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**Teachers and Students:
Perceptions of Feedback in
Second Language Writing**

For the past decades teacher feedback has become increasingly important in English as a second language writing instruction. In comparison with numerous studies dedicated to various aspects of teacher feedback there were only a few studies that compared teachers' and students' perceptions of feedback. The aim of the current study is to explore teachers' and students' perceptions and preferences for feedback and error correction in second language writing classes. Both teachers and students of one of the local universities were surveyed about their perceptions regarding teacher feedback. The focus of the surveys was mostly feedback type and feedback amount. The paper concludes that teachers should be aware of their students' perceptions when providing feedback.

Key words: teacher feedback, student' perceptions, second language writing.

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**Оқытушы мен студент: Екінші
(шет) тілде жазу сабағындағы
кері байланыс**

Соңғы онжылдықта екінші тіл ретінде ағылшын тілінде жазу сабағын дәрістеуде оқытушы үшін кері байланыс (feedback) ерекше маңызды рөл атқара бастады. Оқытушы мен студент арасындағы кері байланыстың түрлі аспектілеріне арналған көптеген зерттеулер жүргізілсе де, оқытушы тарапынан ұсынылатын кері байланысты екі жақтың қабылдау деңгейін сараптайтын зерттеулер көп емес. Зерттеудің мақсаты екінші тілде жазу сабағын оқытуда және қателерді түзетуге қатысты оқытушы мен студенттің кері байланысты қабылдауын сараптау болып табылады. Оқытушылар мен студенттердің кері байланысты қабылдау деңгейін зерттеу жұмысы жергілікті университеттердің бірінде сауалнама әдісімен жүргізілді. Сауалнама кері байланыстың түрлері мен санын анықтауға бағытталған. Зерттеудің қорытындысы – оқытушылар студенттердің кері байланысты қабылдау деңгейін толығынан ескергені жөн.

Түйін сөздер: Оқытушы кері байланысы, екінші тіл ретінде ағылшын тілі, студенттердің кері байланысты қабылдау деңгейі.

Есимжанова М.Р.

**Преподаватели и студенты:
фидбэк при обучении письму
на иностранном
(как втором) языке**

В течение последних десятилетий фидбэк (отзыв) учителя стал играть необычайно важную роль при обучении письму на английском как втором языке. В ряду многочисленных исследований, посвященных различным аспектам фидбэка учителя, немногочисленными остаются работы, анализирующие восприятие учителей и обучаемых к различным видам фидбэка. Целью данной работы является исследование восприятий и предпочтений учителей и студентов в отношении фидбэка и исправления ошибок при обучении письму на втором языке. Исследование восприятия фидбэка преподавателями и студентами одного из местных университетов проводится с помощью метода опроса. Опрос сфокусирован на предпочтениях в отношении типа и количества фидбэка. Одним из основных результатов работы является заключение о необходимости пересмотра практики фидбэка.

Ключевые слова: фидбэк учителя, обучение письму на втором языке.

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**TEACHERS AND
STUDENTS:
PERCEPTIONS OF
FEEDBACK IN SECOND
LANGUAGE WRITING**

Feedback is an essential aspect in developing writing proficiency among second language learners; its significance has been also recognized in education as crucial for learning. Its importance is becoming obvious in process-based writing where it plays a key role in developing writing skills. The current teacher written comments are often supplied with other types of feedback such as: teacher-student conference, peer feedback, and writing workshops. Over the past thirty-forty years there were a great number of studies in language education dedicated to the issues of providing feedback to students' writing (see, for example, AbiSamra, ; Darus and Ching, 2009; Hedgcock, and Lefkowitz, 1996; Kasanga, 2002; Magno and Amarles, 2011; Myles, 2002; Saito, 1994; Williams, 2003 [1-8]).

There were a great variety of studies on feedback and error correction along with the numerous studies on the effects of error correction on students' writing skills (e.g. Ferris, 1999; Leki, 1991 [9; 10]). Some research studies exploring the effects of different types of feedback on second language students' writing have concluded that surface-level errors correction (spelling, punctuation, and grammar) seems to be ineffective. In particular, Truscott, one of the main opponents of grammar feedback, claimed that all forms of error correction in second language student writing are ineffective and as cited in Diab: «Truscott goes even farther to conclude that this type of correction should be abandoned in second language writing classes because it can have harmful effects» [11, 2]. Furthermore, Zamel and Crashen, who studied effectiveness of teacher feedback on second language writing, stated that a focus on surface error does not facilitate students to improve their writing [10]. Nevertheless, many studies indicate that learners express a desire for more feedback on grammar. Whether or not grammar feedback is effective, according to Hyland (1998), there are learners' beliefs that it can help to make progress in their writing [12].

