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Teachers' Oral Feedback Practices in Promoting Academic Writing Skills of ESL Learners

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Abstract: Students entering higher education are expected to have developed academic writing skills that are up to the standards set by the institution. As a consequence of this, improving one's command of the English language, and in particular, one's command of academic writing at the university level is absolutely necessary for academic genius. In this regard, this study used a qualitative approach to evaluate students' perspectives of the oral feedback procedures used by their teachers to develop academic writing abilities among them. All of the students who were currently enrolled in any of the universities located in the Sindh province were included in this study's population. Thirty students were selected by a process known as convenient sampling, and they were given the task of collecting data by interviewing people. The findings indicated various helpful oral feedback practices teachers utilize to develop academic writing skills in university students, which include grammatical-based, procedural-based, clarification-based, and correction-based feedback. In light of these findings, it is imperative for the relevant authorities to organize workshops or training programs with the goal of enhancing the capacity of educators to use a variety of strategies for providing students with written feedback in order to foster academic writing skills among undergraduate students.

Introduction

At the present time, the English language is the most common language used all across the world. This is primarily due to the large number of people who were born speaking English. In addition to this, only one-third of the overall population is fluent in this language. There are only that many people who are able to speak it. In this sense, English possesses the capacity to bridge cultural, academic, social, or political differences; it can also foster mutual respect and comprehension, and it is the language that has the most users in the world because it is the language that is used the most frequently around the globe (Bice & Kroll, 2019).

When it comes to information and communication technology, English serves as more than just a method of communication; in fact, more than half of the websites that are visited the most are written in English. This fact alone demonstrates the importance of the English language. Students have access to a wide variety of learning groups and tools that can aid them in improving their English language abilities as a result of the widespread use of the internet, which is used by more than one billion people (Lee, 2018; Abdelrady & Akram, 2022). Furthermore, English is not just used in Pakistan because it is the country's official language but

also because it is a requirement for many jobs in Pakistan that pay a high salary. This is due to the fact that the great majority of employment organizations place a substantial focus on candidates' English language proficiency (Paulsrud, Tian, and Toth, [2021](#)). In addition, because the majority of the material that is accessible nowadays can only be found written in English, it has also evolved into a subject that is taught in secondary schools, as well as colleges and universities. Because of this, acquiring English language skills is now more crucial than ever (Rahman & Singh, [2020](#)). At the same time, the most significant difficulties that have been experienced are butted up against the level of English language proficiency, which includes incompetent teachers and inadequate amount of resources (Akram, 2020), students' academic and social discrepancies (Haidar & Fang, [2019](#)) foreign language speaking anxiety (Akram, Junaid, and Yang, [2019](#)), a scarcity of possibilities for teachers' professional progress (Akram & Yang, 2021), and students low socioeconomic backgrounds (Haidar, [2019](#)).

Strengthening learners' English knowledge and skills, particularly in the field of literary studies at the higher education level, is thus seen as a prerequisite for progressing and expanding scholarly and professional research topics both within as well as outside institutions of higher learning. On the other hand, it has been demonstrated through the various studies that have been carried out in the past that ordinary English language programs are unable to meet the requirements for academic writing that are imposed by universities (Sadia, Memon, and Pathan, 2021). This is something that is required of students who wish to pursue degrees in higher education; however, the majority of undergraduate students in Pakistan do not demonstrate any capacity to write, particularly academic writing skills, which are essential to encourage scientific and professional research work. Thus, the ability of rookie writers to engage in critical discourse and to think critically about

the norms of the field can be improved by using a progressive critical method to learn academic English. Additionally, students in higher education are required to write critically; accordingly, their academic writing capacities should be improved with the help of linking writing to a particular subject in order for them to be able to think strategically about what they write (Bloor & Bloor, [2013](#)). Regardless of whether or not students are proficient in the components of writing, the student's overall academic success has a significant correlation with their command of all four primary aspects of language, which are reading, writing, grammar, and vocabulary. This is true even if the students are proficient in the components of writing (Gan et al., [2021](#)).

