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The Effect of Teacher, Peer, and Self-Editing on Improving Grammatical Accuracy in EFL Learners' Writing

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the effect of teacher, peer, and self-editing on improvement of grammatical accuracy in writing, using three groups of participants. The first group engaged in teacher-editing, the second group engaged in peer-editing and third group engaged in self-editing. Results revealed that compared to the peer-editing and self-editing groups, the teacher-editing group significantly reduced their rule-based errors in revised drafts. The results revealed that performance of teacher-editing group was better than two groups and performance of peer-editing group was better than self-editing group on correction of specific language errors in revised drafts. This study contributes to teaching pedagogy by encouraging teachers to use editing especially teacher-editing in the writing classroom and to focus on the correction of a few language errors to bring about language development.

Introduction

With the advent of process writing in second language pedagogy, editing has been considered as an important tool for improving grammatical accuracy in writing. It is known that peer-editing helps students to become successful editors because peer-editing gives an opportunity to students to learn about their own problems in writing. Different types of editing have been found to have variable effects (Ashwell, 2000; Diab, 2010). Many studies (e.g., Min, 2006) provide support for the effect of peer-editing on reduction of error, suggesting that the effect of peer-editing is more significant than that of teacher-, and self-editing in development of grammatical accuracy in writing. Reports by other researchers (Paulus, 1999; Lee, 2008; Ashwell, 2000) however, suggest that the effect of teacher-editing is stronger than that of peer-editing and self-editing in the reduction of the errors in students' revised drafts. The findings of a study by Paulus (1998) demonstrated that both teacher-editing and peer-editing affect the revision process, but that students preferred teacher-editing to peer-editing. Krashen (1982) believes that peer review provide situation for students to use language meaningfully in class. Mangelsdorf (1989) claims that peer interaction cause learners to improve their L2 knowledge in general and it helps students to negotiate with each other and transfer their thought, and idea to each other.

The present study aims to find out the possible effects of teacher-, peer-, and self -editing on EFL students' grammatical accuracy in writing. The study is an attempt to explore the effects of teacher, peer, and self-editing and form focused instruction on reducing four grammatical structures under study in the learners' writing (i.e., subject-verb agreement, conditional sentences type 2, should have plus past participle, and causative clause). Editing here refers to correcting grammatical errors by teacher, peer, and self. By addressing the implicit feedback and its effect on grammatical accuracy in students' writing, the research focuses on the four grammatical structures. Therefore, significance of the study is multifaceted. First, it highlights that editing is an appropriate tool for improving writing and three types of editing have different effects on

students' writing. Secondly, this study underlies the importance of form focused instruction for improvement of grammatical accuracy in students' writing. Thirdly, an optimal combination of form focused instruction and teacher, peer, and self-editing is addressed for reduction of errors in writing.

The studies conducted on teacher, peer, and self-editing show mixed results. A study by Diab (2010), on the effect of peer-editing and self-editing on the reduction of rule-governed and non rule-governed errors showed that there were differences in the effect of peer-editing and self-editing in the reduction of non rule-governed errors. Moreover, peer-editing was found to be more useful than self-editing in reducing rule-governed errors. However, Tsui and Maria Ng (2000) reported that students in their study preferred teacher feedback to peer feedback because they had confidence in teacher comments, experience, knowledge, and correctness of teacher feedback. Although the learners in their study incorporated a relatively high percentage of teacher comments in their writing, the advantages of peer-editing, they suggest, should not be ignored. They believe that peer feedback helped L2 learners to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in their own writings and engaged L2 learners in negotiation and collaboration with each other. Tsui and Maria (2000) consider some roles for peer comments that teacher comments may not be able to fulfill: (a) Engaging learner in negotiation of form. (b) Helping to students to become successful self editor. (c) Helping to students to know their own power and weakness in writing.

