



BEING EFFECTIVE OR BEING CORRECTIVE IN WRITING CLASSES?

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ABSTRACT

Providing corrective teacher feedback to English language learners is a significant and effective point for Turkish students. Many studies have been done to fix the importance of corrective teacher feedback. The overall aim of this study was to focus on the way that the instructors can change the students' point of view from teacher-corrective feedback to peer- feedback. A semi-structured interview with English Language Teaching instructors was conducted. Coding and frequency analysis of the codes in the interviews were used for the qualitative part of the research. Based on the results of the qualitative analysis, ELT instructors thought that although teacher feedback could be useful for students in writing classes, but peer feedback is more useful because of peer learning, distinguishing between evaluation and assessment, and also improving a learner-centered point of view. Furthermore, ELT instructors believe that teachers of writing classes should find a way for helping their students change their point of view from not trusting to trusting peer feedback. However, it is not the end of the story and the teachers should have a good planning for preparing students for peer feedback and also, they should train them by using some checklists as a guidance.

Keywords: Written feedback, teacher-corrective feedback, peer-feedback

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Makale Gönderim Tarihi: 08.06.2022
Makale Kabul Tarihi: 29.06.2022

YAZMA DERSLERİNDE ETKİLİ OLMAK VEYA DÜZELTİCİ OLMAK?

ÖZ

İngilizce öğrenenlere düzeltici öğretmen geribildirimini sağlamak, Türk öğrenciler için önemli ve etkili bir noktadır. Düzeltici öğretmen geribildirimiminin önemini tesbit etmek için birçok çalışma yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın genel amacı, öğretmenlerin öğrencilerin bakış açısını öğretmen düzeltici geribildirimden akran geribildirimine nasıl değiştirebileceklerine odaklanmaktır. İngilizce dili öğretimi öğretmenleri ile yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yapılmıştır. Araştırmanın nitel kısmı için görüşmelerde yer alan kodların kodlama ve frekans analizi kullanılmıştır. Nitel analizin sonuçlarına dayanarak, İngilizce dili öğretimi öğretmenleri öğretmen geri bildiriminin öğrenciler için yazma derslerinde faydalı olabileceğini, ancak akran geribildiriminin akran öğrenmesi, ölçüme ve değerlendirmeyi ayırt etmesi ve ayrıca öğrenci merkezli bir bakış açısı geliştirmesi nedeniyle daha yararlı olabileceğini düşündüler. Ayrıca, İngilizce dili öğretimi öğretmenleri, yazma dersleri öğretmenlerinin, öğrencilerinin bakış açılarını akran geri bildirimlerine güvenmemekten güvenmeye değiştirmelerine yardımcı olacak bir yol bulmaları gerektiğine inanmaktadır. Ancak, bu hikâyenin sonu değil ve öğretmenler, öğrencileri akran geribildirimine hazırlamak için iyi bir planlamaya sahip olmalı ve ayrıca bazı kontrol listelerini yol gösterici olarak kullanmalarını eğitmelidirler.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yazılı geri bildirim, öğretmen düzeltici geri bildirim, akran geri bildirim

1. INTRODUCTION

English language is one of the foreign languages in Turkey through which the students may face some difficulties in writing. Writing can be considered as a complex process from first drafts to last final published one. Tillema (2012) explained that although writing is one of the most important skills in foreign language, but it is the most challenging skill to be learnt. Although writing is rather complicated and tedious activity, despite its growing importance not only in the school curriculum but also in real life, it has been neglected for many years. It needs to be taught and learnt in a correct way. To increase effectiveness and reduce negative thoughts about writing, students and educators should keep in mind that writing is a dynamic and ongoing process that involves a mutual relationship. Chastain (1998) stated that writing down one's thoughts is difficult, even under the most favorable and natural circumstances.

