PUTTING STUDENTS AT THE HELM OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK: A STUDENT-LED FEEDBACK PRACTICE IN THE L2 WRITING CLASSROOM

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ABSTRACT

Corrective feedback and its efficacy in the second language (L2) writing classroom has long been debated. Arguments that both written and coded forms of feedback are ineffective and that direct feedback is inferior to indirect feedback (Truscott, 1999 & Eslami, 2014) have led to a push for self-assessment, which can give students ownership of their work and direction for improvement (Lee, 2016). However, in an L2 context, students may struggle with self-assessment. Self-correcting written work after receiving feedback can lead to long-term improvement (Ferris, 2010); thus, students should be seeking out specific corrective feedback based on their own self-assessment. Introducina student-led а bridges consultation practice the gap between self-assessment corrective feedback and in process-driven writing class. The act of self-seeking feedback will give students the tools to see room for improvement in their own work and ask targeted questions with the aim of receiving specified feedback. consultation activity benefits the students' abilities to evaluate their own writing against a rubric and limits the chances of students being overwhelmed with numerous teacher-given corrections. Along with giving suggestions for how to include student-led consultations within a course and how to construct a rubric for such a consultation, pedagogical implications of such practices and general reflections on the practice are discussed. Knowledge of this practice may encourage writing teachers switch from teacher-led feedback to student-focused writing experience.

INTRODUCTION

Among the L2 writing teaching community, the general consensus is that feedback is necessary, but the efficacy of many types of feedback is often questioned. Educators (Truscott and Ferris, namely) go back and forth on what kind of feedback to give and if any should be given at all (Chan & Phillips, 2021). The debate about what feedback to use and how to use it has reached no real conclusion, but there is agreement that identifying how corrective feedback can be more effective is necessary (Chan & Phillips, 2021).

The ultimate aim of writing instructors is to produce better writers. To do this, students need to be able to remember the feedback they have received and apply it to future writing. However, it is well-researched that teacher feedback is not always a benefit to students' learning (Truscott, 1996; Truscott & Hsu, 2008) and tends to be used for short-term rather than long-term gain (Glover & Brown, 2006). Existing research has proven that language students should not be passive in their quest to learn a language or any of its related skills (Unangst, n.d.). This forms the basis for the argument that students should be seeking the feedback that most benefits their growth as second language writers.

This begs the question: how can students be best given the opportunity and motivation to seek feedback? There has been research into what kinds of feedback students tend to request if given the chance (Ruegg, 2020), but ways in which to implement individual student-led feedback activities is still under researched. Possible reasons for this research gap include the daunting nature of asking students to reflect on their incomplete drafts, trusting students to be able to complete the task, and the teacher's need to guide students. Written and oral feedback are both valid forms of giving feedback; however, neither one has proven to be better (Lowe & Shaw, 2019, 130). Student preference for direct or indirect or oral or written feedback plays a part in how effective the feedback is (Bitchener et al., 2005). For many teachers, teaching writing itself becomes too daunting when considering the undertaking of giving feedback. While teachers may know exactly what feedback students need, it can be argued that no one can determine what feedback a student is ready to receive and willing to receive better than the student themself (Ruegg, 2020). Therefore, this paper proposes a form of feedback that allows students to take charge of their feedback by seeking it themselves. It also encourages students to communicate about their own writing to ensure the understanding of both the teacher and the student.

Typical forms of feedback may include any manner in which the teacher gives direct or indirect feedback based on their perception of students' needs. This may be written or oral feedback, and it may or may not include chances for students to privately consult the teacher for further clarification. In student-led consultations, the students approach the teacher with questions about their own writing during an agreed-upon time, and the teacher only offers advice relevant to the consulting student's question. Student-led consultations are underpinned by learner autonomy, motivation, and, to a lesser degree, metacognition.

This practice exists for teachers seeking ways to encourage their students to seek and utilize feedback and understand the feedback they have received. This practice is most useful for teachers who want to motivate their students to become active learners in the writing classroom.

