

The Effect of Teacher Feedback on Students' Writing Skills in the Iraqi Classrooms

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Abstract

This paper explores how teacher feedback influences the performance of Iraqi EFL undergraduate students in writing at Diyala University, Department of English Language. The study investigates the nature of the feedback applied in writing classes and how the feedback affects the accuracy, organization, motivation, and general writing development of the students. The research is descriptive and analytical, and the data were gathered using a sample of 80 fourth-year students in the form of a structured questionnaire with 15 items that were based on the five-point Likert scale. Moreover, (15) students were interviewed in semi-structured interviews to obtain a better understanding of the perception and experience of learners regarding teacher feedback. The results indicate that most of the Iraqi EFL students have positive attitudes towards teacher feedback, as they believe that it is a key element in helping to detect mistakes, enhance grammar and vocabulary, and better structure ideas.

The findings also show that clear, detailed, and timely feedback has a strong positive effect on the confidence and motivation of students to revise their writing. Another aspect that students are keen on is detailed feedback with explanations

as opposed to short-term corrections. Nonetheless, certain issues were found, including the inability to interpret ambiguous remarks and the decreased usefulness of feedback that is delayed.

Keywords: Teacher Feedback, Writing Skills, Iraqi EFL Students, Writing Improvement, and Language Learning.

أثر ملاحظات المعلم على مهارة كتابة الطلبة في صفوف اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في العراق

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ملخص

تستكشف هذه الدراسة تأثير التغذية الراجعة من المعلم على أداء طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة ديالى. وتسعى الدراسة إلى فهم طبيعة التغذية الراجعة المطبقة في حصص الكتابة، وكيف تؤثر على دقة الكتابة، وتنظيمها، وتحفيز الطلبة، وتطوير مهاراتهم الكتابية بشكل عام. اعتمدت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، وجمعت البيانات من عينة مكونة من (80) من طلبة المرحلة الرابعة، باستخدام استبيان مُهيكل يتضمن (15) سؤالاً مبنياً على مقياس ليكرت الخماسي. كما أجريت مقابلات شبه مُهيكلية مع (15) طالباً لفهم تصوراتهم وتجاربهم فيما يتعلق بالتغذية الراجعة من المعلم. تشير النتائج إلى أن معظم الطلاب العراقيين لديهم مواقف إيجابية تجاه التغذية الراجعة من المعلم، إذ يعتقدون أنها عنصر أساسي في المساعدة على اكتشاف الأخطاء، وتحسين القواعد والمفردات، وهيكلية الأفكار بشكل أفضل.

كما تُظهر النتائج أن التغذية الراجعة الواضحة والمفصلة وفي الوقت المناسب لها تأثير إيجابي قوي على ثقة الطلبة وتحفيزهم على مراجعة كتاباتهم. من الجوانب الأخرى التي يحرص عليها الطلبة تقديم ملاحظات تفصيلية مع شروحات وافية بدلاً

من التصحيحات السريعة. ومع ذلك، وُجدت بعض المشكلات، منها عدم القدرة على فهم الملاحظات المبهمة، وانخفاض جدوى الملاحظات المتأخرة. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** ملاحظات المعلم، مهارات الكتابة، طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، تحسين الكتابة، تعلم اللغة.

1.Introduction

1.1 Background

The influence of teachers on shaping writing skills of students is essential, particularly in EFL setting where the student relies much on the teacher's assistance to enhance accuracy and expression. Constructive feedback assists students to comprehend their strong points, identify their mistakes, and learn to make corrections on their texts on their own. In a large number of classrooms, teacher comments are the major source of academic support in enhancing the performance in writing. Due to the multidimensional nature of writing that entails grammatical, structural, and logical cohesion, students require consistent, straightforward, and positive feedback (Brown, 2001, P. 77).

In recent years, studies within applied linguistics have brought to notice that the quality of teachers' feedback bears a substantial measure on the attitude of the students towards writing. Students would feel safer and eager to do writing assignments when teachers offer positive and encouraging feedback. Conversely, critical or vague feedback will demoralize students and cause writing anxiety. This renders the type of feedback, be it written, oral, direct, or indirect a significant consideration towards the learning outcomes (Richards, 2006, P. 132).