In writing classes, teachers have the role of providing feedback as they read ,in addition to that, it is generally the intention of the students to present their documents to their teachers to see how far they have achieved the intended goal of their work. So, the teachers and students in writing classes are running a reciprocal activity. Chastain(1998) mentioned that: "As the conception of writing has changed from that of a product to a process, teachers have begun to emphasize the need to provide more assistance during pre-writing rewriting, writing, and post-writing phases of assigned writing activities. They now include a variety of classroom activities designed to prepare the students to do assignment better with fewer problems, to teach the students how to manage the writing process, and to give the students response and feedback that is more natural and useful" (p.253, as quoted in Külekçi, 2012, p.137)

According to Kamberi, 2013, teacher-feedback is considered to be the more powerful than peer-feedback. Burke & Pieterick, 2010 define teacher feedback as, "Positive, reciprocal arrangement in which tutors' written comments signal information to students about how well they are on course to their target, and students in turn use the comments to redirect their learning." Before comparing the difference between teacher feedback and peer feedback, the researcher tried to give a clear definition of feedback itself.

Nicol&Macfalane-Dick (2006) gave the following comprehensive list of good feedback practices:

- "1.help clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);
- 2.facilitate the development of self-assessment(reflection) in learning;
- 3.deliver high-quality information to students about their learning;
- 4.encourage teacher and peer dialogue around learning;
- 5.encourage positive emotional beliefs and self-esteem,
- 6.provide opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;
- 7.provide information to teachers that can be used to help shape teaching." (p.7)

Bijami, 2013 introduced Peer feedback under different names such as peer response, peer review, peer editing, and peer evaluation. Peer-feedback can be considered as a participation of peers in learning. Peer feedback should be detailed, suitable, high-quality, timely, accurate, constructive,

outcome-oriented, encouraging, positive, intelligible, and focused on what is done well and what needs to be improved. (Konold & Miller, 2005; Gielen & De Waver, 2015).

Gielen et al. (2010) clarified that: “Peer feedback is an assessment form performed by equal status learners. It does not contribute to the assessee’s final grade and has a qualitative output. The assessor discusses the strengths and weaknesses of a specific performance at length and indicates suggestions for further improvement. It is the counterpart of feedback by a teacher”(p.144).

Hyland (2003) explains that peer review helps develop communication competence further, inspires greater student participation, creates an authentic communicative context, and helps writers understand the needs of readers, and also encourages interaction between students.

In writing classes, the place of language teaching remains unclear to many teachers who are seeking to teach composition skills while facing issues in student writing that many of their students have yet to develop the linguistic resources necessary for communicative competence. This research aims to determine the appropriate ways of teaching and giving feedback for writing activities. To help students learn to work collaboratively and overcome the limitations of working alone, peer feedback has been targeted.

1.2. Statement of the problem

English language teachers had problems in giving corrective feedback in written works. They looked for ways to help their students learn to correct themselves and their friends. There were so many researches in the effectiveness of corrective feedback (Ferris,1999; Truscott 1996,1999). But here the researcher tried to put forward the importance of innovative methods in giving feedback for students’ written work. So the main goal of this study is focusing on the positive sides of using innovation in giving feedback and conducting a learner-centered point of view. So, here the researcher is looking for the ways that can help the students move in true path for giving peer feedback.

1.3. Aim of study

To investigate the perceptions of university English language instructors on how to improve the students’ point of view in giving peer feedback, a semi-structured interview was conducted to shed light on the instructors’ opinions in the ways of using peer feedback and helping their students improve positive perceptions about it. The most important part in this investigation is looking for the ways to help the students understand the positive sides of peer feedback and also know the exact goal of peer feedback.

1.4. Research Questions

Following the above mentioned aim of this study, questions were directed to English Language university instructors to uncover their perceptions in peer feedback and their given methods for changing students’ point of view from teacher feedback to peer feedback. Questions were as follows:

RQ1: Is teacher feedback useful?

RQ2: Is peer feedback useful?

RQ3: Is there any reason for students' trust in teacher feedback?