THE GRAND FEEDBACK DEBATE

The efficacy of different kinds of feedback is a continuing debate, with Truscott, Ferris, Hyland and others all taking slightly different stances (Chan & Phillips, 2021). Writing teachers have taken sides, but generally, administrators ask that students are given feedback in some manner. Students have also indicated, in multiple studies, that they would like to receive feedback and that they value feedback from their teachers (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). That leads educators to the questions of how much feedback is the right amount of feedback, how much feedback are students using and remembering, and what manner of feedback distribution yields the best results (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ferris, 2004). It can also lead to hesitation among writing teachers to try new manners of feedback as there is no certainty that any of the accepted versions of feedback work. This does not remove the responsibility of teachers to ensure that students have guided opportunities to improve, but it does affect how teachers might approach the issue (Truscott, 1999).

Evidence has only been able to indicate that indirect feedback (i.e., where the error is indicated but no suggested change is made), has a longer-lasting benefit on students' overall improvement as writers (Ferris, 2004). Teachers may be concerned by the uncertainty of how students will interpret indirect feedback or if they will come to incorrect conclusions (Lee, 2003). Suggestions that educators turn toward oral feedback and discussions with students about what errors the students should focus on have been made in response to these findings (Bitchener et al., 2005). However, few practices involving student opinions on the types of feedback they would like to focus on have emerged from these studies. There is still

a recognized need for longitudinal studies assessing students developing accuracy over time (Liu & Brown, 2015). As Ferris and Roberts (2001) once argued, "it is important for researchers and writing experts to identify issues, feedback strategies, and techniques for helping students to help themselves through various types of research designs," (p. 79). It is clear that while communicative feedback practices led by students have the capacity to encourage long-term improvement, detailed practices and their efficacy remain underexplored.

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

As mentioned before, student-led consultations are underpinned by the following theories in order of relevance: autonomy, motivation, and metacognition. The first is perhaps the most obvious. As Mynard (2018) noted, the best way for teachers to respond to the individual needs of all of the learners in any given class is to promote autonomy. This will mean that the learners themselves can ensure that they are personalizing learning opportunities for their needs. Students who are higher-achieving tend to take advantage of autonomy in the classroom in a way that is beneficial for their learning (Ruegg, 2020). It is, then, unsurprising that students who are receiving more critical feedback that aligns with their desired feedback rather than simply compliments are also more likely to engage with feedback in a manner that may result in long-term learning (Ruegg, 2020; Zhang & Hyland, 2018). In addition, students prefer to receive feedback repeatedly (around 2-4 times) on the same issue to feel they have fully understood the feedback, and doing this in one-to-one feedback sessions has great potential for learners to be able to notice their errors and understand the corrections they receive (Bitchener, et al., 2005). Coupling together repetition with an emphasis on autonomy (i.e. asking students to seek feedback rather than just receive it), may lead to noticeable and sustained improvement in student writing. In addition, autonomy in seeking feedback also ensures students feel they are able to use the feedback appropriately and encourages follow-up questions when needed (Ackerman & Gross, 2010).

Motivation and language learning share a long and complex history that educators and researchers alike are still trying to fully understand in order to unlock whatever benefits we can for our students. Motivation refers to the effort with which the language learner strives to achieve a goal (Zareian & Jodaei, 2015). It is accepted that fear of failing a task and wanting to receive reward are two factors that positively affect learner motivation (Hussain et al., 2020). Student-led consultation sessions provide both students space to 1) create a language-learning goal and 2)

achieve that goal. In the case of creation of a goal, feedback-seeking consultations require students to engage in a one-on-one conversation with a teacher for a predetermined time (around 10 minutes). Conversation itself is often a motivational factor for second-language learners (Magnan et al., 2014). Regarding achievement of that goal, the feedback consultation allows students to realize their language-learning goal within the writing classroom. Therefore, the practice of student-led consultations can directly and positively affect student motivation. Of course, being able to receive praise from a teacher can also be a form of external motivation (Hussain et al., 2020).

Finally, metacognition comes into play by the very nature of the task: students are asked to think about their approach to their own thoughts through a conversation about a writing task. As Davies et al. (2011) indicated, teachers may put students as the focus of how they assess work if their ultimate aims are to develop learners' autonomy, metacognitive awareness of their own thought processes, and strategies that can be employed for the benefit of their learning. Guiding students to be metacognitively aware of their own writing encourages students to seek what gaps are in their work and realize what steps need to be taken in order to improve said work. Students must first pay attention to their own ideas and the ways they have organized them in order to be able to ask for specific advice to improve their writing (Lee, 2016). In that case, students may learn to recognize the importance of the writing process, and subsequently, could be better prepared for lifelong learning with which they purposefully engage (Klenowski, 2009).