In addition, students who are enrolled in higher levels of education are obligated to write academic writing such as publications, reports, and synopses, and finally, a comprehensive research thesis. This requirement is in place to ensure that students are able to demonstrate their mastery of the material. Thereby, this is a prerequisite that has to be satisfied in order to be accepted into and graduate from bachelor's degree programs as well as other degree programs at a higher level in nearly any area of research. Besides, Academic writing tasks at higher education levels need critical literacy to synthesize data and prove a theory. But the majority of the students are struggling because their teachers have high expectations for them and believe that academic writing skills were supposed to be taught to them by their language instructors in previous sessions and mastered by those instructors. As a result, the majority of our students are in a state of confusion (Khan, Majoka, and Fazal, [2016](#)), and they don't receive proper feedback from their teachers (Ghazal et al., [2014](#)). On the other hand, Mumtaz ([2021](#)) underlined the necessity for University of Education, Lahore students to increase their vocabulary through enough practice in order to convey themselves more effectively to the

readers. According to Ghazal et al. (2014), one of the primary factors contributing to the difficulty of academic writing is a lack of appropriate feedback from their instructors. In addition, feedback plays an essential part in the growth of students' writing since it gives students data regarding their work, which students may then use to conduct their own self-evaluations and make appropriate adjustments to their writing (Huisman et al., 2018). Feedback may be crucial to student performance given the ambitious US Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that demand students to demonstrate excellent basic writing skills in various genres (Graham, Harris, & Santangelo, 2015). Therefore, despite the fact that feedback from teachers has a huge potential for enhancing students' educational experiences, the education sector still has a lot to learn about how to make the most of the power of feedback in the classroom (Wahyuningsih, 2020). There are many different ways to provide feedback. It may be verbal, written, or non-verbal, or any mix of these modes, and it may originate from the instructor, other students in the class, or outside agencies such as computers (Graham, 2018b). The role of oral feedback contacts in the development of academic writing skills in ESL classrooms has been the subject of a relatively limited amount of empirical research. At the same time, Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal (2016) recognized inexperienced teachers and ineffective pedagogical approaches as a primary source of poor academic writing skills.

This deplorable state drives the students of English as a second language to psychological chaos. In light of this, the purpose of the study was to investigate the students' perceptions regarding written feedback practices employed by their teachers to enhance academic writing skills among them. In this regard, the current study led for the subsequent purposes:

1. To investigate students' perceptions about the oral feedback practices their teachers

employ to enhance academic writing skills among them.

2. To provide recommendations for alternative approaches to enable undergraduate students to resolve their academic writing challenges.

Significance of the Study

Earlier research has examined the duties of educators as well as the appropriate ways for teachers to respond to the writing of students. In order to ensure that feedback is successful in assisting students in developing their writing skills, numerous theories have been developed, and these ideas are based on the outcomes of past studies. The roles of reader, coach, facilitator, and guide are some of the responsibilities that are recommended for instructors to take on. It is also recommended that instructors prioritize their remarks and offer a healthy mix of both praise and constructive criticism throughout their lessons. Therefore, with this in mind, the purpose of this research is to improve the teaching abilities of ESL teachers and to strengthen the oral feedback methods they use in order to encourage proficient academic writing skills in students.

Student reactions and perceptions of teacher feedback have also been studied. However, most investigations were conducted in the West, and Pakistani ESL oral teacher feedback research is scarce. Most of the research is on L1 or L2-based L1. Thus, it is unclear if local ESL students see instructor feedback the same as the previous study. It is also unclear how students will use teacher criticism in their rewrites and how beneficial they think it is in improving their ESL writing.

Hence why, it is anticipated that the insights that were gleaned from this study will be able to help ESL teachers and students, particularly those who are enrolled in higher education institutions, to enhance the instruction and acquisition of ESL writing.