RQ4: Is there any reason for helping students trust in peer feedback?

RQ5: Could the teachers help their students in improving positive perception towards peer feedback?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many studies have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of peer feedback. Mendonça and Johnson, 1994, claimed that peer feedback is offered as a pedagogy to give language learners more self-control. The reason is that peer correction would allow for more flexible and non-forceful decisions about whether or not students should adopt their peers.

Peer feedback should be considered as a more modern and democratic pedagogy in terms of self-determination and centering on the student concepts that give students more freedom and independency.

Gielen et al. (2010:145) made a classification of the benefits of peer feedback as follows:

“1. Firstly, peer feedback can increase the social pressure on students to perform well on an assignment.

2. Secondly, research in higher education shows that students often perceive peer feedback as more understandable and more useful.

3. A third argument in favour of peer feedback is that it increases the students' ability to understand feedback.

4. Fourthly, peer feedback is quicker. As teacher feedback often has a considerable delay after the submission of an assignment or test, feedback sometimes is not available until after the curriculum has passed to another topic.

5. Fifthly, peer feedback can be part of an increase in the frequency or amount of feedback.

6. A sixth possible advantage is the individualisation of feedback. If teachers try to provide more timely and more frequent feedback, they often organise it collectively to make this feasible. Collective feedback cannot, however, address personal needs and provide opportunities for personal interaction as often as individual feedback can. Additionally, pupils are not likely to show their ignorance or uncertainty during a collective session, so a lot of questions will not even be posed. Peer feedback can make it feasible to provide individual feedback, leaving the teacher available for personal interaction whenever assessors and assesseees cannot find an answer to a specific question.

7. A final argument is the association of feedback with power issues, emotions and identity. Learners may hide their weaknesses and doubts from the teacher, rendering teachers unaware of particular student difficulties or misconceptions. Peer feedback may bypass these difficulties since it is less power-sensitive.”

According to Grabe & Kaplan(1996), responding to peer feedback and making suggestions allows students to see similar problems and weaknesses in their own writing. In this regard, students would have the opportunity to read different thought and reasoning formats. They can also assess themselves by reading the written work of their peers. According to Pienemann(1989), whenever the students feel ready they will consider feedback. Raimes(1983), takes into account both language form and content in peer feedback .

There were several investigations which explained learners` revisions after getting peer and teacher feedback and these studies clarified that peer feedback focuses on meaning-level revisions (Connor & Asenavage, 1994; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Yang et al., 2006). Paulus(1999) gives the name of peer collaboration to peer feedback.

Some studies focused on the advantages of using peer feedback as bringing an original sense of being an audience in writing tasks(Keh, 1990; Mittan, 1989), and it also improves students` critical thinking and analysis abilities (Chaudron, 1984; Keh, 1990).

But the important thing here is that students may not trust their peers feedback, because they are also themselves learning the language (Allel & Connor, 1990; George, 1984; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1993). This shows that students need more help for understanding the main aim of peer feedback and the teachers in the classroom are responsible to guide them in true way. According to some researches, if there are useful trainings in peer feedback, there would be improvements in peer revisions and it fosters the quality of student writings (Chaudron 1984; Zamel 1985; Mendonca & Johnson 1994; Berg 1999).

3. METHOD

3.1. Sample/Participants

This study involved 5 ELT instructors of a foundation university in Turkey. All of the instructors were experienced in teaching writing skill and giving feedback.

3.2. Instruments

In this study, a qualitative data collection instrument was utilized to conduct a semi-structured interview with ELT instructors to determine their perception towards teacher feedback and peer feedback and the way that ELT instructors could help their students get motivated and be encouraged to peer feedback. The semi-structured interview, comprising 5 questions, was conducted with 5 instructors who were working in English Language Teaching Department and all were experienced in teaching writing classes. Coding and frequency analysis of the codes in the interviews were the methods used for the qualitative part of the research.

