A sample survey of 60 student participants (LMD 3rd year at Khenchela University) is the sub-sample of the whole population (123 students) of the academic year 2019; a questionnaire survey was administered to them in order to obtain the needed research data. Questionnaires are one of the commonly familiar means particularly in educational research on account of the fact that it is highly recommended for data collection particularly when dealing with the human sciences' subjects. Moreover, it permits to have the efficient available quantitative analysis and the use of inferential statistics. The gained statistic results from the administered questionnaire which is distributed to the student participants are presented in the presented table (1) and figure (1).

4. Reading and Analysis

From the Table (1) and the figure (1) under:

Item (1) represents the participants' gender. The purpose thus is to ensure that the sample survey integrates males and females undifferentiatedly. Obviously, the number of the females (88,33%) overweighs the number of males (11,66%). This may well be justifiable in that females have a kind of tendency to join the foreign languages stream more than males do. The integration of both genders under the same circumstances drives to certain representative indications and validity of the outcomes.

Item (2) attempts to sort out the students' reactions towards the corrective feedback on their academic writing tasks. A large number of participants (93,33%) confirm that they favor the teacher corrections. On the other hand, 6,66% represents only the participants who show their disapproval towards the correction feedback.

Item (3) brings about to the view which type of feedback (direct/ indirect) students favour. A great number of the respondent students (76,66%) express their obvious full tendency towards direct feedback. The remaining portion (23,33%) prefer indirect feedback.

Item (4) is a complimentary subdivision item which places at participants' disposal a chance to talk things over. This opportunity is helping hand to write down the tendencies and spell out the words clearly. Moreover, student participants can transparently express a variety of ides about their adaptable choice. Through this item, participants provided a variety of thoughts at a proportion of 85%; while the 15% provided no answer.

Item (5) addresses the role of feedback in mistakes correction; whether it is a helpful or unhelpful factor in respect to fixing the errors. The biggest number of participants (71,66%) opted for *"of course"* as opposed to the remaining minority (26,66%) who opted for *'Sometimes'* recognize that corrective feedback is a useful tool to renovate the committed mistakes. Saying that in other words, feedback on student's writing assignments is a blessing profitability to put the bits and pieces on the right track.

Item (6) also is a deliberate free-room for the participants to fill up in the gap the notions and thoughts that may have happened to escape the survey design attention. In addition to that, the sub-item supplies students with restfulness to involve self-expression towards certain inclination. Moreover, it is a warranted corner to assimilate any further discussions,

opinions, and arguments as was provided with an instructional statement encouraging the freedom of working out such perspectives. Within this item, 83,33% of members recorded a variety of answers, while 16,66% stood neutral.

5. Discussion and Implication

In light of the teaching and learning pedagogical prospects, the above tabular and figure results present the obtained perceptions from questioning EFL leaners at ABBESS Laghrour University towards the instructor's written corrective feedback on their classroom writing-productions. That is, the investigation concentrates on the effectiveness of the provisional corrective feedback (implicit and explicit) implementations on EFL students' outcomes. Following this, the statistical demonstrations unveil different salient aspects about the corrective feedback on students' practices in language classes. Of course, the participant students' attitudes in this sense are inconsistent, and they comparably split up into subgroup inclinations; i.e. students hold divergent viewpoints in regard to the direct and the indirect written corrective feedback when provided by the instructors across their written productions.

5.1 Direct Written-Feedback

The procedural way instructors evaluate second language learners' writing is a contentious heated topic of discussion that has recently attracted extensive interest on the part of researchers and scholar teachers alike. In formal writing assignments, learners at dissimilar university settings in general, and EFL writing students in particular, constantly come across abundant measurement standards that accompany the operational instructive categorization of their degrees; hence, the communal liaison between writing teacher's feedback and students' response have strongly been launching the research field in this guise. Thereupon, we approached a sample of students to investigate the correlation between teacher written feedback and different students' reactive attitudes. Starting from the students' questionnaire—it is worthy to point out that student participants were asked of whether they do like their teacher to provide them with feedback on writing assignments or not; and so, it is only a little portion of 6,66% (4 students out of 60 participants) who opted for 'No— choice' that represents the disagreement opinion against teacher's given-feedback. Controversially, the vast majority (93,33%) of students prefer teacher's feedback, especially, when it is provided directly for the reason that the direct correction will not leave any misunderstanding or doubtful response about the committed mistakes. Accordingly,

learners would recognize the faults they committed and hence work on correcting them prospectively. One student informant writes that:

"*Direct correction is better to know exactly where my errors are; therefore, I would like to address the errors straightforwardly...Even more, that is much better for me to remember and try to discuss with my teacher*".

Within the same wavelength and amongst other voices, another respondent student maintains:

"*Actually, in writing tasks, I like to be corrected directly so I can spot my mistakes and correct them, because direct feedback improves my writing accuracy over time.*"

From these views, the more directly the teacher corrects errors and states the mistakes the better students learn from those corrections and statements. Direct correction then helps students to become more aware of the mistakes they commit in their writing. In addition, it assists them more to memorizing the correct answer, focusing directly on mistakes, and avoiding them in the future.

