Simultaneous Oral-Written Feedback on ESL Academic Writing through Conferencing

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Learning at Intercultural Intersections Conference
Kamloops, BC
March 11, 2015
Overview

- Introduction/rationale
- Research questions
- Study methodology
- Results and discussion
- Conclusions
- Further research
1. Introduction

Rationale for the study

• After a long debate over the value of written corrective feedback (WCF), most researchers agree WCF is useful to help ESL students write correctly (e.g., Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Evans et al., 2011; Ferris, 2002, 2011; McGarrell, 2011).
1. Introduction cont.

- Evans et al. (2011) conclude that “rather than focusing on whether practitioners should or should not provide WCF, we encourage researchers and practitioners to continue to identify those strategies that may improve the accuracy of the L2 writers” (p. 9). The main issue has shifted from whether to how.
1. Introduction cont.

Our study responds to such calls and contributes to research on such strategies by examining what feedback strategies ESL students prefer.
2. Research Questions

1. Do **advanced** ESL students prefer to receive *direct* or *indirect* teacher feedback on language problems?

2. Do these students prefer to receive (a) written teacher feedback only or (b) oral teacher feedback through conferencing as well as written feedback?

3. In case of oral feedback, do students prefer to receive teacher feedback *while* the teacher is marking or *after* the teacher has marked?
Defining terms

*Language problems* include those in the following categories:

- grammar, vocabulary
- spelling, punctuation, upper/lower cases
- academic writing style (Hu, 2011), avoiding
  
  a. contracted forms, e.g., *isn’t*
  b. colloquial expressions
  c. questions in the essay body
  d. multi-word verbs, e.g., *go on, look up to*
  e. personal-opinion expressions, e.g., *I think*
  f. choppy sentences, i.e., Ss w/ < 10 words each, in a row

- clear expressions
3. Study Methodology

- Mixed methods: survey and follow-up interviews.

- Participants: 30 ESL students in ESAL 0580 Academic Writing in 2 semesters at TRU for the survey and 11 of them for individual interviews.
# Participants

Table 3.1: Participants surveyed (30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Program of Study</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Count</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Student Participant</td>
<td>Country of Origin</td>
<td>Home Language</td>
<td>Program of Study</td>
</tr>
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<td>---------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Spanish</td>
<td>Pre-MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>China</td>
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<td>BBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
<td>Pre-MBA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
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<tr>
<td>E</td>
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<td>Thai</td>
<td>Pre-MBA</td>
</tr>
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</table>
Table 3.2: Students Interviewed: 6 from Semester 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Participant</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Home Language</th>
<th>Program of Study</th>
<th>Gender</th>
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<td>G</td>
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<td>Pre-MBA</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td>H</td>
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<td>BBA</td>
<td>Male</td>
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<td>I</td>
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<td>BS</td>
<td>Male</td>
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</table>
4. Results and Discussion

Research Question

1. Do students prefer to receive direct or indirect teacher feedback on language problems?
1) I believe that writing correctly and clearly is important for success in ESAL 0580 Academic Writing.
2) I prefer to receive **direct** written teacher feedback (i.e., with the problems corrected and a revision suggested) in the following categories.
Student interview responses

St A: On the first essay, I want DF in all areas. Later on, I would like reminders and warnings [IF] depending on the case.

Reasons for DF on:

Grammar

St A: I must compete with NES for a job [as a permanent resident]. No one will hire a person with [grammar] errors.

St D: I prefer DF because grammar is difficult. I need to know where the mistake is. I need to know how to correct it.
**vocabulary**
St B: ESL students only have simple words, need help with academic vocabulary which has more precise meanings.

**academic writing style**
St C: I need DF for multi-word verbs, colloquial expressions and choppy sentences; IF for contracted forms, questions in the body, and personal opinion expressions.

**clear expressions**
St B: L1 transfer in grammar and vocabulary (via translation). I want DF because I am unable to correct myself.
3) If it is impossible sometimes for the teacher to provide direct written feedback on all your errors and therefore the teacher must provide written feedback on some errors indirectly, would you like to have the problem parts:

![Fig 4.3 :F12]

- Underlined/circled
- Indicated with codes/symbols
- Underlined/Circled and indicated with codes/symbols
Student interview responses

Rationale

St G: This is the hardest to edit, even though we practice a lot in class, it’s still difficult to fix on my own. The more detail (hints) is better.
Research Question

2. Do students prefer to receive
(a) written feedback only or
(b) oral feedback through one-on-one conferencing as well as written feedback?
5. I prefer to receive written teacher feedback only but no conference (or oral feedback) re. my essay.

Fig 4.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Least Strongly</th>
<th>Most Strongly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student interview responses

Reasons for not preferring WTF with no oral feedback

St B: Necessary to discuss problems particular to myself and personal errors and problems privately. Conference is a good environment to talk about my errors.

St E: Sometimes it’s difficult to understand what the teacher means [in writing]. I may misinterpret the teacher’s meaning [without conferencing].
Research Question

3. In case of oral feedback, do students prefer to receive teacher feedback while the teacher is marking or after the teacher has marked?
6. I prefer to have one-on-one conferencing with the teacher to receive oral feedback to discuss my essay strengths and weaknesses *while* the teacher writes feedback on my essay.
Student interview responses

Reasons for “while” or simultaneous oral and written feedback:

St A: Because it’s the only way I can learn. I learn more because I can ask more specific questions and you can explain… I can see where I made a mistake. It’s more immediate, direct.

St C: It allows me to know WHY something is wrong and HOW to correct it.
7. I prefer to have one-on-one conferencing with the teacher to receive oral feedback to discuss my essay *after* the teacher has given me written feedback on my essay.

Fig 4.6
Reasons for not preferring “after”:

St A: I don’t like it because when you are correcting in front of me, I can see and I can ask you. Rather than seeing the results [prior written feedback], I can experience the process. This figuring out [with the teacher] helps me to learn better.

St H: This is fine, but I don’t prefer this way. Because you have to mark a lot of exams, if you have to go through it again, you may not remember what you were thinking at the time you marked it. This takes more time. It is not an efficient way to do it.
5. Conclusions

- **Simultaneous oral-written feedback at conferences** is preferred by most ESL students (see also Hu, 2010).

- Student preference is dynamic in that they prefer DF more on grammar, vocabulary, writing style, and clear expressions than on spelling, punctuation, and mechanics; they prefer DF more in the beginning of a course but as their understanding of language errors and feedback improves, they may begin to like IF for errors they can fix by themselves.
6. Further Research

- A larger sample of students will be needed for surveys.
- The findings are student perceptions based on course experience. Further research can provide experiments to validate the effectiveness of the simultaneous oral-written feedback.
References


Thank you!

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To
RA’s: Alana Hoare, Vera Yu

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada
Conseil de recherches en sciences humaines du Canada