3.3. Data collection procedures

A semi-structured interview was done to determine the reason for which some instructors may find teacher feedback useful, the reason for the students` trust in teacher feedback and also it tried to answer the questions related to the usefulness of peer feedback, and at last the ways that the instructors could help their students be motivated to peer feedback. For the interview sessions, the researcher got appointments in advance and conducted the interview privately. Whenever necessary, the researcher facilitated the interview part by clarifying the unclear parts.

3.4. Data analysis

To analyze qualitative data collected via interviews, content analysis was done by the researcher. In this technique, coding is done by taking the similarity of the vocabulary uttered by the participants into account and they were divided into different themes.

In the first part, the reasons for usefulness of teacher feedback were taken into account and the answers of ELT instructors were codified and divided into three themes. These three themes include teacher as being everything in the classroom, teacher as being more knowledgeable one, and teacher as the only one who gives grades.

Secondly, the reasons for usefulness of peer feedback have been considered. This part could be divided into three themes as learning from each other, understanding the difference between evaluation and assessment, and learner-centered classes.

In the third step, reasons of students' trust in teacher feedback have been analysed. This topic could be divided into two themes which are focusing on evaluation than assessment and focusing on grades, not learning process.

The fourth part which comprises the reasons for helping students trust peer feedback was divided into two themes as changing students point of view and focusing on the role of innovation.

Lastly, the researcher tried to analyse the ways for helping students in giving peer feedback. This part in itself could be divided into three themes as: good planning, training, and using checklists.

4. RESULTS & FINDINGS

Table 1 shows that according to 60% of the instructors, some teachers found teacher feedback useful because they think the teacher is everything in the classroom. Also 40% of the instructors believe that the teachers may think they are the only knowledgeable one in the classroom. About 80% of instructors claim that because the teachers give grades to students' written work, it can be the other reason for usefulness of teacher feedback.

More than half of the instructors mentioned that writing class teachers consider themselves as the authority of the class and they are the only one who can decide about evaluation in the class. But less than half of the instructors believe in the thought that the writing teachers are the most knowledgeable one in the classroom. Approximately, a big number of instructors agree with the idea that whenever the writing class teacher is giving the grades, so, s/he is giving feedback.

Table 1. Reasons for usefulness of teacher feedback

| Reasons | f | Percentages |
|-----------------------------|---|-------------|
| 1. Teacher is everything | 3 | 60% |
| 2. Teacher is knowledgeable | 2 | 40% |
| 3. Teacher gives grades | 4 | 80% |

According to table 2, the results revealed that only 20% of the instructors show the learning from each other as one of the reasons for usefulness of peer feedback. 40% of them claim that understanding the difference between evaluation and assessment is another reason for usefulness

of peer feedback. Also again 40% of instructors believe that because peer feedback is learner-centered it is useful for students.

Table2. Reasons for usefulness of peer feedback

| Reasons | f | Percentages |
|---|---|-------------|
| 1. Learning from each other | 1 | 20% |
| 2. Understanding the difference between evaluation and assessment | 2 | 40% |
| 3. Being learner-centered | 2 | 40% |

Table 3 involves the reasons of students' trusting teacher feedback. About 20% of instructors show focusing on evaluation rather than assessment as one of the reasons students' trusting in teacher feedback. 80% of instructors believe that students' focusing on grades, not the process of learning is another reason.

Table 3. Reasons of students' trusting in teacher feedback

| Reasons | f | Percentages |
|--|---|-------------|
| 1.Focusing on evaluation, not assessment | 1 | 20% |
| 2. focusing on grades,not learning process | 2 | 80 % |

Table 4 indicates that there are reasons for helping students trust peer feedback. 80% of instructors believe by changing students' point of view, the teachers can help them trust peer feedback. Also all of the instructors give importance to the role of innovation as the another reason.

