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Research Paper

Effects of Peer and Teacher Online Feedback on Iranian EFL Learners' Writing Performance

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the effect of using online peer and teacher feedback on Iranian EFL learners' writing performance. To this end, 28 male and female learners of a Private language institute writing class in Tehran, Iran, were purposefully selected to participate in this study. They were divided into two equal groups. The first group received online PF and the second group received online TF. In order to consider the results of the treatments, two types of *t*-tests were run. First, to check the effect of the two types of online feedback on EFL learners' writing performance, paired sample *t*-test was run, and then to make a comparison between the TF and PF, an independent sample *t*-test was done. The obtained results indicated that both types of online corrective feedback are effective. However, the TF group outperformed the PF one. The implication of this finding is that technology integration in L2 classrooms and, more specifically, providing learners with online corrective feedback will lead to more progress in EFL learners' writing performance.

Keywords: *peer feedback, teacher feedback, writing performance*

تأثیر بازخورد آنلاین همتایان و معلمان بر عملکرد نوشتاری زبان آموزان ایرانی زبان انگلیسی

این مطالعه با هدف بررسی تأثیر استفاده از بازخورد آنلاین همتایان و معلمان بر عملکرد نوشتاری زبان آموزان ایرانی انجام شد. بدین منظور، ۲۸ نفر از زبان آموزان دختر و پسر کلاس نویسنده مؤسسه زبان در تهران، به طور هدفمند برای شرکت در این پژوهش انتخاب شدند. آنها به دو گروه مساوی تقسیم شدند. گروه اول PF آنلاین و گروه دوم TF آنلاین دریافت کردند. به منظور در نظر گرفتن نتایج تیمارها، دو نوع آزمون *t* اجرا شد. ابتدا برای بررسی تأثیر دو نوع بازخورد آنلاین بر عملکرد نوشتاری زبان آموزان زبان انگلیسی، آزمون *t* نمونه زوجی اجرا شد و سپس برای مقایسه بین TF و PF، یک آزمون *t* نمونه مستقل انجام شد. نتایج به دست آمده نشان داد که هر دو نوع بازخورد اصلاحی آنلاین مؤثر هستند. با این حال، گروه TF بهتر از یک PF عمل کرد. مفهوم این یافته این است که ادغام فناوری در کلاس های درس L2 و به طور خاص تر، زبان آموزان با بازخورد اصلاحی آنلاین منجر به پیشرفت بیشتر در عملکرد نوشتاری زبان آموزان زبان انگلیسی می شود.

واژگان کلیدی: بازخورد همسالان، بازخورد معلم، عملکرد نوشتاری

Introduction

Since writing requires students to translate their thoughts into words, it has proven to be a challenging ability for EFL students. Due to their poor proficiency level, students often struggle with word choice, grammar, sentence structure, alternative phrases, and cultural understanding while writing (Chen, 2002). In order to improve their students' writing skills, EFL writing instructors have been thinking about how to use efficient teaching strategies.

According to process writing theory, feedback is a crucial component of writing in a foreign language and is receiving more and more attention in ESL. Numerous research projects have been done on feedback (Keh, 1990; Hyland, 2003; Yang et al., 2006). Some studies seek to understand the nature and purpose of feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hyland, 2003). The impact of written instructor feedback and written peer feedback on writing is covered in other studies (Yang et al., 2006; Lee, 2007). According to Paulus' research (1999), both peer and teacher feedback was used in the revision process, with the teacher's input leading to more revision and being more well-liked by students. The compulsory revision also had the potential to greatly improve the class's essay results. The secondary schools in Hong Kong studied by Tsui and Ng (2000) and the Chinese students learning English in Singapore studied by Hu (2005) both revealed a favorable attitude toward peer feedback.

Internet-based language teaching and learning has recently become popular due to the advancement of information technology, particularly the widespread use of the Internet. As a result, some research on online feedback is done, with a particular emphasis on the impact of online peer feedback on the writing of foreign language learners (Yang & Meng, 2013) and the impact of online peer feedback in comparison to traditional peer feedback on writing in a second or foreign language (Tuzi, 2004; Liu & Sadler, 2003). However, little study has been done on the various online writing feedback formats.

