

The Mediating Role of Learners' Feedback Seeking Behavior (FSB) in Writing Developments: Impact on Learners' Writing Developments and Implications for Teacher Development

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Abstract

The present study explored the mediating role of learners' feedback seeking behavior (FSB) in writing developments. The study sought to gain a better understanding of the extent to which feedback seeking behaviour affects their writing developments. In order to conduct the present study and collect the required data, the researcher selected 60 learners from the faculties of English Language Teaching at University, Iran. The selected participants were all from the intermediate category. A writing test (i.e. Longman Complete Course TOEFL Test) was administered to the 60 selected students. Both groups were given the same two topics to choose one of them to write in 70 minutes and the tests were scored by 2 raters which were corrected analytically. The test of feedback seeking behaviour was given to the students the same day. The participants were supposed to answer the test in 90 minutes. The results were calculated in SPSS version 22 and then analyzed and reported. The findings of the study demonstrated that feedback seeking behaviour has a statistically significant effect on learners' writing developments.

Keywords: Feedback Seeking Behaviour, Feedback, Motivation, Writing

1.1 Introduction

Written corrective feedback (WCF) has been considered as an important issue of empirical and theoretical interest in the scope of writing performance among second language (L2) writing students over the last two decades (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1999, 2010; Krashen, 1984; Truscott, 1996). Research has provided various evidence for the relative effectiveness of WCF in improving second language writing performance (Kang & Han, 2015; Russell & Spada, 2006). Generally speaking, research have shown that WCF is viewed as a useful process when it is explicit (e.g., Ferris, 2006), direct (e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Manchón, 2011), and focused on specific linguistic features (e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Sheen, 2007).

However, research on WCF remains inconclusive and controversies over the topic linger to date (e.g., Liu & Brown, 2015; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). Because of inconsistent findings in the literature, scholars have attributed them to methodological problems (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Liu & Brown, 2015) or mediating factors such as second language proficiency or the genre of writing (Kang & Han, 2015). Nevertheless, there is another remarkable issue which might have contributed equally, if not more strongly, to the current state of research on WCF. This gap is the lack of careful consideration of individual learner characteristics as they perceive, process, and apply WCF (Ferris, Liu, Sinha, & Senna, 2013). Shortage of attention to the learner's role in the feedback process in second language writing can be devoted to researchers' preoccupation with investigating how teachers' application of various kinds of WCF (e.g., direct vs. indirect; explicit vs. implicit) affects the accuracy of written products. This key concept of WCF as a teaching resource has overshadowed research in this area at the expense of attention to learners' engagement in the feedback process, casting second language writers as passive recipients of various kinds of feedback in terms of proactive agents in learners' learning (Bitchener, 2017; Ferris, 2010; Ferris et al., 2013; Hyland, 2011; Kormos, 2012). In order to bridge this significant gap in our comprehending of the process of feedback, a basic change in perspective is required. Such a shift would recast feedback as a learning resource, the value of which is driven by its instrumentality in learners' pursuit of their goals. Therefore, the aim of the study is to explore the relationship between second language writers' feedback seeking behavior (FSB) and students' writing ability. The following research question was posed:

RQ1: Is there any statistically significant relationship between Learners' Feedback Seeking Behavior (FSB) and writing developments?

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1 Definition of Corrective Feedback

According to Schachter's (1991), the most common terms for feedback are corrective feedback, negative evidence, and negative feedback. Schachter (1991) maintains that corrective feedback is the term most often used instead of feedback in the scope of second language teaching and learning. It is broadly defined as "information following an error produced by the learner and is part of the learnability problem of language acquisition" (p.25). Lightbown and Spada (1999) considered CF as any indication to the learners which their use of target language is incorrect. It includes different responses which the learners receive after making errors. As Ellis (2006) notes, CF involves an attempt to supply negative evidence which draws the learner's attention to the errors they have made.

