



Effectiveness of Written Feedback in ESL Writing

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Abstract – Feedback is one of the most influential tools in the learning of writing. However, there are divided views on its impact on ESL writing. This article reviews past studies to explore the various types of written feedback and its effectiveness. Firstly, it discusses the feedback role in ESL students' writing, followed by the types of feedback. Furthermore, it highlights the type of feedback which is useful and effective in the writing process. Next, it presents the different views on the effectiveness of feedback in ESL writing due to the type of feedback and the way it is given. Lastly, it concludes that feedback acts as a scaffold by providing a meaningful and impactful learning to students.

Keywords: ESL writing, written feedback, effective feedback

Introduction

Research in the area of writing has in the past decade stressed that feedback is crucial for the development of a writer (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Paltridge, 2004; Reichelt, 1999). However, greater importance was only placed on revision and feedback in ESL writing during the emergence of the process writing movement in the 1970s. It was through writing researchers such as Emig (1977) and Flower & Hayes (1981) that writing as a process was discovered to have provided a platform for instructor intervention. This resulted in the notion that the writing process is to be viewed as “an activity, a process, which a writer can learn how to accomplish” (Lawrence, 1972, p.3). Presently, feedback is used to provide support and encouragement to writers and act as a type of formative intervention in achieving their writing goals (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

A substantial number of studies have researched on ways of giving effective feedback and providing valuable insights into the aspects of teacher feedback on student writing. Some studies have found that teacher feedback is an essential component in ESL and EFL students' writing as it motivates and encourages students to revise and improve their drafts and, therefore, helps develop second language writing abilities (Ferris, 1995; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Goldstein, 2004). However, there are some L2 studies which have shown contrary findings that teacher feedback is not particularly effective or helpful for students in their subsequent writings (Goring-Kepner, 1991; Rob, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986; Semke, 1984).

Feedback is considered to provide valuable information to writers in achieving writing goals. It is usually given in written form and is an important component in the teaching and learning process. Teacher feedback has been generally understood as a valuable tool in the writing process (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1995, 2002). Teacher feedback has helped writers to understand their progress in writing and how they may further develop their writing (Ryan, 1997). This is because written