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Feedback Approaches in Foreign and Second Language (L2) Writing

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Feedback Approaches in Foreign and Second Language (L2) Writing

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Feedback Approaches in Foreign and Second Language (L2) Writing

by

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Written corrective feedback is extensively used in second language writing courses. Although some think it detrimental to student learning (i.e. Truscott, 1996), much research over the last decade has proven a place for written corrective feedback in the classroom. The present report seeks to review literature on such feedback. This includes research on more recent approaches such as dynamic written corrective feedback, computer-based feedback, concordance use as feedback, and peer feedback. The report discusses pedagogical implications and areas for future research.

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Introduction

Together with its counterparts, reading, listening, and speaking, writing in a foreign or second language (L2) has long been a part of foreign language (FL) curriculum. In fact, students and teachers alike come to expect writing activities in their language courses. A growing body of research, most of which relates to writing in English as a Second or Foreign Language (ESL or EFL, respectively) seeks to meet those expectations by examining the efficacy of writing in the classroom (Reichelt, 2001).

Generally, there are two orientations to writing: the process-oriented approach and the product-oriented approach. Research into the effects on FL writers of the process approach or the use of pedagogical practices conventionally associated with process approaches have pointed to generally positive outcomes (Reichelt, 2001). This includes ESL writing research and practice (e.g., Ferris, 1995; Kelly, 1992; Reyes, 1991) as well as pedagogical literature (e.g., Hall, 1993) (as cited in Reichelt, 2001).

In process-oriented classrooms, learners may be encouraged to write several drafts, getting feedback from their teachers or peers, and ultimately make a thoughtful revision or final draft. The provision of useful feedback to learners on how they can improve is a major feature of formative assessment (Fulcher, 2010) and can aid in writing instruction and learner development. In addition, the creation of instances for feedback by peers is the very essence of collaborative process-based writing (Salih, 2013).

Early studies point to the effectiveness of comments on the content of student writing but not on its linguistic accuracy (e.g., Kepner, 1991; Lalande, 1982; Semke, 1982, 1984 as cited in Reichelt, 2001). Early research also suggests that marking of errors may have no positive effect on students' writing (Reichelt, 2001). However, the extent to which foreign language learners

benefit from written corrective feedback has been debated at length since Truscott (1996) mounted a case for its abolition (Bitchener, 2008) and several current studies reveal opposing results.

Research shows that teachers often strongly believe in written corrective feedback and its inclusion in a language program. Moreover, Truscott's idea of correction-free instruction may be unrealistic, as it can be "difficult for teachers to renounce the established practice of giving feedback on student errors in writing" (Lee, 2003, p. 217). This is especially the case in the L2 language classroom, where students often attach a great deal of importance to writing accuracy and are eager to obtain feedback on their errors (Cohen, 1987; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lee, 1997; Leki, 1991 as cited in Lee, 2003).

Recently, the role of computers in assessing students' written work has become a subject of inquiry. With increased class size and the emergence of online courses, instructors often do not have the time to give the type of attention needed to written work. Thus, giving feedback via computer in a process called computer-based, or e-feedback, has arisen as a possible solution. In fact, the use of computers in assessing writing may be "pedagogically desirable as it can be integrated with existing assessment methods and strategies, increase the frequency of feedback, and broaden the range of assessment" (Bull & McKenna, 2003 as cited in Ebyary & Windeatt, 2010, p. 140).

If the area of FL writing is to develop beyond its current state, however, it is crucial that more well-designed research be undertaken on the effects of grammar treatments, computer use, task types, extensive reading and writing, strategy training, process instruction, and feedback. (Reichelt, 2001).

Discussion

This report reviews some of the relevant research regarding corrective feedback in L2 writing, specifically the use of written corrective feedback (WCF), dynamic written corrective feedback, computer-based feedback, concordance use as feedback, and peer feedback. However, delving more closely into practitioner perspectives can demonstrate how feedback practices are actually used within a classroom setting, leading to further research questions and increased pedagogical effectiveness. Accordingly, it is best to examine current educational perspectives prior to drawing conclusions of current research.

Practitioner's Perspectives

Although some researchers maintain that WCF may do more harm than good (e.g. Truscott, 1996), teachers continue to spend large amounts of time on such feedback practices in their classroom.