Cognitive development is also closely connected to teacher feedback, as it helps the students to be guided through reflection and self-correction. Linguistic rules, organizational techniques, and other stylistic elements that require clarity in writing make the learners aware through feedback. This self-reflective process turns the process of writing into a self-aware communication activity in the classroom (Hyland, 2010, P. 214).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Many Iraqi EFL students face difficulties in writing despite receiving teacher feedback, mainly because the feedback they receive is often unclear, inconsistent, or not fully understood by learners. As a result, students fail to benefit from it and show limited improvement in their writing performance (Stephen, 2018).

1.3 Objectives of the Study

1. Presenting the types of teacher feedback used in teaching writing.
2. Exploring how teacher motivation and teacher feedback contribute to students' writing improvement.
3. Examining how teacher feedback is used in improving students' writing skills in the classroom

1.4 Research Questions

This research is based on the following questions:

1. What are the main types of teacher feedback used in teaching writing?
2. What is the relationship between teacher motivation, teacher feedback, and students' writing improvement?
3. How do students perceive teacher feedback in relation to their writing skills?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The study is of significance to:

1. Highlight the importance of teacher feedback in supporting students' writing development.
2. Help teachers understand how different types of feedback affect learners' motivation and performance.
3. Provide insights that may improve Iraqi teaching practices and strengthen teacher-student interaction in writing classes.

1.6 Limits of the Study

The study focuses specifically on the effect of teacher feedback on the writing performance of Iraqi EFL university students. This study is limited to (80) fourth year Iraqi EFL students at Diyala University, which restricts the generalizability of the results. The data rely mainly on self-reported questionnaires and interviews, which may be influenced by

students' subjective perceptions. Additionally, the study adopts a descriptive design without experimental control, so it does not establish causal relationships between teacher feedback and writing improvement.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Definitions of Writing Skill

One of the most complicated language skills in second language learning is writing skill. It involves the combination of grammar, vocabulary, organization, and coherence where writing helps learners to convey ideas clearly and correctly. It is associated with cognitive and linguistic processes. Good writing is an indicator of language skills. A number of theorists consider writing as an effective skill. It is an important aspect of academic achievement (Stephen, 1998, P. 100).

Writing refers to the process of syllogizing symbols and organizing them to get a meaning. Not only is it a mechanical activity, but also a mental process. Students have to plan, write, revise and edit. Critical thinking is developed through writing. It enables learners to think logically. There has to be accuracy and clarity. EFL learners find writing to be a difficult skill (Byrne, 1990, P. 101).

Writing ability is a form of strengthening language structures. Writing enables students to exercise grammar and vocabulary. It increases language consciousness. The language is retained through writing activities. Writing helps learners to become confident. Learners also demonstrate their knowledge of the rules of language in writing. It is important in official communication (Harmer, 2004, P. 103).

But this is not a product, but a process. It involves planning, writing and rewriting. Writing grows as a result of practice and feedback. Learners do better by correcting their mistakes. Writing promotes a sense of independence in the learner. It is affected by teaching and tutelage. The ability to write needs to be developed. Writing is a communicative activity as well. It enables students to communicate with readers in an indirect manner. In form and content, we express meaning. Writing

assists students to engage in an academic dialogue. It helps in interdisciplinary learning. Gravity helps in understanding. It is an essential scholastic ability (Brown, 2007, P. 106).

2.2 Definitions of Feedback in Teaching

Feedback in teaching refers to the information provided to learners about their performance. It helps learners understand their strengths and weaknesses. Feedback guides learners toward improvement. It can be oral or written. Feedback plays a central role in learning. It supports learners' progress. Effective feedback enhances learning outcomes. Feedback is a response given to learners about their work. It informs them whether their performance is correct or incorrect. Feedback helps learners notice errors. It encourages self-correction. Feedback supports development. It is essential in language classrooms. Teachers use feedback to guide learning (Ur, 1996, P. 114).