Some other studies were dedicated to students' preferences and reactions to feedback. In the studies by Cohen and Cavalcanti, and Ferris students demonstrated strong preferences regarding amount and type of teachers' feedback [13; 14]. Similar to the previous studies, Zhang (1995) confirmed that second language students greatly value written feedback provided by teachers, and they rate it higher in comparison with other feedback forms such as peer feedback and student-teacher conferences [15].

Another direction of research has analyzed to what extent second language learners can understand written feedback. In particular, Hyland (2003), Lee (2008), and Zhao (2010) tracked down that students often misunderstood comments of their teachers. Some studies suggest that some of the reasons that second language learners cannot understand written feedback can be the way in which it is provided and illegibility of the feedback [16; 17; 18].

In comparison with numerous studies dedicated to various aspects of feedback there was little research on self-reported assessment of teachers; Elwood and Bode (2014) report that student perceptions of teacher feedback also did not receive much attention. The studies dedicated to student assessment preferences looked, for example, at the relationship between preferences and students characteristics, the role of positive feedback on satisfaction feeling of students, interaction between preferences and learning styles [19]. Additionally, few studies compared teachers' and students' perception of feedback. According to Goldstein (2001, 2006), «There are numerous variables and factors that affect feedback practices, and recently there have been calls for more research to investigate feedback in terms of comparing student perception with teacher self-assessment and actual teacher feedback» [20, 6].

Purpose

The studies above outlined important fields of feedback explored by researchers. While there were some studies on types, effectiveness, practices and interpretation of feedback, there were only a few, as Johnstun asserts, on «the affective factors that influence feedback, namely the feelings of satisfaction with amount and type» [20, 7]. The present study aimed at examining of teacher's and students' perceptions of feedback in English as second language (L 2) writing classes. In particular, the current study targeted at analysis of the relationships between teacher and student perception of teacher written feedback based on the respective self-assessment by examining the following questions:

1. How similar or different are students' and teachers' perceptions in regards to feedback type?
2. Are the students satisfied with the amount of feedback they receive, and what are the related teachers' perceptions regarding the students' satisfaction with the amount of feedback provided by teachers?
3. Which ways do the students prefer getting feedback and corrections in their writings and what are the related teachers' preferences?
4. What is the most effective type of feedback? More precisely, from the viewpoint of students and

teachers, when do students learn most from the following types of feedback: a) instructors' written feedback; b) teacher-student conference; c) peers' feedback?

5. If there is only one option regarding the number of the drafts to be checked by the instructor, which one (of two) would students, and respectively, teachers prefer checking and providing feedback on?

Method. Participants

The surveys have been conducted in 2013 and 2015. The participants of the first survey were 35 students who have completed «Academic Reading and Writing 1» class; 8 instructors working at the same university: 3 of them have BA, 2 hold MA degree, 2 – PhD degree, and one is Candidate of Sciences. The participants of this group were instructors who were teaching «Academic Reading and Writing», «Academic Reading and Writing 1», and «Academic Reading and Writing 2» courses. The respondents of the second survey were 21 students who have finished «Academic Reading and Writing 1» course. This course is one of the first required academic courses at the university. The university offers five English Foundation courses; to many students they are prerequisites to regular classes of undergraduate programs. There are four required English undergraduate courses: Academic Reading and Writing 1, Academic Reading and Writing 2, Academic Speaking and Academic Listening and Note-Taking. The Academic Reading and Writing courses provide training in both reading and written communication with an emphasis on the research skills required of university students.

Survey instrument

The students and instructors were administered a questionnaire adapted from the survey conducted by Diab (2006) and the questionnaire developed by Hedgcock and Leikowitz (1996) [11, 3]. Both questionnaires were redesigned for the research needs of the current study. Most items in the respective questionnaires for students and teachers were formulated the same way to make it possible to compare and analyze teachers and students perceptions and preferences regarding teacher feedback.

The surveys aimed to find out perceptions and preferences of students and EFL teachers of the university regarding feedback provided by teachers and received by students in second language writing classes. In particular, the instrument aimed to identify the following specific features in feedback and error correction: organization, content, grammar, vocabulary choice, preferences for various teacher paper-marking techniques, as well as preferences toward providing feedback on the first or the second draft, and etc.

Results and discussion

The comparison of teacher preferences with those of their students are presented and discussed according to the outlined questions.

Question 1: How similar or different are students' and teachers' perceptions in regards to feedback type?