According to Mendonca and Johnson (1994) teachers should provide L2 students with opportunities to talk about their essay with their peers, as peer reviews seem to allow students to explore and negotiate their ideas as well as to develop a sense of audience. They believe that teachers must give opportunity for students to choose their own partner and they claim that peer reviews are a good form of feedback in L2 writing instruction.

The findings of a study by Mendonca and Johnson (1994) support the observation that peer reviews engage students in negotiation with their peer and this process develop students writing power. Evidence from a number of studies (Tsui & Maria, 2000) suggest that teacher comments and peer comments are different methods for improvement of writing which complement each other and together form a very useful way for improvement of writing. Teacher comments increase the students' awareness of the macro-structures of a text and peer comments increase the students' awareness of strengths and weakness of their own writings.

Truscott (2004) believes that error correction is not useful and should not be considered as a tool for improving students' writing ability and students' knowledge of language. According to Truscott (1996) teacher error correction is not compatible with smooth flow of acquisition or sequence of acquisition that learners must go through to acquire a second language.

The current study

Participants

The participants of this study were 18 male MA students majoring in management and computer at Takab branch of Azad University, who had already passed a standard advanced-level English proficiency test. The reason for the selection of these participants was that writing is the most

difficult skill for learning and only advanced learners are able to translate their thoughts, ideas, and feelings into readable text (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Procedure

The instruments used in this study were two sets of grammar tests in order to elicit the required structure from the participants. Participants' pretest scores and two paragraph essays that were written by the participants were used to divide the participants into low and high groups. The treatment included the four grammatical structures which required the participants to read the texts and to write a summary. Finally, the learners' writings were edited in three groups.

The pretest was designed in order to elicit the required structure from the participants. Then, they were asked to write two paragraphs about their own favorite topic. The teacher provided the learners with form-focused instruction about four grammatical structures, namely subject and verb agreement, causative clause, conditional sentences type II, and should have plus past participle.

After form-focused instruction, 18 learners were divided into three groups of 6. The first group received teacher-editing, i.e. the teacher edited the learners' errors in their writing. The second group received peer-editing, i.e., peers edited the learners' errors in their writing. The third group received self-editing, i.e., they self-edited their own errors in their writings. This study was conducted in 10 sessions and each session lasted for about 50 minutes.

Moreover, during each session, the participants in three groups read the teacher-selected texts, which included many instances of the grammatical structures under investigation. Then, the learners were to reconstruct the text and provide a written summary. After the summary was written, editing was done by the teacher in the first group, peers in the second group, and the students themselves in the third group. After editing was done, the learners received their edited writings and reviewed their errors.

The type of the feedback that was used in teacher and peer-editing groups was coded feedback which required the students to point out any of the four language errors under investigation, to indicate its line number, and write its code and correct it. One of the important strategies of indirect feedback for error correction was coded feedback (Bitchener, Young, and Cameron, 2005) which "points to the exact location of an error, and the type of error involved is indicated with a code (p.193)". A posttest was administered 35 days after the pretest.

Results

A one way ANOVA was employed to compare the effects of the three types of editing (i.e., teacher-editing, peer-editing, and self-editing), and two groups, on the learners' reduction of errors in four grammatical structures under investigation.

This study was an attempt to investigate the effect of teacher-editing, peer-editing, and self-editing on the improvement of grammatical accuracy in the learners' writing. The participants were selected through non-random accidental sampling. The Teacher-editing group received editing and implicit coded feedback from the teacher, and the peer-editing group received editing and implicit coded feedback from their peers, while in the self-editing group the participants themselves had to correct and edit their own writing. After ten sessions, the participants were

given the posttest grammatical questions similar in format to the one in the pretest and writing three paragraphs summary about the text which was prepared by the teacher. The data gathered from the pretest and posttest included accuracy scores for the writing production of four structures, and the average of all accuracy scores of four structures. Therefore, each participant had two scores; one score for grammatical questions, and their writing, as well as one average score. The analysis of the data is presented below.