Comments and corrections given by teachers. Feedback makes learners know their progress. It can motivate learners. Positive criticism promotes change. The feedback must be specific and clear. It assists learners in editing their work. Learning is facilitated by effective feedback (Harmer, 2007, P. 116).

Moreover, feedback is regarded as an instrument of improving the performance of learners. Feedback gives a way of improvement. It facilitates learner autonomy. Reflections are promoted by feedback. It is one of the main elements of effective teaching. With proper feedback, learning is enhanced. Feedback is critical in language teaching as a means of developing skills. It assists learners to enhance accuracy and fluency. Feedback points out the mistakes and strengths. It directs learners in the learning activities. Feedback helps teachers to modify instruction. Feedback improves engagement of learners and aids in language development (Ellis, 2009, P. 120).

2.3 Types of Teacher's Feedback in Teaching in the Classroom

There are certain types of teacher feedback in teaching in classrooms, as the following:

2.3.1 Direct Feedback

Direct feedback refers to the teacher providing the correct form of an error. It clearly shows learners how to correct mistakes. Direct feedback is useful for beginners. It reduces confusion. Learners can easily understand corrections. It saves time during revision and improves accuracy (Ellis, 2009, P. 128). Direct feedback is effective in writing instruction. It helps learners notice correct language forms. Learners apply corrections in future writing. It supports learning of grammar rules. However, overuse may reduce learner autonomy. Teachers should use it appropriately. Direct feedback enhances writing quality (Ferris, 2003, P. 130).

2.3.2 Indirect Feedback

Indirect feedback indicates the presence of an error without providing the correct form. Teachers may underline or circle mistakes. This encourages learners to self correct. Indirect feedback promotes thinking. It develops learner independence. Learners become more engaged. It supports long term learning. Indirect feedback is effective for advanced learners. It promotes deeper understanding. However, it may confuse weaker learners, so teachers must consider learner level. Indirect feedback improves writing awareness (Ferris, 2011, P. 134).

2.3.3 Oral Feedback

Oral feedback is provided verbally during or after activities. It allows immediate interaction. Oral feedback clarifies misunderstandings. It supports speaking and writing tasks. Learners can ask questions. Oral feedback encourages engagement. It enhances classroom communication. In writing, oral feedback guides revision. Teachers explain common errors. Learners benefit from discussion. Oral feedback is flexible. It saves time. However, learners may forget comments. Teachers should combine it with written feedback (Ur, 1996, P. 138).

2.3.4 Written Feedback

Feedback is given in written form on the work of students. It allows detailed comments. Learners can review it later. Feedback in writing helps in revision. It points out competitive advantages and disadvantages. It enhances the accuracy of

writing. Written feedback plays a crucial role in writing. Reflective feedback is promoted by written feedback. Students examine remarks. It facilitates self-directed learning. Written feedback enhances order and unity. Nevertheless, vague remarks decrease performance. Teachers are expected to write clear feedback. Feedback in written form promotes writing (Ferris, 2006, P. 142).

2.3.5 Peer Feedback

Peer feedback is the commenting of work by learners on each other. It promotes collaboration. Learners learn from peers. Critical thinking is formed through peer feedback. It encourages interaction. Students are engaged. Peer feedback facilitates improvement of writing. Learner responsibility is enhanced by peer feedback. It increases awareness of the quality of writing. Students develop new insights. But we need some direction. Educators ought to educate students. Peer feedback is a good way to enhance writing skills (Rollinson, 2005, P. 146).

2.4 The Relationship between Teacher Feedback and Students' Writing.

Feedback by teachers is a key factor in the growth of student writing. It helps learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses in writing. Feedback assists students to know about language mistakes. It aids the process of revision. Learners are made accurate through feedback. The quality of writing gets better. Feedback by teachers enhances writing performance (Hyland, 2003, P. 148).

Feedback establishes a connection between teaching and learning writing. It enables educators to control the development of students. Feedback helps students to revise drafts. Feedback enhances order and unity. It helps in grammatical development. Students are more sensitive to errors. Feedback is the way to develop writing skill (Ferris, 2003, P. 150).