Literature review

Electronic feedback (e-feedback) has been included in the process writing technique as a result of the widespread use of technology in EFL writing classes (Farshi & Safa, 2015; Ho, 2015; Seiffedin & El-Sakka, 2017). In foreign language writing classes, many forms of e-feedback have been used; one of them is known as online peer feedback (OPF), which occurs when classmates provide comments to students who have finished their work and submitted their updated text through an online tool asynchronously (Hu, 2005). By assisting one another in resolving writing-related issues, OPF aims to improve writing proficiency (Shintani, Ellis, & Suzuki, 2014). OPF has been shown to be effective in enhancing grammatical correctness (Van Beuningen, De Jong, & Kuiken, 2012), providing learners with the opportunity to negotiate to mean (Ho & Savignon, 2007), and encouraging learner enthusiasm and involvement (Chang, 2009). But studies have also shown that students are uncomfortable with the veracity of peer evaluation (Liu & Carless, 2006). Particularly, less experienced students are less likely to be able to provide the constructive criticism and precise remarks that their more experienced friends need in order to enhance their writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Additionally, Tuzi (2004) and Diab (2010) noted that OPF often focuses on local-level adjustments (such as grammar, punctuation, language, and sentence structure) as opposed to global-level advancements (such as content, organization, tone, and purpose). Another drawback of OPF is that late or absent responses from peers may affect students' motivation and the success of their OPF application (Shang, 2017).

Feedback

An essential component of the process method is feedback. Feedback is emphasized as an

"essential and crucial contribution to the growth of a work of writing" by Tsui & Ng (2000). The writing process is permeated by, shaped by, and moulded by feedback. Feedback is "an input from a reader to a writer with the consequence of supplying information to the writer for correction," according to Keh (1990). and "by receiving comments, the writer discovers where he or she has deceived or confused the reader by not providing enough information, illogical arrangement, lack of development of ideas, or anything like wrong word-choice or tense." According to experts, feedback in this study refers to recommendations or specific revision information that might provide hints for improved writing.

Types of feedback in writing

Depending on who delivers it, feedback may be divided into two categories: instructor feedback and peer feedback. The topic of teacher criticism of student writing in foreign language classes has received a lot of attention. Some examine the format and information included in the instructor feedback. For instance, Hyland (2003) found that although instructor input that focused on the form might have an immediate effect on the modification of their drafts, it had no discernible impact on the growth of their writing. According to Montgomery & Baker (2007), instructors tend to comment more on specific concerns like grammar and spelling than they do on more general ones like thought and substance.

Online teacher feedback (OTF)

Depending on who delivers it, feedback may be divided into two categories: instructor feedback and peer feedback. The topic of teacher criticism of student writing in foreign language classes has received a lot of attention. Some examine the format and information included in the instructor feedback. For instance, Hyland (2003) found that although instructor input that focused on the form might have an immediate effect on the modification of their drafts, it had no discernible impact on the growth of their writing. According to Montgomery & Baker (2007), instructors tend to comment more on specific concerns like grammar and spelling than they do on more general ones like thought and substance. Some examine how pupils' writing is impacted by instructor criticism. Students that got incorrect feedback from instructors outperformed those who did not, according to Ferris & Roberts' (2001) research.

Others look at how students see and feel about instructor comments. According to Straub (1997), pupils were equally interested in obtaining instructor input on both local word and grammatical errors as well as more general topics like substance and purpose. The majority of students preferred teacher comments over peer comments, according to Tsui & Ng (2000), and teacher comments might result in more modifications.

Online feedback is receiving increased attention as a result of the Internet's integration with language learning and teaching. Research on online instructor feedback on students' writing is comparatively few in comparison to conventional studies on teacher feedback. Some concentrate on the way in which students respond to online instructor feedback. For instance, Duan (2011) researched student acceptance and preferences for various online instructor feedback kinds and discovered that students prefer one-on-one online feedback like e-mail and are more likely to accept input like suggestions.

Others look at how online instructor feedback affects revision (Yang et al., 2013; Alvarez et al., 2012). Alvarez et al. (2012), for instance, suggested that by investigating the nature and purpose of online teacher feedback on students' text revisions, students could benefit from it and improve their writing in a constructive way, particularly when the feedback took the form of suggestions and questions rather than direct correction. Overall, specialized research on online teacher feedback is fairly uncommon.