Evans, et al. (2010) conducted a study of 1053 ESL teachers who responded to an online survey of 24 questions in order to explore disconnect between research and L2 teacher practice in using WCF. Most of the teachers had an L1 of English and had many years of teaching experience at the university-level. The survey specifically looked at the extent to which current L2 writing teachers provide WCF and what determines whether or not practitioners choose to provide it. An analysis of the data revealed that WCF is used extensively in L2 writing by 92% of teachers. A limitation is that the measures examined in this study were based on self-report data. Although this approach yielded results that were both valid and insightful for the study's specific context and purpose, additional researchers may also want to use external measures to examine teacher WCF practices.

Lee (2003) conducted a study on L2 writing teachers' perspectives, practices and problems regarding error feedback. Data were analyzed from responses to 206 questionnaires filled out by 206 secondary English teachers in Hong Kong; follow-up telephone interviews were conducted with 19 participants. The questionnaire consisted of both open and closed-ended questions and asked about teachers' existing error feedback process, their perspective on error feedback, and any concerns. Semi-structured follow-up interviews provided information about salient aspects of the questionnaire results. The results of the study show that "although selective marking is recommended both in the local English syllabus and error correction literature, the majority of teachers mark errors comprehensively" (Lee, 2003, p. 216). Overall, teachers tend to be concerned with the immediate goal of helping students avoid the same errors, rather than equipping them with the tools to edit and avoid errors long-term. Moreover, although they are spend a lot of time marking student writing, teachers' error correction practices are not always consistent with their beliefs or current research.

It is concluded from this research that the majority of language teachers deem WCF as a necessary part of the L2 learning process. Teachers largely find errors as a source of concern, and believe that marking errors can help students to learn certain linguistic features.

Additionally, students often measure their performance on the absence of errors (Gaskell & Cobb, 2004). However, there is still debate on which errors to correct and many teachers mark errors comprehensively. A careful look at current research may help teachers to use their time more wisely, marking only certain errors, and/or training students to self-edit.

Written Corrective Feedback

When reviewing their students' texts, L2 writing teachers can give feedback on a wide range of issues such as the text's content, organization, and vocabulary that is used. However, the

type of feedback that has received most of researchers' attention are responses to L2 learners' non-target-like production, which have been commonly referred to as instances of WCF or feedback on language use (Beuningen, 2010; Storch, 2010).

Bitchener (2008) studied the effects of direct corrective feedback and written and oral meta-linguistic explanation on L2 writing accuracy through the following research questions: 1) “Does accuracy in the use of two functions of the English article system vary over time? 2) Does accuracy in the use of these features vary according to the type of corrective feedback provided? 3) Does accuracy in the use of these features vary as a result of the interaction of feedback type and time?” (Bitchener, 2008, p. 109). The participants of the study were 75 low-intermediate international ESL students in New Zealand. These students were divided into four treatment groups: direct corrective feedback, written and oral meta-linguistic explanation; direct corrective feedback and written meta-linguistic explanation; direct corrective feedback only; and a control group that received no corrective feedback. Students produced three pieces of writing (pre-test, immediate post-test, and delayed post-test) that described what was happening in a given picture. Two functional uses of the English article system (referential indefinite “a” and referential definite “the”) were targeted in the feedback. Results found that the accuracy of students who received written corrective feedback in the immediate post-test outperformed those in the control group. It also found that the level of performance was retained two months later. A limitation of the study is that it focused on only two functional uses of the English article system; however, this can also be considered a strength.

Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima, (2008) similarly studied that effects of focused and unfocused WCF on accuracy. This study included 49 students enrolled in EFL classes in a national university in Japan with six years of English instruction. Using a pre-test–immediate

post-test–delayed post-test design, the study compared the effects of focused and unfocused WCF on linguistic accuracy. The convention studied was the accuracy with which learners used the English indefinite and definite articles to denote first and anaphoric reference in written narratives. There were two experimental groups which consisted of two classes of 18 students in a 90-minute English reading class for 15 weeks. The control group was an oral communication class of 13 students. The focused group received correction of only article errors on three written narratives while the unfocused group received correction of article errors alongside corrections of other errors (Ellis, et al., 2008). The researchers found that both treatment groups receiving focused and unfocused WCF made gains from pre-test to post-tests on both an error correction test and on a test involving a new piece of narrative writing. They also outperformed the control group (which received no correction) on the second post-test. It should be noted that the control group was notably weaker than the two experimental groups, and this could be considered a limitation of the study. In addition, they concluded that WCF was equally effective for the focused and unfocused groups pertaining to accuracy.