Ur (1996) supports this claim and believes that correction is one of the two main components of corrective feedback, another main component is assessment by which the learner

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is simply informed how well or badly he or she has performed and by means of it some specific information is provided on various dimensions of the learner's performance via explanation, provision of better or other alternatives or through elicitation of them from the learner.

According to Ross-Feldman (2007), there are two main reasons why the researchers in SLA are interested in CF. The first reason is that there is an obvious need for it. Many English teachers are under wide pressure to correct learners' errors with the tacit assumption which the correction will be informed by the learner and subsequently make a difference in the learner's language competence. The second reason, in his words, is the renewed interests in error analysis (EA) in SLA research.

2.1.1 Written Corrective Feedback (WCF)

Written corrective feedback (WCF) can be defined as written feedback given by the teacher on a student paper with the purpose of developing grammatical accuracy (including spelling, capitalization, and punctuation) and written feedback on idiomatic usage such as word order and word choice. Written Corrective Feedback (WCF), which is also called error correction or grammar correction, refers to the "correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a student's ability to write accurately" (Truscott, 1996, p. 329).

WCF has been regarded as a normal way of improving students' writing accuracy and a necessary part of the writing curriculum (Hendrickson, 1978, 1980; Truscott, 1996). It originated from the field of second language acquisition (SLA).

2.2 The Concept of Feedback-Seeking Behavior

Ashford and Cummings (1983) defined feedback-seeking behavior as the conscious contribution of endeavour toward determining the correctness and adequacy of actions for obtaining valued end states. Previous research has considered FSB as a useful resource in different fields including job performance (Ashford & Tsui, 1991), learning (Yanagizawa, 2008), and creativity (De Stobbeleir, Ashford, & Buyens, 2011), but has only recently been investigated in the field of second language acquisition (Papi, et al. 2019).

Ashford and Cummings (1983) introduced the concept of FSB as "the conscious devotion of effort toward determining the correctness and adequacy of behaviors for attaining valued end states" (Ashford, 1986, p. 466). Applied to second language writing, FSB can be defined as learners' intentional, calculated, and strategic attempts to collect feedback information on their second language writing performance. It is worth noting that changing the attention from the quality and quantity of WCF itself to the learner's FSB can draw the long-needed attention to the

learners' engagement in the feedback process, which is an important element in the success or failure of L2 writing instruction.

Ashford (1983) also believes that when an individual obtains feedback, s/he can decide to devote additional efforts towards the objectives which may earn him or her the greatest probable gains or the goals which seem to be only achievable with an extra effort. Feedback seeking behavior at an early age helps learners to become feedback seekers at the workplace. Feedback seeking students and workers normally performed higher compared to non-feedback seekers. After an assortment of evidence from different researchers that delved into researching about the current topic.

A controversial relationship exists between feedback-seeking behavior (FSB) and writing performance for language learners. Feedback seeking behavior is a useful tool not only in the learning process but also in workplaces. Students who develop feedback-seeking behavior early in their education processes end up becoming high efficacy employees who use different strategies to seek feedback from not only their educators but also their supervisors (Tayfur, 2012). Therefore, the aim of the present study is to investigate the relationship between feedback seeking behavior and writing performance among writing students.

2.3 Related Studies

Papi et al. (2019) examined feedback seeking behavior (FSB) in second language writing: motivational mechanisms. They collected questionnaire data from 128 foreign language writers from a major public university in the United States. Multiple regression and mediation findings demonstrated that a development language mindset predicted the value of feedback, which, in turn, was a positive predictor of both feedback monitoring and feedback inquiry. A fixed language mindset, on the other hand, predicted the cost of feedback seeking, which, in turn, negatively predicted feedback monitoring. The findings of the results provide new venues for language writing research and teaching.