The first question in this study concerned possible differences between the effect of teacher-editing, peer-editing, and self-editing on the improvement of university students grammatical accuracy in writing. Table 1 shows the adjusted means for the three groups. The mean score for teacher-editing group is 3.83 with a standard deviation of 0.75, higher than that for peer-editing group which is 2.50 with a standard deviation of 0.54 as well as self-editing group that is 0.83 with a standard deviation of 0.75.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the three groups

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teacher	6	3.8333	.75277	.30732	3.0433	4.6233
Peer	6	2.5000	.54772	.22361	1.9252	3.0748
Self	6	.8333	.75277	.30732	.0433	1.6233
Total	18	2.3889	1.41998	.33469	1.6828	3.0950

The multiple comparisons in Table 2 show the results for the three groups. The findings revealed important differences between the teacher-editing group and the peer-editing group ($F_{(5,15)}$ = 28.372 p < .012). Moreover, there is a significant mean difference of 1.33. According to Table 2 there is a significant difference between the teacher-editing group and self-editing group ($F_{(5,15)}$ = 28.372 p< .000). There is also a significant mean difference for the two groups ((I-J) = -3). This shows that the effect of teacher-editing is more than that of peer-editing and self-editing in the improvement of grammatical accuracy in the learners' writing.

Table 2: Multiple comparisons

(I) group	(J) group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
teacher	peer	1.33333	.39907	.012	.2968	2.36999
	self	3.00000	.39907	.000	1.9634	4.0366
peer	teacher	-1.33333	.39907	.012	-2.3699	-.2968
	self	1.66667	.39907	.002	.6301	2.7032
self	teacher	-3.00000	.39907	.000	-4.0366	-1.9634
	peer	-1.6667	.39907	.002	-2.7032	-.6301

As Table 3 shows, there is a significant difference among all the experimental groups, $F_{(5,15)}$ = 28.372 p < 0/000. It demonstrates that this difference is not due to chance but that the effect of treatment yielded group gains.

Table 3: ANOVA results

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	27.111	2	13.556	28.372	.000
Within Groups	7.167	15	.478		
Total	34.278	17			

These findings are compatible with the findings of previous studies that showed a greater effect for teacher-editing than that of peer-editing and self-editing on the improvement of grammatical accuracy in the learners' writing (Ferris, 2006; Ferris and Roberts, 2001). This findings are consistent with those reported by Paulus (1999), who studied the effect of teacher-editing and peer-editing on the reduction of grammatical errors in students' writing and found students did use teacher-editing more often than peer-editing in their revisions. The findings also are in line with those reported by Diab (2010) who showed the effect of peer-editing was greater than that of self-editing because error feedback provided by peers informed learners about incorrect grammatical structures in their writing. The findings, however, are incompatible with the findings of previous research studies that found a greater effect for peer-editing than that for teacher-editing on the improvement of grammatical accuracy in the learners' writing (Mendonca & Jonson, 1994).

Conclusion

This study investigated three types of editing and found higher gains for teacher-editing, in comparison to peer, and self-editing, although peer-editing and self-editing also led to some gains. Therefore, this study lends support for the use of teacher-editing. The outcome of the present study can be interpreted in the light of Ferris and Roberts' (2001) observation that underlining and coding errors are more effective than only underlining errors in revising grammatical errors. The present study can be considered as an additional support for teacher-editing.

The present study contributes to teaching pedagogy by encouraging teachers to use teacher-editing in their writing classroom and to focus on the correction of few language errors to bring about language development. Since this study was limited in term of its sample size, structures under investigation, and techniques of error correction, it seems necessary to carry out further research in this regard. Considering the fact that this study was limited to only one techniques of error correction, it is suggested that similar studies be conducted with other techniques of error correction (e.g., implicit versus explicit, coded versus un-coded feedback). Since the present study focused on only four structures in English, similar studies could examine the accuracy gains regarding other structures. Also, similar studies could have participants majoring in other fields of study. Finally, this study can be replicated with learners at higher and lower levels of language proficiency.

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