Despite early criticism, researchers conclude that WCF has the ability to foster second language acquisition (SLA) and lead to accuracy development in that WCF offers learners opportunities to notice the gaps in their developing L2 systems, test inter-language hypotheses, and engage in metalinguistic reflection leading to SLA. (e.g., Beuningen, 2010; Bitchener, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008).

Dynamic Written Corrective Feedback

In 2010, Hartshorn, Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-krause, and Anderson introduced dynamic written corrective feedback: an instructional methodology that includes feedback and a principled approach to pedagogy which students need to maximize their opportunity to write

more accurately. Dynamic WCF was developed in response to L2 writing teachers' question: why correct student errors if it does not lead to academic achievement? The methodology is based on four assumptions: 1) students desire to improve their linguistic accuracy (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005); 2) students expect to have their writing errors marked (e.g. Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1995; Guénette, 2007; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Leki, 1991; Truscott, 1996); 3) students can improve their linguistic accuracy with appropriate error correction (Bitchener, 2008; Ferris, 2002;) and 4) error correction can be consequential when it is manageable, meaningful, timely, and constant (as cited in Evans, et al., 2010).

Dynamic WCF operates under two principles: 1) feedback reflects what the individual learner needs most as demonstrated by what he produces, and 2) tasks and feedback are manageable, meaningful, timely, and constant for both the learner and teacher (Hartshorn, et al., 2010). In the dynamic corrective feedback model, students write a series of 10-minute paragraphs at the beginning of almost every class period throughout the course of a semester. They are instructed to follow the conventions of good paragraph writing, be as linguistically accurate as possible, and make the content substantive (Evans, et al., 2010). After 10 minutes, the teacher collects the paragraphs and marks them for lexical and syntactical accuracy using establish error correction symbols and returns them during the next class period. Students then tally errors by type, edit, and re-submit the paragraph for a second review. The instructor indicates any errors with a check mark, circle, or underline and returns them to the students for error correction, if necessary. Steps are repeated until the student has an error-free paragraph.

In Hartshorn, Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-krause, and Anderson's (2010) exploratory study, researchers examined the effects of dynamic WCF instructional strategies on ESL writing accuracy within the overall context of written communicative competence

(rhetorical competence, fluency and complexity). Specifically, they compared mean accuracy scores, rhetorical competence scores, fluency scores, and complexity scores between the treatment and control group. The study included 47 advanced ESL students in the United States of similar age split into two groups: those receiving dynamic WCF and a control group receiving traditional WCF. Researchers employed a 30-minute pre-test and post-test essays consisting of an argument essay task. At the pre-test, the groups were not significantly different. At post-test, the treatment group outperformed the control group (made notable gains in accuracy scores). They also found a significant effect of time and interaction between time and group. Although the study supports the use of the dynamic WCF, it should be noted that description was given on how feedback was given for the contrast group and procedure; means and analyses for other measures were not reported completely.

In a separate study by Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, and Wolfersberger (2010), the dynamic written corrective feedback instructional methodology was tested in two classes of 27 advanced-low ESL student participants enrolled in an Applied Grammar course in order to improve their English for academic purposes. Student motivation was considered generally high as all students desired to matriculate in universities in the United States. The goal of the course was “to help students improve their ability to recognize and correct common grammar errors in their own writing” (Evans, et. al, 2010, p. 456). In this study, researchers tested whether linguistic accuracy improved in student paragraph writing over a 13-week semester when dynamic written corrective feedback is used. No control group was used. During the course of the semester, students wrote an average of 31 paragraphs and an approximately four timed essays (30 minutes each) in class. These writing assignments all received teacher feedback following the principles of dynamic WCF as explained earlier and focused almost exclusively on form

errors. Students were required to correct errors and resubmit their work until it was error-free. Students also utilized tally sheets, edit logs, and error lists. The teacher scored each paragraph when it was first submitted using a holistic scoring rubric: 75% for linguistic accuracy and 25% for the content. Wigglesworth (2008) has reported error-free clauses (EFC) to be the most precise measure of writing accuracy. Accordingly, paragraphs from each student's first and fourth sets were analyzed for EFC instead of T-units, which have a long been known as effective measures. Data was collected through both holistic and analytical evaluations and results indicated that the students did improve their linguistic accuracy on new writing assignments during 13-week semester.