THE PRACTICE

While not a novel in the broad spectrum of Second Language Acquisition, within the context of the writing classroom, student leadership still remains a largely theoretical discussion (Lee, 2016). In the case of feedback, this leadership can be viewed as students recognizing their own errors and improvements to continue their learning, a statement which can be summed up by Holec's (1981) definition of autonomy: "the ability to take charge of one's own learning," (p. 3). In the English department at Kanda University of International Studies, a language university in Chiba, Japan, second-year students are required to take an academic writing course. During the course, students are to complete a total of four or five essays, and during each essay, students are guaranteed to receive feedback from their teacher in some form. Because arguments have been made that mistakes in writing should be seen as a useful part of learning

and that teachers should stop focusing so heavily on students' mistakes (Lee, 2016), it is imperative that teachers focus on where students are excelling and support students in self-correcting their errors.

The basic practice outlined here is the implementation of a one-on-one consultation in place of written feedback in the process writing classroom. While it is unreasonable to expect students to become active seekers of feedback without some form of nudging, it is reasonable to assist students in changing from receptive learners who await feedback to active learners who seek feedback. That is the ultimate goal of this practice.

In order to enact a practice where students recognize that they are in charge of their own learning, successfully complete the practice, and see results, instructors will need to take the following steps: instruct, norm and practice, and finally, give students space to perform.

Instruction

The teacher should teach students how to ask questions about their own writing. Modeling this in class using a contrived essay is one way to ensure that students know what the teacher's expectations are.

Some examples regarding a five-paragraph argumentative essay may be:

- In my body paragraph, I wrote about the levels of bowing. Can you look at my sentence order and tell me if it makes sense or if I should re-order my supporting sentences? If yes, please suggest a better order.
- My example talks about the difference in the size of *chawan* between men and women, but I am not sure it is a good example. Can you tell me if I should change my example? I am thinking that explaining the amount of rice and amount of fish is a better example. What do you think? (Note that a *chawan* is the Japanese name of a bowl specifically designed for rice.)

The above questions have been created with almost too much specificity based on the instructor's understanding that L2 students may not be able to produce such a specific question without scaffolding. Without such specific examples, students may instead ask a very general feedback question such as "is this writing good?" With guidelines, students may be better able to copy the style and content of the example questions, successfully avoiding very general feedback questions.

Norming and Practice

To effectively enact a new practice that relies on student input in the L2 classroom, it may be necessary to norm students to the practice before they practice it. The two terms can be distinguished as follows: 'to norm' means to teach students the standard of work the instructor expects and 'to practice' means for students to try what they have learned with their own work in a low or no stakes environment.

To train students to complete a student-led consultation, first tell students that the only question the teacher will ask is "What questions do you have?" so that students are prepared to not receive feedback they themselves do not seek. This starts setting a standard for students that the teacher is expecting their questions and wants to answer their questions.

Regarding the questions that students need to ask, allow students a chance to work together to create feedback-seeking questions by working with a contrived essay. The students may then role-play with one student acting as the teacher. This practice allows the teacher time to check that all students have asked questions of the standard that the teacher expects from them during the actual consultation and allows the students time to reformulate their questions as needed. Depending on the level of the student, it may be necessary to assign reading the contrived essay and creating questions as a homework assignment, but if class time allows, it can also be done in class. After students have been trained on how to consult with a contrived essay, they can move on to practicing.

For practice, students can continue to use the contrived essay or they can practice with their own writing. If practicing with the contrived essay, the teacher may sit with each group from the norming activity during class time and answer the questions they prepared so that students can form an understanding of how the consultation may go. Alternatively, students can practice with each other using questions from their own writing. They may work as a type of peer review activity, depending on the needs of the class.

It is important to note that full essays are not the only form of writing that works for this practice. If starting with full essays is challenging for students, the teacher may consider working on only one paragraph or using outlines of papers instead. It is important for the sake of this practice and its goal of fostering feedback-seeking students that the piece of writing chosen for this practice emphasizes the writing process.

The Student-led Consultation

The students will come during the agreed-upon time. This may be inside or outside of class, but preferably during class time. This may be in a private space or in a regular classroom, per the instructor's preference. It should be noted that students may show discomfort during their first session for two possible reasons: 1) being in a classroom alone with a teacher, or 2) talking about their written work. There is no particular reason why the sessions must be completed in a space with only the instructor and the consulting student. While some students may prefer privacy, others may prefer having peers around who can offer language support if they are struggling. The non-consulting students may like being able to hear additional advice that the teacher is giving the consulting student.