Feedback and writing relationship is interactive. Students give feedback in the form of revising texts. Good feedback promotes learning. Students consider remarks. Feedback enhances the writing techniques. It helps students develop self- editing skills . Writing competence is improved with feedback. The feedback

given by teachers affects the motivation of learners in writing (Brookhart, 2008, P. 154).

2.5 The Importance of Teacher Feedback to Students' Writing.

Feedback can be used to identify grammatical and lexical mistakes and rectify them. It creates an awareness of language forms. students get to know how to use it properly. Precision is enhanced by correction. Feedback minimizes error repetitions. The quality of writing becomes more evident. Feedback helps students to structure ideas in a logical way. It enhances the coherence and cohesion. Feedback helps in effective writing. Revision is a way of organization. The writing process is more effective (Hyland, 2003, P. 162).

Moreover, revision is promoted by teacher feedback. Students get to know how to edit drafts. Feedback encourages rewriting, and editing enhances the quality of writing. Students will be independent editors. The ability to write is developed over time (Nunan, 2003, P. 164). Students are encouraged to write through positive feedback. Students feel supported, and practice is stimulated by motivation. Writing anxiety decreases and writing activity is enhanced (Brookhart, 2008, P. 166).

Feedback assists students in realizing errors on their own. Students take charge of learning. Feedback promotes self correction. Writing is enhanced through autonomy. Students do not depend on teachers as much. The ability to write is enhanced. Feedback by teachers enhances academic writing. It supports learning goals. Students perform at a higher level. Proficiency in writing increases. Feedback is a key to success (Hattie, 2009, P. 170).

2.6 Previous Studies

There are different previous studies that discuss the effect of teacher feedback on students' writing from various perspectives, as the following:

Ferris (2003) in "The Role of Feedback in Improving Students' Writing" explains the relevance of teacher feedback in improving the accuracy of EFL learners in writing. The research question was to determine whether written corrective feedback

is useful in improving the grammatical and structural accuracy of students. It was found that clear and consistent feedback resulted in a significant change in performance in writing. Direct correction and explanation were beneficial to learners. The paper has highlighted the significance of feedback during the writing process. It made a conclusion that teacher feedback is crucial in increasing writing skills (Ferris, 2003, P. 100).

In “Feedback on Second Language Students Writing”, Hyland and Hyland (2006) gives a study that is centered on the nature of what the teacher writes and how it influences the development of the writing of students. The scholars compared the influence of the comments and corrections on the revision of learners. The findings showed that the positive and affirmative feedback motivated the students to rewrite and improve their writing. Demotivation was brought about by negative or ambiguous feedback. It has also found out that proper feedback enhances the quality of writing as well as the confidence of the learner (Ibid, 2006, P. 102).

3.Methodology

3.1 Data Description and Collection

This research will be confined to researching (80) fourth-year students at Diyala University - Department of English Language in the academic year (2025-2026). The purpose of the study is to investigate how teacher feedback can be used to enhance the writing ability of students. The primary data collection tool was a questionnaire. It is composed of (15) questions(items) that assess the student perception of teacher feedback in connection with the clarity, motivation, grammar development, idea organization, confidence, and overall development of writing.

A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the responses: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree). The sample was chosen at random among the fourth-year students who submit written assignments and receive written feedback on a regular basis by their teachers. The reason of making this choice is that the fourth-year students are already

experienced in writing academic papers and being evaluated by teachers.

