

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN ONLINE ESL CLASSES

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Abstract

Corrective feedback is an essential part of teaching languages to second language learners. Peer connections, metalinguistic and metacognitive skills, and the rapport between teachers and students can all be enhanced by written corrective feedback. However, a number of institutions have switched to blended or technology-mediated types of language education as a result of the introduction of Internet technology in language learning and teaching. As a result, "corrective feedback" has become extremely important in the context of online learning. Therefore, the current study focuses on how ESL students comprehend and analyses the constructive criticism they get in online ESL courses. In this investigation, a quantitative methodology was used. Two hundred Islamia University of Bahawalpur undergraduate ESL students responded to closed-ended questions. Following that, SPSS was used to analyses the data. According to the study's findings, students view corrective comments as a crucial component of evaluations. Most respondents said they use CF as an additional tool to enhance their language study. Furthermore, because of the CF of language instructors in online programs, they have also increased their language correctness and competency.

KEYWORDS: Corrective Feedback, CF, Blended mode, online learning, ESL classes,

INTRODUCTION

Feedback is frequently utilized in writing projects for English as a second language/foreign language (ESL/EFL) courses across the globe. Because it can help students become more conscious of their writing, improve their texts, and advance their language abilities, constructive criticism is still a crucial part of the writing classroom (Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Javaid et al., 2023, 2024; Ramzan et al., 2023). Up until now, in-person classroom training has been more common for written feedback than online education. However, as time has gone on, online writing courses have played a bigger role in assisting students in developing their writing skills and sense of independence (Kourbani, 2017; Ramzan et al., 2023). University teaching has been severely interrupted since the COVID-19 outbreak and its global spread, and traditional in-person classroom instruction has been replaced by online instruction. Evaluating the impact of online comments on students' ESL/EFL writing is thus appropriate at this moment (Ramzan et al., 2023).

It appears that the institution's teaching procedures are to blame for the low quality of education it provides. The practices of teachers, as classified by many specialists, appear to be quite important to student learning (Ramzan et al., 2023). While the specifics of how teachers fall into different categories may change from one culture to the next, the general pattern is consistent. Smith, Ewing, and Cornu (2003) classified teachers' actions into four groups: at work, at home, with their peers, and with their students' families.

Technology has revolutionized the way people interact and share ideas in the digital era (Akram et al., 2021; 2022; Ma et al., 2024). Particularly online feedback has become a powerful method in education (Ramzan et al., 2023). This technological advancement has significantly impacted how teaching can be strengthened (Abdelrady & Akram, 2022), fostering a more interconnected and engaged environment (Akram & Li, 2024). Online post-response data that "informs the learners on their actual states of learning and/or performance" is what is referred to as online feedback in educational settings (Narciss, 2008, p. 292). As a result, online feedback on ESL/EFL writing is the assessment of material supplied online by educators, learners, or automated software that shows concern for the writing of the learners (Akram & Abdelrady, 2023; Hyland & Hyland, 2019). A number of empirical studies have examined the effect of online feedback on ESL/EFL writing (e.g., Guasch et al., 2013; Latifi et al., 2019; Link et al., 2020; Noroozi & Hatami, 2019). The results generally show that online feedback improves ESL/EFL writing development and offers better pedagogical meaning for ESL/EFL teachers or learners. However, in order to further investigate the effects of online feedback from various sources, including peers, teachers, and automated feedback, as well as how this feedback enhances students' writing quality as a crucial component of teaching activities, a quantitative synthesis with an accurate and comprehensive view across studies is required. The performance of learners' writing products in terms of complexity, accuracy, fluency, substance, organization, and appropriate use of linguistic and textual language components, among other factors, is operationalized as writing quality in this work (Cumming et al., 2000; Housen & Kuiken, 2009; Sasaki, 2000). Therefore, in order to investigate the impact of feedback in online ESL/EFL writing courses on improving students' writing quality, a thorough research synthesis will be carried out using the meta-analysis, one of the most successful methodologies for research synthesis (Al-Adwan et al., 2022; Li, 2010).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feedback

With input from their instructors on areas of weakness, learners are able to grow and improve on their own. Feedback is given to students by a variety of sources, such as peers, teachers, the learning task, and oneself (Javaid et al., 2023, 2024; Ramzan et al., 2021). The goal of instructor remarks is to improve student performance in the classroom (Li & Akram, 2023; 2024). Giving feedback usually has the dual purpose of inspiring and educating the recipient. Feedback need to be educational in nature and should help learners fix their mistakes without becoming demoralizing. Feedback can also be used to support education (Akram & Yang, 2021). The best remarks focus on the student's performance and point out both their strengths and places for improvement (Ahmad et al., 2022; Amjad et al., 2021).