Methodology

In order to explore students' perceptions regarding how their teachers perform oral feedback practices to enhance academic writing skills among them, the researcher followed a qualitative approach and collected the data through interviews with the students. The mode of interviews was semi-structured in nature (i.e., a blend of open-ended and closed-ended questions), which were guided by probing questions, which allowed the researcher to gain in-depth information (Tenny et al., 2017). Thereby considered the most appropriate approach to explore written feedback practices employed by teachers to cultivate academic writing skills among students in detail. The interview questions were designed by following the questions developed by Tom et al. (2013) and prior literature to investigate which oral feedback practices teachers employ to cultivate academic writing skills among students.

Population and Sampling

The population of this study consisted of all the students enrolled in the universities in the province of Sindh. By using a convenient sampling technique, 30 students were recruited to collect the data from them. Subsequently, all of the interviews were conducted by the researcher via direct face-to-face communication, which lasted for 20–35 min after getting permission from the participants. In addition, to keep the identities of the participants confidential, their names were changed to pseudo-names.

Trustworthiness of the Instrument

In qualitative research, the term "trustworthiness" refers to the degree to which the research questions are understood in a timely and sufficient manner. In order for an instrument to be useful, it needed to possess both validity and dependability. In the research conducted by Creswell (2014), it was found that a valid instrument was one that accurately measured the

user's purpose. According to Patton (2015), inter-coder dependability is an essential element of open-ended questions in the study. In this regard, three peers and two specialists in their respective fields were selected to evaluate the coding method used in the study as well as the findings drawn from it. The level of consensus among independent researchers and subject matter experts was greater than 80%, which indicates a level of reliability that is adequate because it is lower than the cutoff figure established by Creswell and Creswell (2017). Following this, two interviews were carried out as a core component of the pilot scheme; however, those interviews were not incorporated into the final interviews. Following the completion of an investigation into the dependability of the qualitative interview technique, participants in the qualitative data collection were handed a consent letter in addition to the interview protocol.

Data Analysis

Each of the interviews using a semi-structured format was recorded and then transcribed. The researcher listened to each recorded interview and analyzed it to determine how well it fell into the categories of students' interviews. The researcher asked follow-up questions in interviews to attain a rich, thorough picture of students' perceptions of the oral feedback approaches and tactics their teachers use to promote academic writing skills among them. The qualitative analysis included the creation, processing, and categorization of transcriptions as part of the methodology. It required locating the data, defining it more precisely, categorizing it, and extending it (Rubin & Rubin, 2011). We looked at themes from interviews as well as themes from literature. After the coding was complete, a detailed description was provided for each theme. The key issues and maybe a variety of discoveries were disclosed when the primary themes were clarified, grouped, and merged. At

long last, a story provided an explanation for developing ideas (Rubin & Rubin, [2011](#)).

Results and discussion

The participants' comments, guided by the study's research objectives, indicated various helpful oral feedback approaches and tactics their teachers utilize to develop academic writing skills among, which are outlined below. According to the students, oral feedback given by the teachers is the best practice for recognizing their errors and mistakes and how to avoid them in future writing tasks. According to Hosseiny (2014), giving constructive feedback on ESL students writing projects helps them receive self-correction on the one hand while enhancing their writing skills on the other.

Grammatical Feedback

Grammar consideration is the most crucial aspect of academic writing in the English language. Therefore, students struggle the most in this area while writing essays or comprehensions. In this regard, the grammatical correction method of highlighting errors for students' mistakes was indicated as the most effective oral feedback technique by the students. Regarding grammatical correction, a student, HF, mentioned:

"I find it most helpful when teachers point out grammatical errors and give suggestions to how to correct them."

Regarding sentence and paragraph writing, a student, RT, mentioned:

"The oral feedback I receive from teachers helps improve my grammar and sentence writing the most since it helps me produce the right phrases with the right meaning."