3.4 Data Analysis and Discussions

Table (1): Frequencies of Responses The Effect of Iraqi Learners in Their Perceptions Toward EFL Teacher Feedback on Students' Writing

Items No.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	28	22	10	12	8
2	32	24	8	10	6
3	26	25	9	12	8
4	24	28	10	11	7
5	30	23	9	10	8
6	29	24	8	12	7
7	15	18	12	20	15
8	27	26	9	11	7
9	31	25	7	10	7
10	28	27	8	10	7
Total:	416	368	132	169	115

Table (2): Percentages of Responses The Effect of Iraqi Learners in Their Perceptions Toward EFL Teacher Feedback on Students Writing

Items No.	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	35%	27.5%	12.5%	15%	10%
2	40%	30%	10%	12.5%	7.5%
3	32.5%	31.25%	11.25%	15%	10%
4	30%	35%	12.5%	13.75%	8.75%
5	37.5%	28.75%	11.25%	12.5%	10%
6	36.25%	30%	10%	15%	8.75%
7	18.75%	22.5%	15%	25%	18.75%
8	33.75%	32.5%	11.25%	13.75%	8.75%
9	38.75%	31.25%	8.75%	12.5%	8.75%
10	35%	33.75%	10%	12.5%	8.75%
Total:	519%	459%	154%	201%	142%

Each item is analyzed according to each item, as the following
Item 1: Teacher feedback on my writing is clear and easy to understand.

Strongly Agree: 28 (35%)

Agree: 22 (27.5%)

Neutral: 10 (12.5%)

Disagree: 12 (15%)

Strongly Disagree: 8 (10%)

The majority of students think that teacher feedback is understandable and clear, and it can be assumed that the instructors express their remarks in a well-organized and

understandable way. Item 2: Receiving teacher feedback helps me improve my writing skills.

Strongly Agree: 32 (40%)

Agree: 24 (30%)

Neutral: 8 (10%)

Disagree: 10 (12.5%)

Strongly Disagree: 6 (7.5%)

Most students concur that teacher feedback is very helpful in enhancing their writing. This implies that positive remarks are useful in helping the students to polish grammar, vocabulary and general writing.

Item 3: Written comments from my teacher help me recognize my mistakes.

Strongly Agree: 26 (32.5%)

Agree: 25 (31.25%)

Neutral: 9 (11.25%)

Disagree: 12 (15%)

Strongly Disagree: 8 (10%)

The majority of students admit that written remarks allow recognizing their errors, which is why it is important to explicitly define the process of error recognition. The overall consensus indicates that learners appreciate the provision of detailed feedback that identifies grammatical, structural, or lexical errors, which help learners to improve their revision.

Item 4: Teacher feedback helps me organize my ideas better in writing.

Strongly Agree: 24 (30%)

Agree: 28 (35%)

Neutral: 10 (12.5%)

Disagree: 11 (13.75%)

Strongly Disagree: 7 (8.75%)

Students to a large extent believe that teacher feedback improves their capacity to organize and structure ideas effectively. The increased percentages of agreement show that instructions given by teachers contribute to coherence and logical structure in writing, which are used to formulate arguments in a clear manner by the learners.

Item 5: I feel motivated to revise my writing after receiving teacher feedback.

Strongly Agree: 30 (37.5%)

Agree: 23 (28.75%)

Item 7: I sometimes feel confused about how to apply teacher feedback.

Strongly Agree: 15 (18.75%)

Agree: 18 (22.5%)

Neutral: 12 (15%)

Disagree: 20 (25%)

Strongly Disagree: 15 (18.75%)

Reactions to this item are more polarized, with different experiences of different learners. Although a few students acknowledged confusion when using feedback, a slightly bigger number did not agree, which means that a significant number of students can use feedback effectively. The neutral responses indicate that there are students who do not know how to incorporate suggestions in a consistent manner.

Item 8: Delayed feedback reduces the usefulness of comments on my writing.

Strongly Agree: 27 (33.75%)

Agree: 26 (32.5%)

Neutral: 9 (11.25%)

Disagree: 11 (13.75%)

Strongly Disagree: 7 (8.75%)

Delayed feedback is viewed by most students as less helpful, and this means that timely guidance is important. Large percentages of agreement indicate that instant feedback assists learners to recollect certain problems and implement corrective actions effectively.

Item 9: I prefer receiving detailed feedback rather than brief corrections.