Meta-Analysis

Meta-analysis would likely examine various studies to determine the overall impact of different types of corrective feedback on language learning outcomes. It would assess factors such as the frequency, timing, and types of feedback provided, as well as learner characteristics and instructional contexts.

Such an analysis might find that while corrective feedback generally has a positive effect on language learning, its effectiveness can vary depending on factors such as the learner's proficiency level, the type of error being corrected, and the teaching methodology employed. For example, direct corrective feedback (explicitly correcting errors) might be more effective for beginner learners, while indirect corrective feedback (providing hints or prompts to guide learners to self-correct) could be more beneficial for advanced learners.

The meta-analysis might also explore the role of technology in delivering corrective feedback in online ESL classes, such as the use of automated feedback systems or synchronous/asynchronous communication tools. It could highlight the advantages and limitations of different feedback delivery methods and offer recommendations for optimizing their effectiveness in online language learning environments. Overall, a meta-analysis on this topic would provide valuable insights for educators and researchers.

Meta-analyses have gained popularity in the field of second language (L2) writing because these quantitative techniques for averaging effect sizes across studies can be systematic, replicable, and have additional benefits like increased statistical power, moderator analyses, etc. (Oswald & Plonsky, 2010). With an emphasis on corrective feedback, numerous meta-analyses on the effect of feedback on L2 writing have been conducted (Biber et al., 2011; Chen & Renandya, 2020; Huisman et al., 2019; Kang & Han, 2015). For instance, Biber et al. (2011) looked at 23 research that included both written and spoken feedback to determine the impact of different feedback kinds on students' writing quality. Studies using a pre-/post-test design showed a greater effect of written feedback ($g = 0.68$), compared to those using a treatment/control design ($g = 0.40$). They also found that there was little overall difference between feedback from teachers and feedback from other sources (computer, peer, and self-combined).

After synthesizing 21 source papers, Kang and Han (2015) found that second language learners gain more from written feedback than do foreign language learners. Significant differences between groups within this genre in narrative and descriptive writing tasks led to the suggestion that L2 instructors should be aware that not all writing genres are as simple to correct as narrative and descriptive texts. A study by Chen and Renandya (2020) looked at 35 primary studies. The findings revealed an overall effect size of $g = 0.59$, indicating that written corrective feedback improves the grammatical precision of L2 writing. According to this data, learner proficiency was the most potent motivator.

In contrast to the previous research, Huisman et al. (2019) compiled data from 24 quantitative studies that examined academic writing by students in higher education. Compared to controls and self-assessment, it was discovered that participation in peer feedback resulted in higher writing improvements. After receiving comments from peers or teachers, pupils' writing improvement did not differ much. Furthermore, the authors claimed that additional

methodologically sound research is required because there aren't many well-controlled studies in this subject.

The results of earlier meta-analyses show how beneficial peer or remedial feedback is for L2 writing. However, the focus of these studies is on written feedback from peers or teachers during in-person instruction; online feedback and feedback source are not as well-considered as they may be as moderating factors. Online feedback on language writing, made possible by technology and the Internet, offers many benefits over traditional teacher and student feedback in the classroom. These benefits include information storage, multimodality, user-friendliness, instant access to feedback, and increased interaction (Bakla, 2020; Chen, 2016). It is vital to investigate if online feedback may successfully increase ESL/EFL writing quality, since online learning has grown in popularity and importance for language instruction, especially in light of the disruption produced by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Online Teacher Feedback

Writing instructors, especially those working in higher education, are increasingly distributing assignments and grading papers and providing comments online through means such as electronic files, chats, wikis, and blogs because of the importance of electronic-mediated instructions (Elola & Oskoz, 2017; Hyland & Hyland, 2019). There is a significant difference between the quantity and quality of conventional and electronic feedback, and empirical research suggests that pupils can benefit from the former (Johnson et al., 2019). Similarly, studies have looked at how students feel about receiving feedback from teachers online; results imply that students would rather receive online feedback because it is more accessible and of higher quality than handwritten input (McCabe et al., 2011; McGrath & Atkinson-Leadbetter, 2016). It was also discovered that online teachers tend to focus more on the content of students' writings than on the mechanics of their writing (Ene & Upton, 2018).