Teachers were asked to self-assess how much feedback they give on essays. The feedback was

divided into the following types: organization, content/ ideas expressed, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. Teachers were supposed to evaluate the amount of feedback they give on students' writings and rank their responses on a Likert scale with choices of «none», «a little», «some», and «a lot». Students were also asked to evaluate the amount of the written feedback they get from teachers using a similar response format. The results are shown in table 1.

Table 1 – Participants' responses regarding amount and type of the feedback in survey 1

	Students (%)				Teachers (%)			
	a lot	some	a little	none	a lot	some	a little	none
Organization	34	40	14	11	60	40		
Content/ ideas expressed	20	43	23	14	50	30	20	
Grammar	31	20	40	9	30	50	20	
Vocabulary	9	28,5	48,5	14	20	80		
Mechanics	14	31	37	17	60	20	20	

According to the results, most of the students report that they are not getting enough feedback regarding «content/ ideas expressed» in their writings, for example, in survey 1 most students (43%) report that they are getting «some» feedback; in survey 2 most participants' responses refer to «a little» (47.1%) choice. At the same time majority of teachers (50%) in survey 1 report that they are providing «a lot».

Regarding «organization of the essay», most of the teachers (60%) report that they are likely to provide «a lot» of comments, while most of the students report that they are getting «some». When comparing responses of teachers regarding amount of feedback on «organization» and «content/ ideas expressed» with those of students, we can see that there is a mismatch in the perceptions of students and teachers about the amount of feedback given and received: teachers report that they provide more feedback than students report that they receive. This confirms findings of study by Leki [21] who informed about students feeling of not receiving enough teacher feedback on global issues.

In the «grammar» type of feedback, most of the teachers (50%) indicate that they provide «some» feedback and some teachers (30%) note «a lot», whereas most students indicate that they receive «a little» (40%) and «some» (52.9%) in both surveys respectively. Thus, in the «grammar» type of feedback the teachers report that they provide more than the students state they receive.

Question 2: Are the students satisfied with the amount of feedback they receive, and what are the related teachers' perceptions regarding the students' satisfaction with the amount of feedback provided by teachers?

Teachers were asked to evaluate whether their students are satisfied with the amount of feedback and comments teachers provide on students' writings and rank their responses on a Likert scale with choices of «yes», «no», «somewhat», and «I don't know». Students were also asked to evaluate their satisfaction of the written feedback they get from teachers using a similar response format. The results are shown in table 2.

Table 2 – Participants' responses regarding overall students' satisfaction with the amount of feedback in survey 1

	Students (%)	Teachers (%)
«yes»	51	95
«no»	17	
«somewhat»	29	
«I don't know»	3	

The results show that about half of the students in survey 1 and 70.6 % in survey 2 are satisfied with the amount of feedback they receive, at the same

time 95% (survey 1) of teachers reported that they think that their students are satisfied. Although the perceptions of majority of participants are positive, the figures considerably vary. Some students (17% in the survey 1) responded that they are not satisfied with the amount of feedback they get, and 23.5% of students in survey 2 reported that they are «somewhat» satisfied. The students' dissatisfaction with the amount of feedback received might be attributed to the anxiety that many students encounter when studying in «Academic Writing» classes, however the faculty should be recommended to reconsider the amount of the feedback provided.

At the same time students were asked about making progress in L2 writing. In particular, the students were supposed to assess their progress in writing on the scale from 1 – «strongly agree» to 5 – «strongly disagree», from the most progress to the lack of it respectively. About half of the students in survey 1 reported that they agree that they are making progress in second language writing, they assessed their progress on the scale as «agree» (43.4 %) and «strongly agree» (13%), while some students (26%) indicated that they neither agree or disagree regarding their progress, and 17.6 % reported about little progress in L2 writing. The results mostly match with the findings received in survey 2 where about half of the participants (52.9%) agree that they are making progress and 17.6% strongly agree.

In addition, teachers were asked to indicate their existing practices in error corrections, to be specific, to choose one out of the three options: a) «I mark all students' errors»; b) «I mark students' errors selectively», and c) «I don't mark students' errors in writing». The results reveal that a little bit more than half of the teachers «mark students' errors «selectively», while approximately another half indicate that they «mark all students' errors». Thus, according to the responses, many teachers still tend to mark all students' errors.

Although the present study does not intend to uncover direct connections between self-reported teacher practices and the satisfaction level of students, it may be suggested that teachers of writing classes should be informed about some students' dissatisfaction with the amount of feedback received so that respective revisions regarding the feedback could be implemented.

Question 3: Which ways do the students prefer to have the feedback and corrections in their writings and what are related teachers' preferences?

