

**Developing students' argument-building skills in essay writing through oral
and written feedback. 2022**

Abstract

It is essential for language learners to get feedback either from peers or teachers because feedback is helpful for students to achieve the target language. In writing class, it is common for teachers to give written and oral feedback during the learning process, yet the teachers' written feedback is sometimes not well-understood by the students because the feedback are not further clarified by teachers. This research examined the role and effectiveness of oral and written feedback in developing students' argument-building skills, student uptake as well as student and teacher perception of feedback while writing essays in ESL classrooms. We planned to use a number of feedback types as oral - Teacher-Student conferencing, Peer review, Whole class discussion and written corrective feedback - as explicit, implicit and uncoded. Learners considered all types of feedback fruitful as they support them in writing essays.

Key words: *corrective feedback, teacher-student conferencing, explicit, implicit, uncoded*

Relevance and Problem Justification

According to the results of the external summative assessment, majority of students could not cope well with the writing assignments. By analyzing the high-school students' works we detected some common mistakes that most students made in writing formal essays. Learners might go off-topic providing irrelevant information; due to insufficient evidence and unclear reasoning their arguments happened to be weak and not extended, and they also found it difficult to support their claims. These challenges are widely documented among L2 learners (Miller & Pessoa, 2016). Research consistently identifies feedback as a powerful tool for improving writing skills (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Written corrective feedback has been shown to improve accuracy (Bitchener et al., 2005), while even minimal feedback encourages self-revision (Ismail et al., 2008). Addressing this need aligns with the broader goal of improving academic writing and developing critical thinking through argumentation skills.

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of the study was to investigate ESL students' perceptions and attitudes towards oral and written feedback they receive for their essays aimed at developing argumentation skills. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What is the relationship between feedback and learners' uptake in writing?
2. How effective is written and oral feedback in encouraging students to develop their argument-building skills in essay writing?
3. What are the most effective ways of feedback that support students to develop their argument-building skills?

Theoretical Framework

Finding the best ways to teach is another challenge. That is possibly why Brown (p.340 2001) contends that "we are still exploring ways to offer optimal feedback to student writing." Shintani and Ellis (2013) revealed that uncoded feedback leaves the student to diagnose and correct the error himself. Ahmadi, Maftoon and Mehrdad, (2012) found that in EFL writing classes it is advised to incorporate both feedback types (implicit and explicit), keeping in mind that there is no single feedback strategy which works for all students, in all situations and with all the variety of errors. Hyland and Hyland, (2019) disclosed that providing feedback to students, whether in the form of written commentary, error correction, teacher-student

conferencing, or peer discussion is recognized as one of the ESL writing teacher's important tool.

Based on research two forms of corrective feedback were considered: written feedback (explicit, implicit and uncoded) and oral feedback - Teacher-Student conferencing, Peer review, Whole class discussion.

Methodology

A mixed-methods design was adopted for data collection in the present study. Both quantitative and qualitative data integrated to address the research aims previously outlined – surveys (to collect quantitative data) and focus group discussion of students with reviews of their documents (as the primary source of qualitative data).

As most types of oral feedback is completed by a teacher in the classroom, the role of teacher observation is essential in encouraging students to improve their argument-building in writing. Throughout this study teachers observed learners in the classroom to collect relevant information and data regarding the effectiveness of oral and written types of feedback. Teachers' notes allowed to avoid bias and to record details objectively.

To gain more qualitative data, a focus group discussion (FGD) with 5 students was conducted towards the end of the data gathering period to investigate learners' views, perceptions, and beliefs surrounding feedback in essay writing. Focus group discussion enabled to explore the meanings of survey findings that cannot be explained statistically, the range of views on a topic of interest.

Concerning quantitative data, a four-item questionnaire was used to obtain the learners' attitudes toward various corrective feedback modes. It is a closed-form questionnaire containing four multiple-choice items to which 24 participants are requested to respond by choosing one of the given corrective feedback modes that they prefer to receive.

Implementation (Research Process)

The research was undertaken after going through the Action Research cycle of planning, action, observation, analyses and reflection. During the planning phase, suitable feedback strategies were chosen from a review of the literature on effective writing instruction. In action stage various forms of feedback were provided to the students, in the form of written feedback and oral feedback through teacher-student conferencing, peer review and whole-class discussions. Throughout the process of implementation, teachers observed students systematically with respect to engagement, and tracked their progress in developing writing and argumentation skills. In the last stage, data obtained from student's essays, answers to the questionnaires and the results of the focus group discussions were analyzed to assess the success of the feedback strategies, as well as to reflect on the consequences of the feedback strategies for the development of the student's writing.