Online Peer Feedback

Online peer feedback refers to the process of providing constructive criticism, suggestions, and praise to fellow peers through digital platforms or tools. It's a valuable way for individuals to improve their work, learn from others, and build a supportive community.

In meta-analysis, online peer feedback can involve sharing draft manuscripts, data analysis plans, or findings with colleagues via digital platforms or tools. Peers can provide critical insights, suggest additional studies or analyses, and help ensure the robustness and accuracy of the meta-analytic process. Online peer feedback can enhance the rigor and credibility of the final meta-analysis.

In corrective feedback, online peer feedback can be facilitated through digital platforms where learners share their work, such as written assignments, speaking exercises, or quizzes. Peers can then provide feedback on errors, offer suggestions for improvement, and reinforce correct language usage. This approach encourages active engagement with the material and promotes a supportive learning environment where students can learn from each other's mistakes. There are, however, some discrepant results. According to Chen's qualitative synthesis, the results of online peer feedback are not always positive (2016). Due of students' linguistic restrictions, some studies looking into the quality of online peer evaluation found that it was generally tied to

lower-order issues (Schultz, 2000; Tolosa et al., 2013). Additional research has shown that peers are unprepared to make use of online comments in terms of both confidence and strategy (DiGiovanni & Nagaswami, 2001). Pham (2019) discovered, however, that there were no significant differences in the effects of lecturer e-comments and peer e-comments on student modifications. Online peer feedback was found to have greater potential than automated corrective feedback in improving sentence writing, minimizing grammatical errors, and producing more varieties of lexical items (Shang, 2019). When comparing the impact of in-person and online peer written corrective feedback on writing achievement, Vaezi and Abbaspour (2015) found no significant difference.

To conclude it can be said that Corrective feedback is crucial in the second language classes therefore it is imperative to explore this topic more in the context on virtual or online classes so that teachers, students and curriculum designers can be benefitted from it.

Online Automated Feedback

The extensive use of online automated feedback (OAF) produced by writing evaluation systems in ESL/EFL writing education is keeping up with the advancements in artificial intelligence technology. OAF is seen to be useful in helping students with their writing because it offers immediate feedback (Kellogg et al., 2010). If there is more automatic feedback accessible, students are likely to use the tool more frequently, revise more of their writing, and successfully narrow the knowledge gaps between what they already know and what they want to know (Link et al., 2020; Morch et al., 2017; Saricaoglu, 2019). Additionally, research indicates that when students carefully revise their compositions in response to automated feedback, their writing scores rise (Zhu et al., 2020).

Cheng (2017) looked into how OAF affected students' reflective journals in a university-level, 13-week EFL course. He discovered that OAF could give students fast feedback on their reflective writing's advantages and disadvantages, raising their level of awareness as they were learning a second language. Because of its convenience, Stevenson and Phakiti (2019) observed that students probably edit their drafts as soon as they receive OAF. However, their engagement with the perspectives of cognition and affection was insufficient to support their development as writers and learners. In order to reduce their burden and give more instruction time, teachers can also benefit from OAF by changing the focus of their feedback (Zhang & Hyland, 2018).

Previous study on the impact of online criticism on ESL/EFL writing has had conflicting results, as the reviews above demonstrate. In order to compile the existing research on the impact of online feedback on writing quality, we carried out this meta-analysis. While some of the studies included in this meta-analysis offered exact ratings for individual criterion, most of them only supplied the total writing score. All of the included studies evaluated the writing proficiency of ESL/EFL students, regardless of the methods they used to report the writing scores. Furthermore, we investigated aspects of online feedback that could affect its efficacy in enhancing writing skill. This meta-analysis is expected to yield insightful information about online feedback in ESL/EFL writing teaching.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study's main objective was to review the literature in order to ascertain the impact of offering constructive criticism in virtual English as a second language (ESL) classes. The study's methodology might be applied with minimal work. The following are the many steps that were involved in conducting this study:

Research Design

The researchers in this study computed the percentages and frequency distributions using a quantitative methodology. A survey was carried out.