Evans, Hartshorn, and Strong-Krause, (2011) also studied the effects of dynamic WCF on linguistic accuracy, fluency, and writing complexity as opposed to a traditional process writing approach. Participants included university-matriculated ESL learners in the USA over the course of one semester in which the professor used dynamic WCF. The control group consisted of 14 students who were taught in a traditional process writing course, while the treatment group consisted of 16 students that took a course that emphasized dynamic WCF. The control group wrote approximately 20 pages of polished writing which did not include pre-writing and drafts. Assignments included an opinion editorial (1 page), a rhetorical analysis (4-6 pages), and a research paper (11-13 pages). WCF focused primarily on rhetorical aspects of writing, and linguistic accuracy. The treatment group wrote 10-minute paragraphs on familiar topics 3-4 times per week for a total of 35 paragraphs (19 pages). Every paragraph received feedback on form errors and students were required to correct errors and submit their work until it was error-free. Students used tally sheets, edit logs, and error lists. Results suggest a positive effect on improved writing accuracy for the treatment group. Effects were negligible for fluency and

complexity. Interestingly, writing from those in the control groups was less accurate in post-tests than it was in the pre-tests.

Studies in addition to Evans et al. (2010) support the use of dynamic WCF in the classroom to improve L2 writing accuracy. Hartshorn, et al. (2010) found that the average accuracy scores from the treatment group's post-test essays were significantly greater than those from the control group. However, the study also found no significant differences in rhetorical competence scores, fluency scores, or complexity scores. Similarly, results from Evans, et al. (2011) suggest that dynamic WCF had a positive effect on improved writing accuracy but outcomes were negligible for fluency and complexity.

Computer-based feedback

Although it has been established that WCF is beneficial to L2 student writing, the provision of such feedback can sometimes be limited, due to large class size and instructor time constraints. Feedback on writing "is a time-consuming task for instructors because they may not be able to give individualized, immediate, content-related feedback to multiple drafts" (Grimes & Warschauer, 2010; Lee et al., 2009 as cited in Ebyary & Windeatt, 2010, p. 122). A way to combat this issue is to use computer-based feedback (CBF) or electronic feedback (e-feedback).

CBF or e-feedback is feedback in digital, written form which is transmitted via the internet. It transfers the concepts of oral or written response into the electronic arena.

Researchers seek to "discover if limiting the modes of communication to digital written messages is a benefit to or an obstacle for L2 writers" (Tuzi, 2004, p. 217).

El Ebyary and Windeatt (2010) studied the effects of CBF provided by the program *Criterion*, which provides automated written feedback at word, sentence, paragraph and text level, so that students are able to correct at least some types of errors in subsequent versions of

essays (see Attali, 2004), on students' second draft and subsequent submission. Data were collected at a university writing course in Egypt in which 549 EFL trainee teachers were enrolled. Qualitative and quantitative data about feedback practice were collected from the trainee teachers using pre- and post- treatment questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. A subset of self-selected trainees (n=24) received CBF using Criterion on two drafts of four essays each. Results recorded by the software indicated a positive effect on the quality of student's second drafts and subsequent submissions. Findings from the questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups showed that, on a four-point scale, 25% were negative, 45% were neutral, 17% were positive, and 13% were undecided in their attitude towards feedback (Ebyary & Windeatt, 2010). More than 88% of the 24 trainees who used Criterion, however, expressed a positive attitude towards feedback after using the program as opposed to 16% before. In addition, only 12% of students still had a negative attitude. Students' attitudes were similar as to the effect Criterion had on their writing. Results indicated an identifiable improvement in trainees' writing, especially between the first and last submission. However, it cannot be concluded that this result was due to actual learning on the part of the student or recognition and avoidance of errors. The authors conclude that the type of feedback may be no different from that of the instructor; therefore, CBF may be a suitable alternative to traditional feedback practices.