Papi et al. (2019) covered a learning situation in which international learners enrolled for foreign language courses at a university in the United States. 287 students taking courses in foreign languages like Spanish (107), French (113), and Arabic (67) at Florida State University participated in the study (Papi et al., 2019). The questionnaire data from the 287 students studying different languages revealed that learners could make calculated decisions concerning whether to seek feedback and the strategy that they intend to use in seeking feedback, as well as the source of their feedback. Their perceptions about the values and costs associated with different feedback-seeking strategies affect their decisions most (Papi et al., 2019).

3. Methodology

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3.1 Participants

The participants of this study were 60 learners from the faculties of Education at Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic. They were only males with the age range between 19 to 25 and were chosen based on non-random sampling. The students enrolled in second writing courses participated in the present study.

3.3 Instrumentations

3.3.1 Feedback Seeking Behaviour Scale

The scale developed by Tuckey et al. (2002) was used to measure the motives for feedback seeking. This scale is composed of four subscales each measuring different motives that may affect the feedback seeking behaviors of people. More specifically, the subscales are related to desire for useful information, desire to protect one's ego, assertive impression management, and defensive impression management motives, and all items were rated on a 6-point scale (1 = Extremely true, 6 = Extremely untrue).

3.3.2 Writing Scale

It includes two topics which were taken from TOEFL CBT book (2006) and administered to the students. They were required to choose one of the topics and start to write. The writing of students should not be less than 250 words, based on the instructions given and it should be clear, concise and well organized. 70 minutes were given to the students to write the writing.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

Before administering the questionnaires, permission was obtained by professors to use their class time for the purpose of data collection. Also, before administering the questionnaires, participants were informed that filling the tests are completely optional and were convinced that the purpose, and process of completing the two questionnaires, namely Writing test and feedback seeking Scale, respectively. Then, ambiguities and misunderstanding about the questions were cleared by the researcher, if there was any. Therefore, In order to conduct the present study and collect the required data, the researcher selected 60 learners from the faculties of Education at Charles University, Prague. The participants were selected non-randomly. The selected participants were all from the intermediate category. A writing test (Longman Complete Course TOEFL Test) was administered to the 60 selected students. Both groups were given the same two topics to choose one of them to write in 70 minutes and the tests were scored by 2 raters which were corrected analytically. The test of feedback seeking behaviour was given to the students the same day. The participants were supposed to answer the test in 90 minutes. The results were calculated in SPSS version 22 and then analyzed and reported.

3.4 Design

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The design of the present research was Ex Post Facto design. In this design the researcher appears on the scene after all the events have occurred. In other words, the researcher has no control over the events. The variables are not manipulated, controlled, or modified (Mackey & Gass, 2005). In the present study, the researcher had no control over whatever the students had learned, and they answered the feedback seeking behaviour tests based on their prior knowledge.

3.5 Data Analysis

The Pearson product correlation was conducted to investigate the performances of two groups in writing ability and feedback seeking behaviour tests. The participants' age was not considered significant in the study, though. All the subjects and their teachers were also informed that the tests were going to be administered.

4 Results and Discussion

This study aimed at exploring the relationship between second language writers' feedback seeking behavior (FSB) and students' writing developments. The data collection procedure was carefully run and the raw data was entered into SPSS (version 22) to compute the required statistical analyses and deal with the research question and hypothesis of the present study.

4.1. Analysis of the Research Question

In order to answer this null-hypothesis, two independent sample t-tests were conducted on both pre-test and post-test. Before presenting the results of the first t-test, the related descriptive statistics are given in Table 1.

4.1: Descriptive Statistics

4.1: Descriptive Statistics

| | Mean | Std. Deviation | N |
|---------|-------|----------------|----|
| FSB | 73.05 | 18.407 | 60 |
| Writing | 60.74 | 13.245 | 60 |

As it can be seen, table 1 shows the results of variables of FSB and Writing ability, respectively. The mean and standard deviation of FSB are 73.05 and 18.407, respectively. Also, another variable; the mean and standard deviation of Writing are 60.74 and 13.245, respectively. Therefore, it should be noted that the difference between these two variables was not significant at the beginning of the term. In order to find the difference, the researcher conducted Pearson Correlation Test between these two variables.