Research Tool

Responses were gathered for the current investigation using a closed-ended questionnaire. A 5-point Likert scale statement was used in a questionnaire containing 31 statements. The questionnaire was distributed to the students to complete in order to collect data from them. There were five options available for every statement in the survey. Either "Strongly Agree," "Agree," "Undecided," "Disagree," or "Strongly Disagree" (SD) may have been your choice. Five options were presented to the respondents, and they were allowed to select any one of them. The responses were categorized as follows: One is strongly disagree, two are disagree, three are neither agree nor disagree, and five are very disagree.

Population

Students enrolled in the English department at Islamia University of Bahawalpur made up the study's population. Each and every participant was an undergraduate.

Sample

Two hundred ESL students were selected as a sample from the larger community. A straightforward random sampling technique was used to select the sample from the population.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

An electronic questionnaire was created and distributed to the undergraduate ESL students at Islamia University of Bahawalpur. The Islamia University of Bahawalpur undergraduates gave a positive response and the required data. Following data collection, the software programmer SPSS was used to analyze the data, and percentages and frequencies were computed for each questionnaire item.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

In descriptive statistics, percentage and frequency would be the main topics of discussion. The purpose of this discussion of the statistics is to ascertain the attitudes, perceptions, or patterns of the respondents about different facets of corrective feedback in online ESL lessons. Bar graphs have been made as a result to explain the numerical data.

Table 1

Corrective feedback is an essential part of my evaluation.

Option	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SA	77	40.1	40.1	40.1

A	79	41.1	41.1	81.2
N	29	15.1	15.1	96.3
D	7	3.6	3.6	99.9
SD	4	2.1	2.1	102
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

This table shows the percentage of students that said "corrective feedback is an essential part of student's evaluation." The findings indicate that 81.2 percent of students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, compared to 5.7% who opposed or strongly disagreed. 15.1% of the total was neutral. This suggests that a sizable percentage of students understand the value of receiving corrective feedback for both learning and assessing their own development. The ambiguous answers can indicate that some students are unclear about the importance of corrective criticism or might require more explanation. The findings, taken as a whole, demonstrate the importance of corrective feedback in fostering student learning and raising academic achievement.

Table 2

Corrective feedback results in improving the level of my accuracy in using second language.

Option	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SA	71	37	37	37
A	93	48.4	48.4	85
N	18	9.4	9.4	94.4
D	8	4.2	4.2	98.6
SD	3	1.6	1.6	100
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

It can be deduced from the data in the table and graph that 48.4% of the students agreed and 37% strongly disagreed that receiving corrective feedback helps them become more accurate speakers of their second language. This suggests that students' opinions regarding the usefulness of corrective feedback in raising their accuracy in their second language are not all that consistent. The 9.4% neutral response raises the possibility that some pupils lack sufficient experience with corrective feedback or does not have a strong opinion. The fact that 1.6% of students strongly disagreed and 4.2% of students disagreed is noteworthy because it shows that a tiny percentage of students do not think that receiving corrective feedback helps them become more accurate speakers of their second language. To find out why certain students think this way and how to change their attitudes, more research may be required.

Table 3

I think corrective feedback is mandatory aspect in my learning in online classes.

Option	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SA	63	32.8	32.8	32
A	88	45.8	45.8	78
N	22	11.5	11.5	89

D	14	7.3	7.3	96
SD	6	3.1	3.1	99
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

The table show that 45.8% of students agreed with the assertion that corrective feedback is required in online classes, while 32.8% of students strongly agreed with it. Furthermore, 3.1% strongly disagreed, 7.3% disagreed, and 11.5% of the students were neutral.

According to the results, the majority of students (78.6%) strongly or somewhat agree that receiving corrective feedback is vital in online classrooms. Nonetheless, a noteworthy proportion of students (10.4%) expressed a neutral or disagreeing opinion with this assertion. These findings demonstrate how important corrective feedback is thought to be in online language learning settings. The fact that a sizable percentage of the students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement indicates that, even in the setting of remote learning, they think that receiving corrective feedback is essential to improving their language proficiency. The comparatively small proportion of students who disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement may suggest that they have different preferences for language learning and skill development, or that they do not think corrective feedback is relevant or helpful in the online learning environment.