5.2 Indirect Feedback

Indirect corrective-error indicates to the implicit feedback method while the teacher may only resort to allocate and allude to some typical/or all-in error cases that have already been committed by writer learners, but the teacher offers no tangibly clear answers, whereby giving chance to the learner to make a diagnostic analysis and find out the convenient remedy. In reference to such those issues, indirect corrective feedback, without any doubt, has its advocate supportive welcomes attributed to some writing-learners who cling on to the leaning of their own accord. While 76,66% of participants (the majority) favour direct feedback, some participant students (23,33%) support *indirect feedback*. Subsequently, the conviction then springs out to the persuasive belief that *implicit feedback* (rather than explicit feedback) is a convenient satisfactory manner to a number of situations; forasmuch some individual-participants characterized that the former, for certain, does offer better chances to learn passable bits and pieces throughout venturesome trial, via a contemplating process, and via discovering their own mistakes. Within this line, students accept as true that implicit correction eagerly raises their deep mindful motivation for making out the efforts to critically think how to get over the troubles. In addition, participants maintain that implicit feedback is sometimes a useful aspect that puts forward a further alternative re-check to

figure out the faults. In other words, this process urges to think a bit more consciously and challenge one's self somehow to deal with the committed mistakes.

5.3 In writing tasks, is written-feedback a helpful factor for students to fix their errors?

In response to the question addressed of whether feedback helps them in their learning course in general and in the writing process in particular, the respondent students provided varying answers. Surprisingly, one case (a participant who opted for *"No" –choice*) represents the rate 1,66 % argues that *"I do not care at all about the feedback"*; suchlike pessimistic claims on the part of learners may very likely trace their origin to the psychological drives, disinterest to make progress, feeling uncomfortable in learning, being indifferent about the stream of the study, etc. Arguably enough, 71,66 % of participants claim that feedback *"definitely"* helps them fix their errors. Hence, feedback maximizes the learners' capacity to refresh their information and get new knowledge; it leads to acquisition of new vocabulary and derive on the correct spelling of words, settling grammatical issues, and the like. Simultaneously, in this regard, 26,66%   of the respondents state that feedback— particularly in writing process—*sometimes* helps, and other times does not. It helps in being more careful and becoming aware of the pitfalls to shun in the future. Moreover, the students declare that once the flaws are highlighted, they will be more heedful not to commit the same faults again, and will by default work on fixing them. Furthermore, some participants argue that *"sometimes"* feedback does not help much, as it leads to forgetting the new provided information while it is hard to memorize all the corrections (the action is a taxing problem, it needs great efforts).

Table 1. Summary Data Results

Item	Option	Students N/60	Ratio%	Total %
1-What is your gender ?	Male	7	11,66%	100%
	Female	54	88,33%	
2-In writing tasks, do you like your teacher to provide you with feedback?	Yes	56	93,33%	100%
	No	4	6 ,66%	
3-Do you favor:	Direct feedback ?	46	76,66%	100%
	Indirect feedback ?	14	23,33%	
4-Please, can you say why?	Reported answers	51	85%	
	No answers provided	9	15%	100%
5-Does feedback help you fix your errors?	Of course	43	71,66%	
	Sometimes	16	26,66%	100%
	Never	1	1,66%	
6-Please, Clarify how?	Reported answers	50	83,33%	
	No answer provided	10	16,66%	100%

Table 1. Summary Data ResultsFig.1. Summary Data Results
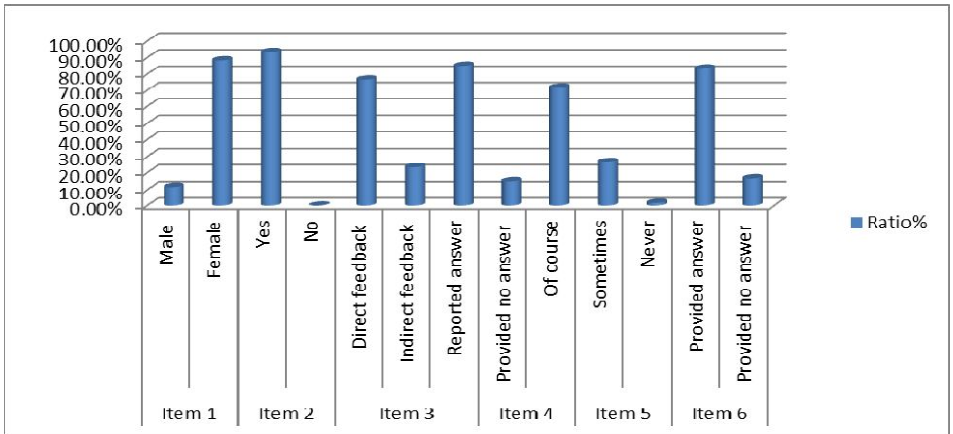
6. Conclusion

The study cast lights on the issue of *EFL writing learners*' perceptions of teacher *corrective feedback* and its effect on their *academic writing* outcomes. Through this research, the results obviously uncovered a variety of participants' assortments towards corrective feedback: those who are in total agreement with direct explicit feedback as opposed to those in full preference for implicit feedback, as well the tiny minority taking a neutral stance. By general consensus, other things being equal, feedback is of essence a worthy task with ultimate pay-offs to undertake on the part of instructors for the benefit of their writer-students in academic writing.

The study coincided with the Covid-19, and was conducted during the first wave and early months of the pandemic, after the *Algerian Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research* suddenly announced that universities and educational centers should be closed. Because of that, a number of limitations need to be considered. This study was limited in terms of the small number of participants that were available; and due to that, the abtained results are not generalizable. For more conclusive results, future research is required to include a greater number of partcipant students. It is also recommended that comparative and larger in scope studies be conducted with students from different universities. It is suggested as well that similar studies be conducted using interviews to obtain more details about the students' respective attitudes. While the present study was of a descriptive design that used only self-report survey, it would be better for future studies in this sense to triangulate the survey with teachers' actual testimony concerning the provisional written feedback to figure out the degree of consistency of the students' answers.

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