In a separate study, Tuzi (2004) studied the impact of e-feedback on the revisions of L2 writers in an academic writing course. Specifically, the exploratory study focused on how L2 students responded to their peers and teacher e-feedback and what kinds of revisions they made in a multi-draft process approach writing environment as a result of the feedback they received. Twenty freshman university L2 students enrolled in an ESL composition course " wrote, responded, and revised on a database-driven website specifically designed for writing and

responding” (Tuzi, 2004, p. 217) created by the researcher. E-feedback was submitted via the website and sent to the email account of the author. The students could also obtain oral or written feedback from their peers and oral assistance from the university writing center. Students wrote a total of six papers, and could revise them up to five times each at their discretion. Participants were trained to use the technology to produce quality e-feedback. Researchers collected the statistical data through coding of the written drafts ($N=274$) and instructor responses ($N=300$), as well as conducted interviews and observations. Results showed that students preferred oral feedback. However e-feedback had a greater impact on revision than oral feedback and helped L2 writers focus on revisions at a higher structural level, which implies that e-feedback might be more useful.

Current research on the provision of CBF and its impact on students’ written work concludes that the provision of computer-based or e-feedback can be helpful when used in the L2 writing classroom for error correction (Ebyary & Windeatt, 2010; Tuzi, 2004). In general, the provision of e-feedback was well-received by students and contributed to error correction and fewer errors on subsequent writing submissions. There is a general consensus that CBF may be better used as an augmentation tool for teachers and students, rather than to replace teacher feedback altogether.

Concordances as corrective feedback

In addition to electronic based feedback, the use of learner concordances or direct corpus use as a tool for feedback is becoming more widespread in L2 writing and language pedagogy. Corpus linguistics provides a powerful research methodology for almost every language-related field ranging from lexicography to language teaching and has had a considerable impact on L2 writing (Lee & Swales, 2006).

Gaskell and Cobb (2004) investigated the use of concordance feedback for sentence-level writing errors. The study focuses on concordance use in the following areas: usefulness, error correction, reduction in errors in free production, and independent use following concordance training. The study was conducted in a lower intermediate-level English writing course which met for one 3 hour class per week for 15 weeks at a university in Montreal, Canada. The participants were 20 adult Chinese EFL learners, most of whom held an undergraduate degree from China, and all had received at least three years of English instruction via the grammar-translation method. All were familiar with computers. The course followed a process approach consisting of 10 assignments over the course of the semester. Students completed a first draft and received peer feedback, then revised their papers and submitted them electronically. The instructor gave feedback to each student's assignment and included online concordance links for five typical errors. The students revised the text for final submission. For each of the concordance-linked errors, they were required to submit a form explaining how they used the concordance information for error correction. Results showed that 40% of students found the concordance work to help them understand how to use constructions they had been having trouble with in the beginning of the course. Most students completed the error analysis forms, and 60-70% were able to work from concordance to correction by week 6. The drop in week 9-10 is assumed to be from pressure to study for the final exam. Overall, the number of independent searches rose over the course of the experiment; however, only seven of the 20 students used the concordance persistently. In terms of overall errors, there was no decrease as a result of the course. There was, however, a significant reduction in word order, capitals/punctuation, and pronouns. The researchers concluded that "learners are willing to use concordances to work on grammar, that they are able to make corrections based on

concordances, and that precast links are a useful training system that leads some learners to independent concordancing” (Gaskell & Cobb, 2004, p. 317).

The use of concordancing for error correction and its impact on L2 writing is still little-researched. However, like e-feedback, it could prove useful in terms of teacher-student ratio. In addition, once learners are trained on how to correct their errors using a concordance or language corpora, they can independently self-correct their errors. Preliminary research argues that adapting concordances for language learners holds promise in terms of error correction feedback and warrants future research (Gaskell & Cobb, 2004).

Peer Feedback

Fairly common in foreign language writing curriculum is the use of peer review or peer feedback. Peer review has been regarded an essential feedback delivery system in process-based second language (L2) writing classrooms (Salih, 2013). Current studies underscore its importance (see Salih, 2013; Villamil & Guerrero, 2008; Yang, Badger, & Zhen, 2006).