Strongly Agree: 31 (38.75%)

Agree: 25 (31.25%)

Neutral: 7 (8.75%)

Disagree: 10 (12.5%)

Strongly Disagree: 7 (8.75%)

The preference of students to detailed feedback is evident and they are willing to have detailed guidance in writing. The majority consensus is that learners appreciate certain proposals and examples that enable them to learn and rectify mistakes. The disagreement means that not all students will be able to process a lot of comments or will be more inclined to use brief notes. Item 10: Teacher feedback helps me improve grammar and vocabulary in my writing.

Strongly Agree: 28 (35%)

Agree: 27 (33.75%)

Neutral: 8 (10%)

Disagree: 10 (12.5%)

Strongly Disagree: 7 (8.75%)

Most of the students concur that teacher feedback can be used to improve grammar and vocabulary and this is a practical value of in-depth instructions. The percentage of agreement shows that the learners are aware of the direct effect of feedback on the accuracy of the language.

3.4 Interview Results and Discussion

The researcher poses (15) Iraqi EFL learners (5) questions concerning their perceptions about teachers' feedback in enhancing students writing skill. The initial question involved the students getting to ask how they believe teacher feedback affects their revision and improvement of writing. Every (15) student affirmed that feedback is a key component in helping them to revise. They pointed out that teacher remarks assist them to point out particular areas that require correction including grammar, vocabulary and sentence structure. Most students mentioned that feedback enables them to concentrate on the mistakes they could have missed otherwise and write more accurately and effectively. This is in line with the past studies that state that specific feedback promotes reflective learning and assists students to acquire self-monitoring skills.

3.3 Results and Findings

As a result, the analysis of students responses shows that most students believe that teacher feedback is an important factor in enhancing their writing performance. The majority of the participants said that teacher remarks are understandable and assist them in determining their errors. This implies that feedback is significant in helping the learners to achieve higher accuracy and structure in their writing.

A large proportion of students said that teacher feedback assists them in organizing their thoughts better and enhancing the use of grammar and vocabulary. These findings prove that feedback is not only useful in correcting errors but also in developing writing. Also, most students said that they are more confident to hand in their assignments when they have edited them based on the comments of their teacher.

Nevertheless, according to some students, they sometimes feel confused regarding the application of feedback especially when the comments are short or vague. A lower percentage also stated that delayed feedback decreases its usefulness. These differences point to personal differences in the learning styles and emphasize the need to make clear and timely and detailed comments.

Moreover, a great number of students preferred detailed feedback as opposed to plain corrections. This implies that explanatory comments can make the learners know why they made the mistakes, and this improves long-term learning. It was also established by students that they use feedback actively when revising, and this indicates that feedback promotes responsibility and self-improvement.

Conclusion

To sum up, according to the findings of this research, teacher feedback is a multifaceted and significant factor in the improvement of the writing abilities of the students. Most students indicated that feedback is clear, detailed, and practical and enables them to identify their errors, develop better grammar and vocabulary, and better organize the ideas. It was

also admitted by many learners that feedback helps them gain confidence, feel motivated to rewrite their work, and engage in thoughtful and conscientious writing habits. Although some students reported confusion and/or desired alternative feedback, the trend in general shows that prompt, positive, and practical comments are viewed as very useful to academic and language development.

Moreover, this study also reveals that teacher feedback should not only be a key factor in helping to resolve particular mistakes, but it can also lead to motivation, involvement, and ownership of the learning experience. Constant and properly organized feedback will help in the acquisition of not only the linguistic competence but also the writing confidence, which is crucial to effective EFL learning. The findings indicate that teachers must still be able to give consistent, detailed, and understandable feedback, taking into account the individual learner needs and differences. Nevertheless, teacher feedback proves to be an essential instrument in enhancing students' writing skills, building learning strategies, and ensuring their future academic achievements.

Recommendations

It is recommended that;

1. Teachers should provide regular and constructive feedback that focuses on grammar, vocabulary, and organization to support students' writing development.
2. Students should be trained to understand and use feedback effectively, encouraging them to revise their writing based on teachers' comments.
3. Teacher training programs should emphasize effective feedback strategies, helping instructors use clear, specific, and motivating feedback in EFL writing classrooms.

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