Table 2: Pearson Correlation Test between FSB and Writing

| | | tarjomeh | TA |
|---------|---------------------|----------|-------|
| FSB | Pearson Correlation | 1 | .327* |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | | .035 |
| | N | 60 | 60 |
| Writing | Pearson Correlation | .327* | 1 |
| | Sig. (2-tailed) | .035 | |
| | N | 60 | 60 |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The above table indicates Pearson Correlation Test between these two variables. In fact, in the above table Pearson Correlation Test between these two variables are given. The correlation coefficient may range from -1 to 1 , where -1 or 1 indicates a “perfect” relationship. The further the coefficient is from 0 , regardless of whether it is positive or negative, the stronger the relationship between the two variables. For example, a coefficient of $.453$ is exactly as strong as a coefficient of $-.453$. Positive coefficients tell us there is a direct relationship: when one variable increases, the other increases. Negative coefficients also tell us that there is an inverse relationship: when one variable increases, the other one decreases. Therefore, as the table shows, the level of significance is $.035$ and less than 0.05 . Therefore, the Pearson coefficient for the relationship between FSB and Writing is $.327^*$, and it is positive. This tells us that, just as we predicted, as FSB increases, Writing increases. FSB appears to be an important predictor of Writing. The correlation matrix also gives the probability of being wrong if we assume that the relationship we find in our sample accurately reflects the relationship between education and occupational prestige that exists in the total population from which the sample was drawn (labeled as Sig. (2-tailed). The probability value is $.327^*$, which is well below the conventional threshold of $p < .05$. Thus, our hypothesis is supported. There is a relationship (the coefficient is not 0), it is in the predicted direction (positive), and we can generalize the results to the population ($p < .05$).

5. Conclusion

In summary, from theoretical and practical perspectives, the results of this study shed new light on the scope of feedback seeking behaviour and writing ability. The researcher can assume that the mean difference is significant, and the learners have developed in their

performance. In other words, the null hypothesis to this research question is rejected. That is to say, feedback seeking behaviour (FSB) has a significant effect on the enhancement of the writing ability by learners. As a teaching resource, feedback is seen as corrective messages that are transmitted to a recipient concerning his or her linguistic knowledge or skills. Perceived as a learning resource, feedback is personally-relevant information that students seek in any information environment, inside or outside the instructional settings, to meet their valued second language writing goals. Such feedback can include referent information about what goals are valuable and appraisal information about how learners are progressing toward achieving those goals. This change in perspective opens a wide range of research venues and extends the attention from teachers and the type of feedback they provide to the process of feedback and learners' involvement in that process, that is their FSB. It also highlights the importance of exploring ways to promote such behavior through different personal and contextual adaptations such as goal setting, improving classroom relationships, task requirements, and evaluation standards to decrease the perceived cost of feedback seeking and increase its associated value. This view of feedback can complement the mainstream WCF research by investigating how FSB can lead to the success or failure of the feedback process.

5.1 Pedagogical Implications

Improving a development second language learning goals can develop the value and decrease the cost of feedback seeking, thereby contributing to learners' FSB. Research has shown that teachers can improve learning goals in their classes through setting learning rather than performance standards of progress, make the process of writing development rather than product of writing the focal point of their teaching, treat errors as signs of development rather than symptoms of weakness, establish an atmosphere of collaborative learning, minimize the sense of competition and social comparison, and evaluate learners with respect to their intra-individual instead of normative progress.

Improving FSB's value and declining its cost can be done via different means including but not confined with producing feedback seeking behaviours (e.g., Williams, Miller, Steelman, & Levy, 1999), improving the feedback seeker–source relationships (e.g., Levy, Cober, & Miller, 2002; VandeWalle et al., 2000), and producing a FSB-friendly setting via promoting intellectual stimulation, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills among students (Anseel et al., 2015).

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