Table 4. Reasons for helping students trust peer feedback

| Reasons | f | Percentages |
|---------------------------------------|---|-------------|
| 1.Changing point of view | 4 | 80% |
| 2. focusing on the role of innovation | 5 | 100 % |

According to table 5, there are three ways that the teachers can help their students give peer feedback. 80% of the instructors believe that for helping students, the teachers should make good plans. Also 80% of instructors give more importance to training in peerfeedback. And only 60% of the participants focus on the roles of checklists in helping students.

Table 5. The ways for helping students in giving peer feedback

| Reasons | f | Percentages |
|---------------------|---|-------------|
| 1. Good planning | 4 | 80% |
| 2. Training | 4 | 80 % |
| 3. Using checklists | 3 | 60% |

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Discussion of the findings of RQ1: Is teacher feedback useful?

In this part researcher tried to answer the question related to usefulness of teacher feedback and the reasons for getting teacher feedback as useful were under focus. Three themes have been codified here, as: Teacher is everything in the class, teacher is knowledgeable, and teacher gives grades. According to the answers of participants, 60% of them think that in the classes teacher feedback gain more importance because in Turkey the teacher can be considered as everything in the classroom. So, teacher feedback is received more attention. some answers of the ELT instructors were as follows:

- Teacher feedback is useful because the teacher is the only authority in the classroom,
- Teacher feedback is useful because the teacher is the source of true answers,
- Teacher feedback is useful because the teacher is everything for students,

About 40% of the participants accept that the teacher is knowledgeable in the classroom, so teacher feedback can be dealt as important in writing classes. A few responses are shown below:

- The teacher know everything,
- The teacher is more knowledgeable,
- S/he teaches everything,
- The teacher knows how to correct students.

Also about 80% of the participants show that because the teachers are giving grades, so it can be a good reason for considering teacher feedback as useful one. Some sentences of instructors are as:

- Teachers evaluate and score the writing activities,
- Teachers are grading the tasks,
- Teachers evaluate the writing papers.

5.2. Discussion of the findings of RQ2: Is peer feedback useful?

Regarding the usefulness of peer feedback, the participants answered through three themes: learning from each other, understanding the difference between evaluation and assessment, and being learner centered.

About 20% of participants pointed out “learning from each other” as one reasons for showing the usefulness of peer feedback. According to their answers, when the students are giving feedback to each other they can learn from each other more. Here are some responses of participants:

- Students are learning with and from each other,
- Students can learn from their peers,
- Students are trying to analyse their friends written work learn through that,
- Students learn that their friends are making mistakes as well.

This result can be corresponded to Gielen et al. (2010) who emphasized the learning part of peer feedback. According to this mentioned study, students are assessors who are discussing the strengths and weaknesses of peers` written work and they learn.

And also 40% of participants expressed that by giving peer feedback the students could understand that they are not evaluating each other but they are assessing. 40% of participants agreed that students would like to have learner centered rather than teacher centered class. According to them by giving peer feedback, the students can improve their self-confidence.

Some sentences of instructors are as:

- As the students are giving feedback to their peers, they can feel themselves as the center of learning,
- Students can feel themselves as responsible,
- Students would be happy to be responsible for their learning,
- Students can see themselves at the center of teaching and learning.

5.3. Discussion of the findings of RQ3: Is there any reason for students` trust in teacher feedback?

Answering the question related to students` trust to teacher feedback, participants of this study respond under two themes: focusing on evaluation not assessment, and focusing on grades not learning process.

According to 20% of participants believe that students are focusing on evaluation , not assessment. So, the students think that giving peer feedback is a kind of evaluation, not assessment. Because of this reason they only trust their teachers` feedback. A few responses are shown below:

- By focusing on scoring, the students think that their teacher should give grades,
- The students are taking feedback as a kind of evaluation,

-The students don't know that the feedback is not evaluation.

This result could be covered by (Allel & Connor, 1990; George, 1984; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1993) Through which the peers are shown as learners and couldn't manage feedback.