The findings disclosed by Algburi and Razali ([2022](#)) also identified that students' biggest concern was related to the grammatical challenges they faced while writing; thereby, the grammatical correction was perceived as the

most beneficial oral feedback technique by the students. It is, therefore, crucial for teachers to provide pupils with oral feedback that both celebrates their abilities and provides critical criticism on grammatical errors. This will assist pupils in avoiding making the same mistakes in their following assignments.

Procedural Feedback

Providing procedural instructional feedback emerged as another oral feedback technique indicated by the students. It includes reminding students about the directions of the assigned task with the help of elaborating on mistakes from the previously assigned tasks. Schuldt ([2019](#)) also came to the conclusion that students preferred to receive oral feedback in the form of providing procedural instructions about the task. This is due to the fact that this method enables students to become more aware of their previous errors and the ways in which they can improve upon them. Regarding this technique, a student named UG remarked:

"I find that it is really helpful to comprehend my mistakes when lecturers identify my shortcomings and provide me suitable guidance about the assignment."

Another student mentioned that:

"When the teacher guides me effectively in the classroom, I am able to absorb a great deal of information."

Clarification based feedback

Providing feedback through explanations emerged as another oral feedback technique indicated by the students. It comprises providing explanations to students to clarify the obscure terms or ambiguous sentences of the allotted assignment. These explanations are supported by explaining errors from tasks that were provided in the past. The authors of the aforementioned study, Van Der Kleij and Adie ([2020](#)) went on to add that offering feedback by describing the content is a more successful method than simply

offering remedial criticism. Regarding clarification-based feedback from a student, FU mentioned:

"When we don't respond to a teacher's question or give an answer that is incorrect, our instructor provides us with oral feedback by describing what it is that he was specifically searching for in the answer. This helps guide students toward providing the appropriate response."

Another student MU mentioned that:

"Teacher checks on all of the student's work to make sure that each student has comprehended the material completely, and that the instructor was open to questions and answered well and he clarifies it."

Correction based Feedback

In addition, the method of pointing out errors and providing the right answers for students' mistakes was indicated as another most effective oral feedback technique by the students. The mistake restoration may include making changes to the punctuation, vocabulary, and verb usage in the sentences. Wirantaka (2019) also determined that students favored receiving feedback in the form of pointing out errors because the teacher immediately provided the appropriate form of writing. However, teachers are not encouraged to provide too much feedback through error correction because, according to Amara(2015), error correction is harmful to students because it allows students to know the correct form without allowing them to participate in the learning process, making them dependent on the teacher. In this regard, a student, KL, mentioned:

"For me, the most helpful form of oral feedback that professors can provide is when they point out my mistakes and tell me the right answers out loud at the same time."

Suggestions and Conclusion

The findings indicated various helpful oral feedback techniques that teachers employ to enhance academic writing skills, among them

grammatical-based, procedural-based, clarification-based, and correction-based feedback. However, faculty members make an effort to play a supporting role by providing constructive criticism to students in an effort to develop the student's academic writing skills. Still, in order for the faculty members to be successful in achieving their goals, the university must provide assistance. In this regard, in light of the findings of the current study, a few of the following suggestions may be considered to improve the academic writing skills of undergraduate students in Pakistan:

1. In the classroom, it's important for teachers to provide constructive criticism on both grammar and content by clarifying properly.
2. The outcomes and conclusions of this study imply that instructors ought to give greater consideration to the instructions or suggestions that they deliver orally to their students before actually doing so.
3. In order for pupils to view constructive criticism as a source of inspiration, teachers should deliver positive comments even when students get something wrong.
4. Universities should organize workshops or training programs to enhance teachers' capabilities to employ various kinds of oral-based feedback techniques to promote academic writing skills among undergraduate students.
5. Teachers should make sure that whatever feedback is given are understandable and useful for the improvement of the student's writing.

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