Ten minutes is the recommended time for a consultation session. Any shorter and the teacher runs the risk of not allowing enough time for the student to ask their questions and receive a satisfactory answer. If the student is truly prepared and has asked questions that seek specific feedback, 10 minutes may not feel sufficient. The teacher will have to set expectations of what the student should prepare for the consultation, but a completed draft of the relevant assignment would be the most basic requirement. A list of questions that the student is planning to ask may also be included in the list of items the teacher requires for consultation. However, as the student will be asking the questions out loud in a consultation, this may not be necessary.

During the session, the student is in charge, posing questions and taking notes on the teacher's responses to their questions. The teacher and student may work on a hard copy or through a digitally shared copy of the student's work. The teacher should refrain from making corrections that the student did not request so as not to overwhelm or distract the student, and the teacher should avoid offering the student feedback until the student has indicated that they have no other questions. Note that here, the term feedback means teacher-led feedback. Suppose the student is unable to continue the consultation due to nerves, lack of preparation, or any other reason. In that case, the teacher should be able to switch back to teacher-led feedback, as all students should receive some form of feedback, even if teacher-led feedback is arguably less effective (Lee, 2016). The session ends when the teacher has confirmed the student has no further questions or at the end of the student's agreed-upon time slot.

Grading

Such a practice as the one described above may not require grading, as the ultimate goal of the practice is to assist students in their understanding of the material and their understanding of themselves as writers. It could be argued that the "grade" of consultation is the point boost that students gain from implementing their teacher's advice. However, as many teachers believe that any work that students are required to perform should have some form of impact on their grade, it is possible to mark student-led consultations as a completion grade. More specifically, one could assign point values to the student's preparation, ability or desire to continue the conversation, the student demonstrating understanding, and the changes that the student has made as a result of the consultation (see Appendix for a suggested rubric).

Further Suggestions and Adaptations

Teachers may wish to begin student-led consultations from the first major assignment, but it is unlikely that the practice will be met with favorable review from the students or the teacher in that case. Students should benefit greatly from being normed to the practice or, at the very least, having class time to practice, before being given full reign of their allotted consultation time. In addition, group work and partner work can also give students confidence when approaching the teacher to seek feedback. Following these two suggestions, the teacher may choose to do a practice round with a contrived essay in groups so that students can become familiar with seeking feedback from their teacher with the support of their peers. In addition, a teacher may choose to provide written feedback alongside the oral feedback so that students can recognize the kinds of feedback that they prefer or what types of feedback they wish to seek.

It can be challenging to recognize how well a student has understood the advice they have received; however, asking the student to repeat back what they have learned or asking them to take notes can assuage these issues. In addition, it may be a good idea to allow students to record their sessions so that they can listen to them again for reference. Studies have verified that students, if given a chance to record material, are likely to listen to it for a better understanding of what they have learned (Heilesen, 2010).

As this practice requires educators to exercise patience with their students, for classes that only meet once per week, supplementing student-sought feedback with teacher-directed feedback, be it direct or indirect, may be necessary.

Last, teachers may choose to reward their students with a section of the rubric that emphasizes that the student has made positive change. Positive change can be defined as both increased awareness of the features of good academic writing and "deeper and more elaborative" writing (Boscolo et al., 2007, p. 424). In this way, the process of writing, editing, reflecting, and re-writing is emphasized more than simply earning points. This part of the rubric may appear on the consultation grade or on the assignment grade itself as can be seen in the Appendix.

IMPLICATIONS & LIMITATIONS

This form of feedback does beg the question of whether students will be able to receive the feedback they really need. However, this issue is not markedly different from the common occurrence of students choosing to only make simple corrections that a teacher suggested in written feedback rather than dealing with the more complex content or organization suggestions. What is present in the structure of this practice is the hope that students will become more confident in explaining their writing and their difficulties. This could add a level of communication to the writing classroom that is scarcely seen in writing practices. Teachers need to become more aware of methods that encourage students to become long-term and able editors of their own work (Lee, 2003).

