Learners' and Instructors' Perceptions and Preferences for Feedback in ESL Writing

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Introduction

Although many studies have investigated the role of corrective feedback (CF) in second language writing development, little research has examined learners and instructors perceptions of various types of CF and the contextual and individual factors which may impact their preferences for feedback (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010). Guided by these concerns, the present research compares the preferences for feedback of ESL students and instructors in an IEP program and examines the potential factors which may be related to ESL students' and teachers' feedback preferences. This exploratory research aims to answer the following two questions: 1). What are students and teachers perceptions and preferences for different types and amounts of corrective feedback in ESL writing? 2). What individual and contextual factors influence students and teachers perceptions and preferences for the types and amounts of corrective feedback in ESL writing?

Methods

In total, seventy low-intermediate to advanced ESL students from Level 3 to Level 6 at PIE completed a questionnaire. The majority of the respondents were Arabic males. The average age of respondents was 23. Sixteen instructors from PIE were also involved in the study. They were present and previous teachers for Writing Lab, Grammar and Writing, Reading and Writing, and CBI.

The instruments for data collection included a questionnaire for students and a questionnaire for teachers. Items included in the questionnaires concerned students and teachers' perceptions and preferences for corrective feedback in terms of its source (teacher versus peer), mode (written versus oral), focus (content and organization versus language use versus

mechanics), amount (comprehensive versus selective error correction), and degree of explicitness (locating errors only, editing symbols, direct correction, metalinguistic explanation). Student Questionnaire was administered to Level 3 across Level 6 in week 12 and 13. During the same time, the Teacher Questionnaire was given to the 16 teachers. Follow-up interviews with three teacher respondents were conducted in the following weeks and the conversations were audio-recorded for later analysis.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of the responses indicated that while both students and teachers appreciated the benefits of student-teacher conferences and a combination of positive and negative feedback, a more complex picture of feedback emerged that pointed to specific areas where teachers and students diverged in their views of feedback. Specifically: 1) as students proficiency level increased, their attitudes towards peer feedback became more positive; however, teachers' opinions were more diverted concerning the value of peer review; 2) most students believed that feedback on lexical and grammatical errors was more important than that on content and organization problems, whereas most teachers held the opposite opinion; 3) over half students wished all their errors were marked; in contrast, the majority of the teachers preferred to mark a few types of errors each time; 4) nearly half of learners wished their errors were directly corrected accompanied by detailed metalinguistic explanation; however, most instructors preferred using editing symbols and leaving the responsibility of error correction to students themselves. The results also suggested that learners' preferences for the types and amounts of feedback were not only related to their L2 proficiency level but also the scoring rubrics they had been frequently exposed to; whereas instructors' feedback preferences were influenced by a mixture of contextual factors including course curriculum, students' proficiency level, and the

type of errors in student writing. The findings bear pedagogical implications for providing

feedback in ESL writing instruction and professional development for pre-service and in-service

ESL instructors who need to respond to student papers.