One of the aims of the present study was to find out teachers' and students' preferences for the

ways of providing error correction; the results are demonstrated in table 3.

Table 3 – Participants' preferences regarding the ways for providing error corrections in survey 1.

	Students (%)	Teachers (%)
1. Crossing out what is incorrect and writing the correct word or structure	43	15
2. Indicating where the error is and giving a clue about how to correct it	54	65
3. Only indicating where the error is	3	20

The results show that there is mostly agreement between teachers' and students' responses regarding the second way of correcting errors, namely: «indicating where the error is and giving a clue about how to correct it». However, there is a discrepancy regarding the other two ways for providing feedback; specifically, some students (43% and 17.6% in both surveys respectively) would prefer «crossing out what is incorrect and writing the correct word or structure», however only 15% of teachers express their preferences for indicating correct words and structures. Further, only some teachers (20%) would prefer «only indicating where the error is», and only a few students (3% and 11.8 % respectively) claim that they would choose this option. The differences in teachers' and students' perceptions can be accounted for by differences in their expectations and experiences; as Cohen and Calvanti (1990) have found that learners have limited strategies to apply teacher's feedback and learners expectations can be connected with previous instructional experiences which not always may be useful [13].

Question 4: What do students mostly prefer: a) instructors' written feedback; b) teacher-student conference; c) peers' feedback; and what are the related perceptions of teachers?

This question was constructed to inquire about the usefulness of different options of feedback.

According to the results, there is most agreement on the usefulness of «teacher's written feedback»: most students indicate it being «always» useful and most instructors as «often» respectively. The second highest rated choice is «teacher-student conference»; the responses vary with slight difference: most students view it as «often» useful while teachers view it as «always»

useful. There is also agreement regarding some usefulness of peer's feedback: majority of students and teachers believe that students «sometimes» learn from peers' feedback.

As it can be seen, teachers seem to underestimate to some extent when reporting about usefulness of their written feedback. The result partly corresponds with the findings of a study by Lee (2009), who informs about mismatches between teachers' beliefs and practice in written feedback, in particular, «teachers' written feedback practice allows students little room to take control although teachers think students learn to take greater responsibility for learning» [22, 17]. Generally, results on the teachers' and students' perceptions on the effectiveness of instructors' written feedback and teacher-student conferences seem to be positive in comparison with the usefulness of peers' feedback. These results also match with the results of a study by Kasanga (2002) which suggested that students prefer teacher's feedback over peers' feedback [4].

Question 5: If there is only one option regarding the number of the drafts to be checked by the instructor which one (of two) would students, and respectively, teachers prefer checking and providing feedback on?

This question aimed to reveal which draft (first or second) of the essay should be checked and commented by writing teachers. The Academic Writing classes have been introduced in the curricular of undergraduate programs at the university since 2007; and it has been practiced for the first three years to check and provide feedback on the first drafts only. This practice has been changed since the Fall 2010 when the second drafts were recommended to be given feedback and commented on by instructors.

Most of the students and teachers chose having the 1st draft to be given feedback and to be commented by instructors. When asked to provide reasons for the choice, teachers indicated, for example, that «it is important to direct students at

the initial stage», «students need a chance to make revisions», «Commenting on the 1st draft is of crucial importance for the students' understanding what to write about and how. All the rest work will be just polishing what has been written and making some additions»; «1st draft is very important as it serves as the basis for other drafts». Students' explanations for choosing the 1st draft were as follows: «1st draft is the main», «after the 1st draft we can see our mistakes», etc. Those students who chose the 2nd draft stated that it is important because of the final grade, the 2nd draft is submitted before the Final, and it means more possibilities to improve a grade of the final essay.

To sum up, it seems obvious that teachers should be informed that majority of teachers and students prefer checking the 1st draft, as it was reported to be more useful for learning.

Conclusion

This study presents some implication for second language writing classes at the university. The students in this study demonstrated that they were only somewhat satisfied with the amount of feedback they have been provided. Furthermore, teachers should self-monitor their feedback practices. Generally, results on the teachers' and students' perceptions on the usefulness of instructors' written feedback and teacher-student conferences seem to be positive in comparison with the usefulness of peers' feedback. The results also revealed that it should be recommended that the 1st draft should be commented and given feedback on by the instructors, as the majority of teachers and students agree that it is more beneficial for learning.

As with any study, there are several limitations in the present one. One of the limitations of this study is that all responses are self-reported. In future prospective research it can be recommended that bigger number of students should be involved in the survey. Additionally, there can be unknown factors that could have affected students' perceptions of teachers' feedback.

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