Online peer feedback (OPF)

Peer review has also been a contentious subject. Some examine the advantages of pupil comments on their writing (Keh, 1990; Lochhart & Ng, 1993). They emphasized how reading peer writings may help students improve their own writing while also saving instructors time and increasing audience awareness. Some academics, however (Zhang, 1995; Nelson and Carson, 1998), contest the benefits of peer review. Based on the emotional qualities of feedback, they discovered that ESL writers preferred instructor feedback to peer feedback and that they used teacher comments more often than peer comments in their revisions.

The electronic peer feedback feature has been shown to be effective in improving grammatical accuracy (Van Beuningen et al., 2012), exposing students to a variety of writing styles (Ho & Savignon, 2007), and providing global revisions (Guardado & Shi, 2007; Yang, 2011), fostering learner motivation (Wu, Petit, & Chen, 2015), and developing critical thinking skills (Chang, 2009). Tuzi (2004) studied 20 college writers to examine the link between online criticism and how it affected the revisions of EFL authors. The study's findings demonstrated that students' revisions benefited most from online peer criticism, which enabled them to improve their original writings at both the sentence and paragraph levels and enabled them to add new content. The impact of online peer criticism on the weblog posts of 13 Taiwanese EFL college students was examined by Liou and Peng (2009). Results showed that participants improved their compositions more successfully in the blogging environment and made more comments for their peers. The participants said that receiving training focused on blogs increased their incentive to write better, yet, not all of the participants felt certain that their comments were helpful.

As was indicated in the literature cited above, research on feedback has shown the significance of feedback in writing. There is, however, a dearth of studies comparing the efficacy of various online feedback formats for writing in a foreign language. In order to evaluate the impact of online peer feedback with that of online instructor feedback, research must be conducted. To this end, the following research question was addressed in the present study:

Q. Do online teacher and peer feedbacks affect Iranian EFL writing performance?

Methodology

Participants

This study was conducted in a private language institute writing class in Iran. The writing class was held two times a week for 120 minutes to foster students' paragraph writing skills using a process writing approach to develop learners' writing abilities. Twenty-eight language students in this class, comprising 12 males and 16 females, were the participants of this study. The participants ranged in age from 17 to 23 years. The participants were randomly divided into two groups. The first group received online peer feedback for their problems and the second group received online teacher feedback.

Instruments

The instruments used in this study were as follows:

Writing tasks

At the beginning of the class, all the participants took part in an in-class writing assignment so that the researcher could choose homogeneous learners. The categories were based on overall writing scores, including the use of vocabulary, sentence structure, organization, and content provided by Cool Sentence Corrective Network (the maximum score is 100 points). This free-writing task lasted a total of 90 min, during which students were asked to write a paragraph (200–250 words) with the title, "Autobiography". After finishing the composition, the participants sent

their writing to the instructor via e-mail for scoring (PFovided by Cool Sentence Corrective Network). The results showed that the participants' writing scores ranged from 15 to 40 points, with a mean of 23.3 (SD = 8.46). Regarding the treatment sessions, they were asked to write about "a perfect birthday party" for peer feedback and to write about a "dream home" for teacher feedback.

Online peer and teacher feedback tool

Moodle (a modular object-oriented dynamic learning environment) was adopted in the writing course as the tool for OPF and OTF. Moodle was offered at the research site and served as the platform for students to submit their assignments and peer feedback. Students were required to submit their texts for review and to access their already-submitted texts and accompanying reviews in Moodle mode. After completing the writing assignments, students submitted them using Moodle as the computer-mediated mode for peer and teacher feedback.

Procedures

Data collection PFocedure

Paragraph writing framed this writing course content. As a course requirement, participants were instructed to take part in PFe-writing tasks. The students then received training in writing assignments and PFoiving effective peer feedback for the allocated tasks. For example, the instructor explained the features of a paragraph, brainstorming, a good topic sentence, supporting and concluding sentences, and transitional signals, and then PFoived a sample article for the students to PFactice peer review. Based on the research purpose, students in the first group were asked to focus on local-level revisions and underline PFoblematic grammar, words, or sentences and then participate in online discussions for the comments added by their peers. To help the students to PFoive effective comments in the peer feedback PFocess, before the first writing task, the instructor described the effective methods for adding peer comments by modeling how to identify local-level PFoblems (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.) and made concrete suggestions. After composing the first assignments, the students submitted their first drafts to Moodle. The students of the first group then chose partners to review each other's drafts: Upon logging into Moodle, the students could submit texts for review and access their already-submitted texts as well as accompanying reviews in the discussion section. Students were required to review and PFoive feedback outside the class within two days. Then, the mean score of the revised writing tasks after OPF application was computed based on the aspects of syntactic complexity, grammatical accuracy, and lexical density. The same PFocess was repeated for the second group's writings, but this time the learners received their teacher's feedback.