Yang et al. (2006) examined whether peer feedback may provide a resource for addressing feedback constraints resulting from examination-focused programs and class size. Two Chinese EFL classes of 79 students involved in three rounds of multi-draft composition writing were given parallel writing instruction, except for the feedback they received. In teacher feedback class, which consisted of 41 students, the teacher provided WCF and oral feedback on matters of general interest when she returned the compositions. Students then revised their drafts independently and submitted their final products. In the peer feedback class of 38 students, feedback was given by peers working in self-selected pairs using the peer feedback sheet and L1 oral communication (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005). Afterwards, students revised their drafts and handed in the final products. Three sets of data were used: first drafts, feedback, and

second drafts written by the students in the both classes, questionnaire survey, and the teacher-researcher's notes on the classes and their writing. As a supplemental data set, the researchers conducted a case study intended to help understand the conditions under which students adopted or did not adopt feedback from the teacher or their peers. This provided a more in-depth view of students' view of the different kinds of feedback: students' video recordings of interactions between three pairs from the peer feedback class and interviews in L1 discussing the drafts, the final products, and the written comments. Results showed that students adopted more teacher feedback (90%) than peer feedback (67%). However, when students adopted the feedback given by their peers it resulted in slightly more successful revisions resulted (98% as opposed to 87% correct revisions) The peer feedback group made also more meaning changes (27%) than did the teacher feedback group (5%) and showed a stronger tendency for self-correction (16 self-corrections as opposed to 5). In the interview, students said they prefer teacher feedback over peer feedback, but not significantly

In a separate study of 16 university-matriculated students in Malaysia, Salih (2013) researched the focus of peer responses to L2 writing. The 16 L2-matriculated students in this study held at least 15 years in English instruction. They participated in five peer review sessions. The researcher then used a debriefing questionnaire to investigate strategies in providing feedback on peer drafts and an interview session intended to explore student perceptions and their focus in providing feedback to peer drafts. Results showed that peer responses to writing focused more on clarity of feedback, unlike writer expectations which focused more on grammar correction. This “confirms the relevance of peer review as an alternative feedback delivery system in L2 writing and suggests that peer corrective feedback provides teachers with important perspectives about the L2 students' language and writing knowledge” (Salih, 2013, p. 42).

In another study, Villamil & De Guerrero (1998) examined the impact of peer review on writers' final drafts in two rhetorical modes: narration and persuasion. Researchers primarily concerned themselves with how revisions were incorporated by writers in their final versions and how linguistic errors were revised according to different aspects (content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics). Fourteen intermediate ESL college students from a large private university in Puerto Rico participated in peer revision sessions with the same partner. The students were exposed to narration and persuasion over a period of four weeks in which readings and writing journals were assigned. Students then received training in self and peer revision and produced a first draft for peer revision. Externally-trained raters identified "a 'writer' (the author of the composition which needed more revision) and a 'reader' (the other member of the pair, whose task was to assist the writer)" (Villamil & De Guerrero, 1998, p. 497). During the revision sessions, they were not informed of the roles assigned to them. At the end of each revision session, the author of the composition was asked to produce a final version and submit it within a week. Results revealed that 74% of peer suggestions were incorporated with only 7% of false repairs, leading them to the conclusion that peer revision can motivate student writer's revision and self-editing. Writers made many further and self-revisions after the sessions. They focused equally on grammar and content when revising in the narrative mode and predominantly on grammar in the persuasive mode. Organization was the least attended aspect in either mode.

In summary, researchers conclude that peer revision can help L2 learners realize their potential for effective revision and should be seen as an important complementary source of feedback in the ESL classroom (e.g., Salih, 2013; Villamil & De Guerrero (2008); Yang et al., 2006). Using peer feedback on drafts followed by teacher feedback on final texts may be an especially useful resource to enable teachers to better help their learners develop their writing

skills (Yang et al., 2006). However, it should be noted that a limitation of all three studies is their small sample size, which may or may not generalize to outside contexts.

Pedagogical Implications

Truscott's (1996) assumption seems accurate: "In L2 writing courses, grammar correction is something of an institution. Nearly all L2 writing teachers do it in one form or another" (p. 327) (as cited in Evans, et al., 2010). In the survey of 1053 ESL teachers by Evans, et al. (2010), it was found that 99% of practitioners use WCF to some degree and 92% of respondents use WCF extensively. Evans, et al. (2010) assert that the L2 practitioners who participated in this survey, all of whom were very experienced, are often "operating on their developed principled pragmatism and sense of plausibility when it comes to WCF." That is, teachers often "theorize from practice and practice what they theorize" as an alternative to traditional methods; what Kumarivadivelu calls "principled pragmatism" (1994, p. 27, as cited in Evans, et. al, 2010).