As teachers seek practices that put students in more of a self-editor role, they will need to check that students are able to edit correctly. Lower level students who are unfamiliar with grammar terms and names for parts of essays in English may find this consultation task too difficult to be successful. For students who can speak English at the A2-B1 level or higher, the practice should be able to be successfully implemented. Conversely, Bitchener et al. (2004) demonstrated that upper intermediate L2 writers can improve the accuracy of their writing if they are regularly instructed via oral feedback. Therefore, this practice may be best kept for higher-level students who are able to use terminology specific to academic writing or who are able to focus on the content of their writing rather than just the structure of it.

Reflections

Having started teaching writing with a very traditional model of writing feedback on student drafts and the hope that they would follow the feedback, moving toward a feedback model that is more reliant on student efforts, was a welcome relief. Not only is there noticeable improvement in student work, much less time is spent on writing feedback. The concern that students do not understand written feedback is also removed as it is

clear in a face-to-face setting or even on a video chat when students are struggling to understand the feedback. While there is often a barrier formed by social hierarchy between teachers and students, especially in the Japanese context, this practice helps lower that barrier by making feedback feel more readily available. The number of students who are keen to ask questions before, during, and after class time has greatly increased with the implementation of this practice. Students confidently come to both confirm their knowledge and to seek validation of the changes they have made, seeking positive feedback as well.

Any adjustments that were made to return to a more traditional form of feedback were met with apparent student disinterest, so it can be argued that once students understand what autonomy looks like as a writing student, they prefer it. It is hoped that students who gain confidence in asking questions during the consultation will learn to approach their teacher whenever they have uncertainties about assignments.

A Look to the Future

In the future, an analysis of student work after completing the transition from feedback to consultation is needed to fully understand the efficacy of this practice. In addition, students' beliefs on their learning after taking charge of consultations must be gathered and analyzed to determine what improvements could be made to the practice. While the overall scores of students have improved within the context described here, it would be worthwhile to ask other teachers to employ student-led consultation sessions so that the implementation of this practice into other classrooms can be used to gauge on a broader scale how well students respond to being in charge of their own improvement in writing.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, some of the biggest challenges with teaching writing will continue to be how to give feedback, when to give feedback, and how much feedback to give. These challenges arise largely from the fact that the typical expectation is for teachers to take the task of providing feedback fully on themselves rather than allowing students to take charge of their own writing journey. The collaborative process of students seeking their own feedback allows for teachers to focus their energies specifically on the advice that students wish to receive and creates more teacher-student trust in the classroom. For educators seeking to be more directly involved in their students' learning without adding additional time in their schedule for meeting students, or for educators seeking to reduce the amount of time they spend doling out written feedback, student-led

consultations may be the answer they seek. As writers, students who are given opportunities to seek their own feedback may become more actively involved in their approach to the writing process. Students who learn to see their own mistakes will not only be better writers, but may also be able to transfer that skill into other areas of their academic career.

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APPENDIX

Suggested Student-led Consultation Rubric

This is used in a 2nd-year language university with English majors in Japan at Kanda University of International Studies.

Attendance										
Student came to the session at the correct time with relevant materials.										
	1	0								
	Yes	No								
Preparation										
Student arrived with questions specific to their paper.										
	2	1	0							
	Questions were specific and answerable	Questions were broad, but could be answered in general terms.	Questions could not be answered or were not asked.							
Note-Taking										
Student took notes on teacher's comments.										
	3	2	1	0						
Comvounti	Made corrections and took notes during the session.	Took notes on most discussion topics.	Took notes on only one discussion topic.	Did not take notes.						
Conversation										
Student continued the conversation, using the entire time allotted to them.										
	3	2	1	0						

	Was an active participant of the conversation.	Made some attempts, but preferred to just listen.	Listened only.	Made little or no effort.						
Accepted Feedback										
(To be marked after reception of final draft). Student took teacher's notes and suggestions seriously and made suggested changes. Student asked follow-up questions.										
	5	4	3	2	1	0				
	Student made efforts on all suggested corrections . Perhaps student asked follow-up questions.	Student made efforts to adjust most suggested corrections . Perhaps the student asked follow-up questions.	Student made effort on half of the suggested corrections . A follow-up question may have been asked.	Student made effort on some suggested corrections . Or, effort was made without corrective results.	Student only made an effort to correct some feedback, but no concrete correction was made.	No effort or changes were documente d.				