About 80% of participants consider focusing on grades and not learning process as the important reason of trusting teacher feedback. In a context which grades gain more importance than learning process, it is natural that students prefer teacher feedback as the true one. Some answers of the instructors were as follows:

- Students are focusing on grades,
- Students do not know how to focus on learning process,
- Students give more importance on grades,
- For students scoring is at the center of learning,
- Students are getting afraid of their scores.

5.4. Discussion of the findings of RQ4: Is there any reason for helping students trust in peer feedback?

In considering the reasons for helping students trust peer feedback, participants answered under two themes: changing point of view, and focusing on the role of innovation.

80% of participants agreed that by helping students trust peer feedback, they can help them change their point of view from evaluation focused to assessment focused one. So, students can benefit from the advantages of peer feedback in their learning process. A few responses are shown below:

- Students don't know for which reason they should trust their peers,
- Students don't know the difference between assessment and evaluation,
- Students think that evaluation and assessment are the same,
- Teachers should help their students know the difference between evaluation and assessment.

All of the participants(100%) accepted that innovation in new era is an important factor and for following concepts of innovation, the students should trust peer feedback in this new age. Some sentences of instructors are as:

- In innovative age which everything demands novelty, new ideas should be followed,
- Peer feedback means innovation in teaching,
- Peer feedback is important point of view in a world full of novelty.

5.5. Discussion of the findings of RQ5: Could the teachers help their students in improving positive perception towards peer feedback?

Good planning, training, using checklists are the themes that the participants pinpointed related to the ways for helping students in giving peer feedback. 80% of participants explained that for helping students in improving positive point of view towards peer feedback, the teachers should manage a good planning. Without a planning it would not be possible. The following are the answers of the instructors:

- Before a good planning peer feedback is not running true,
- For teaching peer feedback, the teachers should have a plan for that,
- Teachers should plan all steps for peer feedback very well,
- Teachers could not manage peer feedback without organizing a plan.

Also, for creating positive perception, training in peer feedback was considered as an important factor. Because according to 80% of participants the students couldn't manage peer feedback by themselves and they should be trained completely. A few responses are shown below:

- A training in peer feedback is a prerequisite,
- Without teaching how to give peer feedback, students would not be able to manage it,
- Teachers should give a detailed steps for giving peer feedback,
- A training part in peer feedback is necessary for students.

This part can be corresponded to (Chaudron 1984; Zamel 1985; Mendonca & Johnson 1994; Berg 1999). In the mentioned research, useful training in peer feedback is necessary.

About 60% of participants referred to using checklist could be a lead-in way for students to improve their peer feedback skills. It could direct them to walk in a true path. A few responses are shown below:

- Using checklists can show the road for students,
- There should be a checklist as a guide for students to find their path.

6. CONCLUSION

This research shed light on teachers' perceptions of peer feedback and their tendency to improve students' trust in peer feedback. In total, it was concluded that all instructors had positive attitudes towards the innovative role of peer feedback. Most of the instructors agree that for creating a sense of trust in students, their point of view should be changed from teacher feedback to peer feedback. Because the instructors believe that for students' grades in their writings play an essential role and it makes them prefer mainly teacher feedback.

Also, the students could rarely distinguish the difference between evaluation and assessment and this may direct them into the path of teacher feedback. Because the students are taking evaluation

and assessment equal and they could not focus on the process of learning in itself. Also the instructors puts forward the idea that by changing the students` point of view, they never consider the teacher as everything and the only knowledgeable in class. For this reason, the students will be able to trust their peers and will be motivated to a learner- centered learning process. If the students know that they are assessing their peers written work for learning, not grading, they would be encouraged.

Lastly, it should be mentioned that a good planning, an effective training, and providing checklists as clear criterias can help students be motivated and be encouraged towards peer feedback. So, having positive attitudes towards peer feedback is not enough. A good plan may give a clear map to teachers and students to know how could they move. After organizing a plan for peer feedback, there should be a well designed training for students. Also, using a clear checklist may be a guide for students to follow the steps in peer feedback.

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