Teachers reported using WCF because it helps students notice or be aware of language patterns and errors, teaches them how to self-correct, and provides them with good language models to improve their writing (Evans, et. al, 2010; Lee, 2003). They also reported providing feedback because they thought students need it and that WCF is an effective pedagogical practice (Evans, et. al, 2010).

It is important to note that feedback for writing errors remains a divisive topic between teachers and learners (Gaskell & Cobb, 2004). Students have consistently demonstrated a desire and expectation for WCF (e.g. Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1995; Guénette, 2007; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Leki, 1991; Truscott, 1996) (as cited in Evans, et al., 2010).

Although many skilled practitioners may operate on their developed principled pragmatism, present studies have indicated that WCF is effective and thus strengthens the case for its use in the classroom (e.g. Ellis, et al., 2008; Bitchener, 2008). Rather than focusing on whether instructors should or should not provide WCF, it may be more fruitful for researchers and practitioners to identify strategies that may improve the accuracy of the L2 writers in the

unique contexts in which they work (Evans, et al, 2011). There can be great benefit to teachers from taking a critical stance toward their own feedback practices, challenging assumptions, and re-visiting feedback by examining the issue from multiple perspectives (Lee, 2010).

Insofar as the current research suggests, some of the issues teachers may want to look at critically are the use of dynamic WCF, computer-based feedback, concordancing as a means for feedback, and peer-feedback. The dynamic WCF instructional methodology can be used in order to improve the accuracy of student writing (Evans, et. al, 2011). However, the authors also asserted that this approach to process writing may be inadequate for sustained improvement in linguistic accuracy as rhetorical expectations for student writing increase (Evans et al., 2010) whereas direct WCF may yield lasting development (Bitchener, 2008). Teachers may also consider their initial approaches to teaching, as accuracy may be taught separately from other aspects of writing (Hartshorn, et. al, 2010).

Recent research proposes integrating technology into the L2 classroom by way of computer-based feedback and concordancing as a means for feedback. Computer-based feedback has become an interest of researchers with the development of the online composition classroom, large class sizes, and technological advances (Lo & Yeh, 2008). Teachers may want to consider augmenting their teaching with electronic feedback systems or train their students to use concordances. Computer-based feedback allows for more interaction with the student in terms of error correction. Teachers may want to consider using this as a tool to augment their limited class time. In addition, preliminary research shows promise in teaching students to use concordances for feedback (Gaskell & Cobb, 2004). More important than determining how to most effectively use technology in the language classroom is that instructors, if possible, “have a part in molding the technology even as it molds methodology” (Tuzi, 2004, p. 218).

Teachers may also want to consider the use of peer-feedback. Research has shown that peer review, if designed carefully, is a fruitful and not a sterile act which can support teacher error treatment strategy (Ferris, 2002; Hansen, 2005; Rollinson, 2005) (as cited in Salih, 2013). Although students may value teacher feedback more highly than peer feedback, they have been found to recognize the importance of peer feedback (Yang et al., 2006). Peer feedback can lead to improvements and appears to encourage student autonomy, so it can be seen as a useful adjunct to teacher feedback, even in cultures which are supposed to grant great authority to the teacher (Yang et al., 2006). It can also provide teachers with important perspectives about the L2 students' language and writing knowledge (Salih, 2013). In any case, teachers should remember that feedback needs to be provided within a realistic writing context to enable valid assessment of the role of CF in L2 learners' written accuracy development Beuningen (2010).

Future Research

Although insights from recent second language acquisition-oriented WCF research contribute to closing the wide gap among research, theory, and real-world practice (Ferris, 2010), many future research questions remain.

Focused/Unfocused CF

There are opposing results regarding the use of unfocused or focused CF, and thus more research is needed to ascertain the best methodology. Ellis, et al., (2008) support narrowly focused CF, going so far as to call unfocussed written CF ineffective (i.e. Truscott, 2007) and suggest research on how focused CF needs to be to enable learners to attend to and understand the corrections.