Table 4

Corrective feedback helps me in learning English in online classes

Option	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SA	64	33.3	33.3	33.3
A	89	46.4	46.4	80
N	23	12	12	92
D	11	5.7	5.7	98
SD	5	2.6	2.6	100
Total	200	100.0	100.0	

According to the data in the table, most students (33.3% strongly agreed, 46.4% agreed) seem to think that receiving corrective feedback during online sessions helps them get better at English. Fewer pupils (12%) disagreed, (5.7%) strongly disagreed, and (2.6%) were neutral. These findings imply that the majority of students recognize the benefits of getting constructive criticism in an online learning environment, which can offer direction and assistance for their language development.

Table 5

In ESL classes, non-verbal communication is an essential part of the teaching-learning process

Option	Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
SA	55	28.9	28.9	28.9
A	82	43.2	43.2	72
N	32	16.8	16.8	89
D	17	8.9	8.9	98
SD	6	3.2	3.2	100

Total	200	100.0	100.0	
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The findings suggest that while nearly half of the students agreed, less than one-third strongly felt that feedback is helpful for learning. On the other hand, 12.1% of the students opposed or strongly disagreed with the statement; while a sizeable percentage (16.8%) were neutral. As a result, even while there is some consensus that feedback is beneficial, a sizeable percentage of students may not see its value or remain doubtful about its applicability.

Conclusion

By defining feedback, going over its various forms, and evaluating its effectiveness in light of empirical data, this study contributes to our understanding of feedback by analyzing studies on CF in the context of language instruction. In the first section, numerous learning theories were discussed and feedback concepts were offered. This study offered a thorough explanation of the several types of language-related feedback along with a tone of examples. Two types of feedback mechanisms used in language acquisition are written and/or oral comments on performance and proficiency. Numerous investigations have yielded fascinating results in this field.

Since they are seldom exposed to what they have studied in their daily lives, the author's observations in the classroom indicate that pupils hardly apply what they have learned. Unfortunately, pupils frequently perform poorly on assignments. The author has discovered that receiving vocal or written feedback on their work is quite beneficial. Remarks about their performance from successful students encouraged them to keep trying. When individuals were informed about their potential, they were more likely to establish performance goals that directly correlated with their desire to further their education. The author contends that language instructors must step back from their routines in order to enhance both their teaching strategies and the results for their pupils. Regardless of your experience level, you must give careful consideration to the feedback you give your students. Following a discussion of CF, both overt and covert types of feedback were discussed. In explicit feedback, sometimes referred to as direct corrective feedback (CF), a word, phrase, or morpheme is removed, and the language structure is restored at or close to the site of the linguistic problem. Indirect CF includes asking for clarification, getting confirmation, and paraphrasing. Explicit and implicit feedback is essential for improving one's capacity to recognize and fix errors. Students, however, have the power to initiate their own course modifications. In research settings, students come from a wide range of countries, educational systems, and classroom experiences. There are situations when further research into the SLA variables is required. However, it is indisputable that feedback is essential to the development and success of second language learners. In online learning environments, remedial feedback is equally as crucial as it is in conventional classroom environments. As students may feel alone and cut off from their teachers and peers in virtual learning environments, it might even be more important.

Recommendations

After the study's conclusion, the following suggestions seem suitable for additional investigation;

- It is important to highlight the role that feedback plays in students' learning since doing so will show how critical feedback is to supporting students' development as learners.
- It is imperative to include as many diverse sources of targeted input as you can in the study.

- It's crucial to utilize more statements in the analysis when examining how feedback affects students' learning. Specific areas need to be the focus of feedback. Grouping the statements is necessary since each category may address a distinct section of the comments.
- The study should cover the many forms of feedback that are offered to students along with their benefits and drawbacks. This will assist teachers and students learn about the most effective forms of feedback and improve their instruction.
- It is also possible to conduct a comparison study between the learning of students who receive feedback from their teachers and the learning of students who do not. This will assist in determining the significance of feedback in the process of teaching and learning.

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