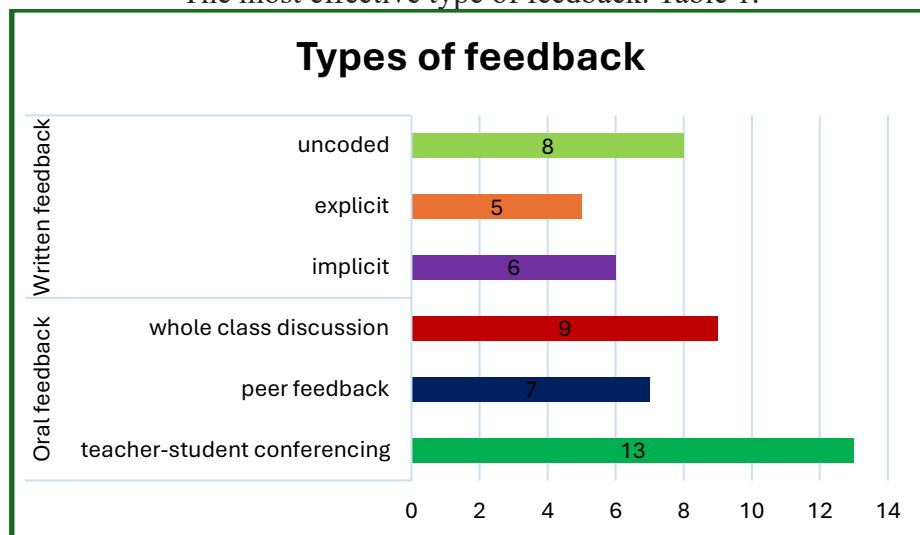
Results and Key Findings

Document analysis based on learners' essays, which were collected, read, reviewed by a teacher and returned, demonstrated significant changes regarding the layout and argumentation eventually. According to the analysis of summative assessment per unit and per term learners began to earn better grades and higher test scores on writing in relation to their previous exam results.

The results of the questionnaire illustrated that in comparison with the written corrective types oral feedback is more valuable, positive and effective. Among oral feedback they defined the teacher-student conferencing as the most effective type that enable them to understand their mistakes in detail. Even though teacher-student conferencing was time-consuming and organized out-of-class time, they found this type of feedback more effective to build arguments and recognize their errors.

Among written corrective feedback uncoded feedback was considered better than implicit and explicit types of feedback. In FGD students pointed out that though uncoded feedback is less positive to get, through self-revision they are more aware about their mistakes, and self-correction will facilitate them to remember and avoid the same mistakes further. The findings of Bijami's study (2013) also demonstrated that self-revision would make it possible to help learners think critically and upgrade their independence.

The most effective type of feedback. Table 1.



Overall, all participants admit that all types of feedback are effective and support them to improve their written and argument-building skills. The findings of Alvira's study (2016) also presented that the appliance of any feedback would yield positive results by encouraging students to advance their writing skills.

Mansourizadec (2014) divided students into 3 groups with different types of feedback. Although all improved accuracy of writing, the oral feedback group experienced the most progress and considered the exercise more practical and time-efficient. Similarly, our learners preferred oral feedback. The study also underlines the importance of teacher feedback, although time constraints commonly mean that individual support is limited.

One of the types of feedback used in the classroom was peer feedback. According to Suh's study (2005) written corrective feedback turned out to be more efficient than peer-review sessions. Students' language competence might be a hindrance to arrange peer feedback activity in the classroom as the favourable implementation of peer review can be available only when all learners are capable to provide constructive feedback. During focus group discussion our learners mentioned this fact either.

The research done by Küçükali (2017) showed that there is a close relationship between feedback and learners' uptake regarding writing. The empirical findings indicated that receiving more detailed meaningful feedback will promote learners develop their writing skills and show better results at exams. During the latest international exam our learners displayed better results in writing and proved that constructive feedback play an important role in encouraging students to make a progress.

Practical Recommendations

It is recommended to teachers to improve their feedback practice in English learning classroom:

- Teacher Training and collaboration play a vital role in encouraging teachers use efficient techniques and different approaches of feedback, as well as, when and how to give feedback in their classrooms.
- Teachers should be more concerned about using different approaches of feedback in their classrooms as students are individuals with different backgrounds. The same type of

feedback may not work for all learners; therefore, it should be carefully selected depending on the needs of students.

- To conduct effective teacher-student conferences, teachers need to be patient, because providing quick solutions is not necessarily the best way to assist students in developing new skills.

Conclusion

In conclusion, each type of feedback was acknowledged effective for students in the classroom. It is not important what type of feedback is given, but it is most important how useful is given feedback for students. Nevertheless, participants of this study found oral feedback more advantageous and fruitful in terms of learning and attainment.

Both whole-class discussion and teacher-student conference were helpful, still learners gave preference to the latter in enhancing their understanding on argument-building in essays. One-on-one interactions through writing conferences provided opportunities for students to showcase their writing styles, while teachers could recognize their students' strengths and weaknesses. Peer review was not always successfully conducted due to learners' different language competence.

Learners valued the significance of both explicit and implicit feedback in dealing with language mistakes; however, uncoded feedback was recognised the best for them to reconsider errors, self-correct and present evidence.

Overall, oral feedback combined with written feedback would be more acceptable and practical for greater performance in essay writing.

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