Data analysis PFocedure

In order to obtain the quantitative results of the study, the obtained scores of two groups were analyzed by SPSS. First of all, in order to find out the effectiveness of each feedback type, paired sample *t*-test was run. In the next step, in order to compare the differences in performance of the two groups independent sample *t*-test was run. Then, the data from the writing tasks, including the first drafts, online teacher or peer feedback, and modified drafts, were examined from two facets: the PFactical feedback PFoived by the teacher or peers in accordance with Hyland's definition (1998), successful revisions in accordance with Conrad and Goldstein's (1999) classification, and types of revisions in accordance with Faigley and Witte's taxonomy (1981). In order to PFove reliability, a different teacher was invited to do the analysis. There was 89% agreement.

Results and Discussion

Tables 1 and 2 below illustrate the results of paired sample *t*-test and independent-sample *t*-test used to assess the degree to which online instructor feedback and online peer feedback impact foreign language learners' writing, respectively.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of the Two Pairs' Performance

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	PFe-test peer FDBK	25.07	14	8.04	2.1
	Post-test peer FDBK	49.6	14	11.1	2.9
Pair 2	PFe-test teacher FDBK	22	14	5.3	1.4
	Post-test teacher FDBK	78.5	14	8.6	2.3

The PFe-test and post-test mean scores of both groups show that students' writing has improved to some degree. In addition, the paired sample *t*-test sig. values of 0.000 indicate a statistically significant difference following the online feedback therapy for both groups.

Table. 2

T-test Statistics for the Performance of Two paired Conditions

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	SD	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
P. 1	PFe and Post-test peer FDBK	-24.5	15.09	4.03	-33.2	-15.8	-6.08	13	.000
P. 2	PFe and Post-test teacher FDBK	-56.5	11.6	3.1	-63.3	-49.8	-18.1	13	.000

Although it is shown above that both groups receiving online feedback showed statistically significant improvement in writing, it is unclear if there is a meaningful difference between the two separate online feedback groups. In order to shed light on the findings, a *t*-test based on independent samples was carried out.

Table 3

Descriptive Statistics for Two Groups

	Conditions	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-tests writing tasks	Peer	14	49.6	11.1	2.9
	Teacher	14	78.5	8.6	2.3

The mean scores for Online Peer and Teacher feedback conditions were respectively 49.6 and 78.5, which can be seen in Table 3, and the two mean scores are not near to one another. And as Table 4 below indicates, the sig. value is 0.56, which is larger than the significance threshold of 0.05, indicating that the scores do not violate the assumptions. The value sig. two-tailed is 0.000; so, there is a significant difference in the student's writing abilities as a result of getting teacher feedback. To summarize, the input students get from their online teachers and the feedback they

receive from their online peers has a statistically-significant effect on the students' performance. There is, however, a discernible difference between the two distinct types of online feedback groups (eta square is 0.68 which indicates a large difference).

Table 4
Independent Samples Test

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	Equal variances assumed	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
post- tests		.3	.56	-7.6	26	.000	-28.9	3.7	-36.6	-21.1

Discussion

Consistent with earlier research (Xiao & Lucking, 2008), the current study revealed that online PF and TF might effectively improve learners' writing skills in every assessed parameter. This effect may entail PF-related learning efforts. These individuals committed a lot of energy to PF, which may explain their improved results. These students considered online PF as a challenging undertaking, but leveraging peer feedback helped their learning and modifications. Previous research on PF's usefulness from learners' viewpoints supports this finding (Covill, 2010; Yang, 2011).

This research indicated that online PF improved writing cognitively, affectively, socially, and linguistically (Connor & Asenavage, 1994). Learners are required to commit more time to peer criticism and self-reflection for cognitive growth. How peers-built material, presented ideas, arranged paragraphs, sequenced phrases or words, and picked language and grammar might be a great model to copy or a poor example to avoid (Liu & Hansen, 2002). Peer relationships may increase mutual understanding and effective growth. PF promotes good writing attitudes and reduces anxiety (Ho & Savignon, 2007).