On the other hand, Beuningen (2010) considers comprehensive or unfocused CF the most authentic feedback methodology as it focuses on a wide range of linguistic features. The learning potential as well as CF responsiveness of different types of errors via unfocused CF surely deserves more attention (Beuningen, 2010).

Writing Accuracy/Complexity

In accordance with Hartshorn, et al. (2010), there may be a trade-off between accuracy, fluency, and complexity. Future studies investigating the effect of CF on L2 learners' accuracy development may also want to explore whether and how correction impacts the complexity of students' writing (Beuningen, 2010). Also, research might do well to investigate whether instrument differences, for example, different genre tasks, have similar or different effects on accuracy (Bitchener, 2008).

E-Feedback

Ebyary & Windeatt (2010) suggest further research on a combination of computer-based and teacher feedback. That is, how can teachers use CBF to augment their language classes, rather than as a replacement for teacher feedback? In addition, instructors and students are using “technology to collaborate on writing tasks but the research on the effects of this technology on L2 writing has not kept up with the increase of technology in L2 instruction” (Tuzi, 2004, p. 218).

Longitudinal/Qualitative studies

If the aim is to shed light on the impact of WCF on students' writing, future studies need to adopt a more qualitative and ecologically valid research design (Beuningen, 2010; Reichelt, 2001; Storch, 2010). Future research would do well to extend the scope to allow for more than one treatment occasion and to include several additional post-tests over a longer period of time so that the ultimate value of written corrective feedback for acquisition can be determined Bitchener, J. (2008).

Qualitative studies have been able to shed a unique light on feedback. A case study by Storch and Wigglesworth (2010a, 2010b) found that learners' attitudes towards the feedback affects not only whether and how learners respond to the feedback provided, but ultimately whether there is long term learning (as cited in Salih, 2013). It should be noted; that Storch's (2010) call for more qualitative approaches to research on WCF does not imply that there is no merit in experimental research on the topic.

Context

As for future research, it may be useful to examine more closely how context may or may not shape WCF practices (Evans, et. al, 2010). Focusing on the contextual variables that impinge on teachers' feedback can shed light on how feedback can be best delivered by different teachers to suit different learners in different contexts (Lee, 2011). Contextual variables and their relation to feedback and SLA that may be of particular interest are those described by Evans et al. (2010): learner, situational, and methodological variables.

Concordance Use

Concordance and corpus use are becoming a main topic in applied linguistics and foreign language teaching. However, research findings have yet to add anything to the empirical base for corpus-based learning (Gaskell & Cobb, 2004) or carry over into effective pedagogical practice Lee and Swales (2006). Although not WCF in the tradition sense, it is possible that concordancing is an unrealized opportunity for error correction. Thus, future research is warranted.

Conclusion

Writing and the use of teacher feedback continues to be a part of L2 curriculum and is strongly supported by teachers and students alike. Although Truscott (1996) may have charged against CF, research is conclusive that its use can have a positive impact on students' linguistic accuracy (see Beuningen, 2010; Bitchener, 2008; Ellis, et al., 2008).

Research results, however, are largely inconclusive as to focus of error correction feedback on students L2 writing (e/g/ grammar, lexicon, structure), the form in which it is given (e.g. explicit vs. implicit), and the source of the feedback (e.g. instructors vs. peers) (El Ebyary & Windeatt, 2010). Evans, et al. (2010) call for a time in research and pedagogy in L2 writing to embrace a more sophisticated view of the value of corrective feedback. If the area of FL writing is to develop beyond its current state, it is crucial that more well-designed research be undertaken on the effects of unfocused and focused CF, the role of grammatical accuracy and complexity, and context. In addition, more longitudinal and qualitative studies must be undertaken if we are to understand the full scope of CF.

Teachers can also benefit from taking a critical stance toward their own feedback practices. Ellis, et al.'s (2008, p 368) claim sounds convincing: "A mass of corrections directed at a diverse set of linguistic phenomena ... is hardly likely to foster the noticing and cognizing that may be needed for CF to work for acquisition." Thus, teachers should arm themselves with the theoretical knowledge needed to develop their students' L2 writing in addition to a strong belief in CF practices. Apart from corrective feedback strategies, the literature has underlined the importance of error treatment beyond teacher error correction (Lee, 2003). In other words, it is important for teachers to use error feedback in conjunction with other strategies such as computer programs or peer revision sessions to help students learn to self-correct and become better writers.

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