Social awareness may be boosted through intergroup encounters. When commenting on peer works, students might estimate based on comparable learning backgrounds or explicitly ask peers. Students learn their duties as readers and writers via confirmation (Wu, 2006). Linguistically, PF form-filling exercises strengthen students' knowledge of composition standards. The feedback obligation drives students to hunt for linguistic expertise to point out their classmates' flaws, but the effects aren't visible owing to their poorer English writing skills. After instruction and mentoring, pupils should improve.

In the case of PF favorability, the experimental group of learners cared about PF initiatives and wanted specific feedback. Incompetent verbal and writing abilities hindered most learners' roles as learning facilitators. They could identify problems from a reader's standpoint, but it was hard to provide consistent, thorough criticism. Different reviewers' feedback might generate misunderstandings. Learners may value PF for cognitive growth, language awareness, and social engagement. They were nonetheless cautious about their counterparts' PF quality (Yang et al., 2006).

PF enhances social relationships, especially when resolving feedback and comment disputes. When PF differences arise, some students say they'll contact peers for alternatives rather than

sticking to their original opinion. Their views toward the PProcess led to more peer conversations and less instructor intervention. The students seemed to understand that PF required them to negotiate/comPFomise with, refer to, and consult many readers to update their content (Storch, 2005). Most learners didn't think friendships would hamper PF when giving feedback to peers. This contradicts certain research. The teacher emphasizes PF's significance throughout training; thus, most students don't take criticism personally (Min, 2005).

Both sets of students felt TF could PFoperly detect mistakes, PFovide alternate exPFessions, and highlight topic PFoblems. Yang et al. also favor TF (2006). Peer feedback listed these qualities as flaws. Feedback seems confused and difficult. With poorer language skills, these pupils may be unable to compose a phrase effectively, making brief writing difficult. Implicit feedback that encourages autonomous Learning may not fix their PFoblems. Teachers may need to PFovide more scaffolding to help these pupils PFoduce PFoper sentences.

Online TF versus PF showed that learners had a greater awareness of TF and critical reflections of their writing than online PF. Students believed the online platform offered many benefits, including the ability to view peer group compositions, convenience and flexibility (an easily manipulated interface, convenient feedback, immediate access to Internet resources, and recorded revisions), and environmental PFotection (reduction of paper waste). Several studies support these views (S. S. J. Lin, Liu, & Yuan, 2001; Xiao & Lucking, 2008). Elola (2010) claimed that online collaborative learning environments could engage learners in content development and PFovide a tool to create, transform, track, and erase work with built-in accountability. This generation of students lives in an electronically mediated learning environment and uses online technology to learn English writing.

Online TF had a greater impact than online PF because students found it more dependable for correcting grammatical faults and word meanings. Storch and Wigglesworth (2010) discovered the reformulation technique did not engage pupils extensively. Students had little time to discover PFoblems and remedy them. Online corrective feedback doesn't rePFesent pupils' cognitive depth (Mila & Mayo, 2013; Tocalli-Beller & Swain, 2005).

TF in this research helped students PFoduce more PFecise writing than online PF. In both cases, pupils can recognize and explain faults (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010; Bitchner & Storch, 2016). Students may use TF to more reliably grasp instructor comments on their writing. Students were really engaged. Using technology, teachers give online feedback. It emphasized metalinguistic signals and explicit and implicit text correction. Metalinguistic hints helped students enhance their language skills so they could modify their works based on lecturers' remarks and recommendations (Stefanou & Revesz, 2015; Karim & Nassaji, 2020).

Conclusion

Based on the discussion above, several key discoveries and pedagogical implications may be gained. Online instructor and online peer feedback may help foreign language writing. Both groups imPFoved after receiving online instructor or peer feedback. Online instructor and peer comments affect students' writing revision. Students may read feedback points and use them in revision writing, resulting in effective revisions and diverse types of revisions.

Technology integration in L2 classrooms is viable and beneficial since it's not limited by time or space. In terms of writing education or Learning, it may give a suitable platform where students can communicate, debate, and pool ideas using internet technologies. Second, instructors are urged to offer more online feedback, which is an essential aspect of PProcess-oriented writing and may assist enhances students' writing in terms of language, ideas, organization, etc. Follow online instructor comments to imPFove writing, then. Third, students should be encouraged to contribute online peer criticism, which benefits both them and others. They may enhance their

writing by reading classmates' work. The approach may also help pupils build language expertise and collaborate. In writing instruction, online instructor and peer feedback should be used. They may enhance pupils' writing and get them involved in revision.

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