The Effect of Different Types of Teachers' Written Corrective Feedback (Evaluative and Formative) on Students' Writing Performance

Ehsan Mohammadinejad* and Majid Nemati

University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran

* Corresponding author's Email: e.mohammadinejad@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Debate about the value of providing corrective feedback on L2 Writing has been outstanding in recent years as Truscott, denied the effect of written corrective feedback and mentioned that feedback cannot be helpful, some others favor a role for written teacher feedback, the result of this study firstly showed that generally feedback is a helpful strategy in nature. The current study aimed at finding the effect of two different types of feedback (evaluative and formative) on students writing performance. This study has been conducted with 60 pre-intermediate English students who were selected by a placement test (first writing draft). The participants were divided into three groups of 20 students. Group one received direct (Evaluative) written corrective feedback; group two on the other hand received indirect (formative) type of feedback; group three received no feedback. Each participant completed four 120 word writing tasks during the 10 week period. Results showed that regardless of the type of linguistic error, groups that received formative and evaluative feedback were more successful than group that received no feedback, However the result of the present study confirmed that both evaluative and formative feedback were effective but the result also revealed that evaluative feedback follows more regular pattern of improvement and conclude that although formative feedback, based on its nature, raise the level of awareness among student writers, it may also cause confusion, on the other hand Iranian low proficiency student writers prefer the clarity of evaluative feedback which directly addresses their errors.
Key words: Corrective Feedback, Evaluative Feedback, Formative Feedback, Student Writing, Writing Performance

INTRODUCTION

In fact among various ways of improving writing it is strongly believed that feedback is one of the most efficient ways. A substantial amount of research has been done over the last two decades into the value of different kind of responses offered to students and their effects on student performance. ―Research investigating students reaction to teacher responses has shown that student generally expect and value their teachers 'feedback on their writing‖.

There are different ways of shaping feedback such as peer feedback, error correction, teachers comment including oral and written teacher feedback (evaluative and formative).

Regarding to peer feedback teachers may challenge its value within their particular context, or wonder how such a time consuming activity can be recorded with course or exam limitations. Students may have even more hesitations: they are in doubt about its purpose and advantages; they may feel naturally that only a better writer is qualified to judge their written work. they may feel that feedback received from classmates whose English level is more or less the same as there is a poor alternative to the real thing that is, the teachers 'red-penned notations .One distinction that has been made in the literature is between direct (Evaluative) and indirect (Formative) teacher feedback. (Ferris, 1995; Ferris and Hedgcock, 1998; Hendrickson, 1978; Ferris and Roberts, 2001).

A number of the scholars have challenged the idea of giving feedback as an effective technique in educational settings.

There are different kinds of feedbacks such as evaluative and formative. We see most teacher feedback to L2 writing falling somewhere on a continuum between two extremes.

Evaluative feedback, expresses to a writer how well the instructor's instructional priorities have been met. This type of feedback normally passes judgment on the draft in terms of some abstract, undefined idea of an ideal 'paper, reflects a preoccupation with sentence-level errors, and takes the form of directives for improvement on present or future assignments. Teachers who provide this sort of feedback may assume that addressing the curricular purpose of the assignment is enough to inspire ‗improvement'.

On the other hand, formative feedback (also sometimes referred to as facilitative or intermediate feedback) typically consists of feedback that takes an inquiring stance towards the text. Addressing the particular needs of individual writers, it often consists of questions intended to raise awareness of the reader's understanding of the meaning of the text as a means to encourage substantial revision on the next draft. This feedback is rooted in the assumption that writers create their own communicative purpose—the story or ideas that they wish to share—beyond the instructional purpose of the assignment that needs to

be tapped in order to motivate revision and then improvement. The features and implications of these two feedback approaches are explored in greater detail below. Both theory and research (Ferris, 2002) favor a role for written teacher feedback, but attempts to identify the kind of feedback that most effectively motivates writers to undertake draft revision have had mixed results.

According to some observers (Leki, 1990), teachers are worn out in their conflicting roles as collaborators in the writing process and evaluators of the final product.

In a widely-quoted study, Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam found that feedback on students'work probably has more effect on achievement than any other single factor (Black and Wiliam, 1998).

One of the things that puzzle many teachers is why students go on making the same mistakes even when those mistakes have been repeatedly pointed out to them. Yet not all mistakes are the same; sometimes they seem to be deeply ingrained, yet at other times students correct themselves with apparent ease (Harmer, 2007).

The researcher, as a language teacher, has observed a lot of progress in students writing that has been achieved by the means of providing feedback and analyzing students 'reactions to different kinds of them. And based on the idea of categorizing feedback into evaluative (imperative) and formative (questioning, raising awareness statements) it occurred to the researcher that it would be of a great value and significance if it was possible to give preference to one of them and applying the result of the study in real classroom contexts.

Research Question: -Is there any difference between types of corrective feedback (evaluative and formative?)

with regards to EFL learner's linguistic errors?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants and instructional context: This study has been conducted with 60 pre-intermediate English students at Islamic Azad University (Bandarabbas Branch) who were selected by a placement test (first writing draft). The reason for selecting this student level is the fact that unlike most error correction studies to date that have focused on more advanced learners in academic setting, this study wanted to measure lower level students which seems to have more difficulties in using grammatical items and normally have poorer level of accuracy, so the researcher decided to conduct the research with 60 pre-intermediate university students.

Ages ranged from early twenties to late fifties, but the majority was in their late twenties and early thirties.

Data collection: The participants were divided into three groups of 20 students. The same amount of instruction and time was spent teaching grammar and essay writing in each of three groups. Group one received direct (Evaluative) written corrective feedback in the form of imperative judgment on the portfolios; group two on the other hand received indirect (formative) type of feedback in the form of questioning, raising awareness statements and group three received no feedback. Each participant completed four 120 word writing tasks during the 10 week period (weeks 2, 4, 6, 10). Each writing task was of a similar type –historical compare and contrast type essay which vary in content but which yet provided participants with the chance of using targeted linguistic forms which are student's difficulties in using prepositions, simple present and simple past tenses.

Direct (evaluative) written feedback took the form of full, explicit correction above the underlined errors. Indirect (formative) feedback took the form of suggestions, raising awareness questions related to errors done by student writers at the bottom of the page.

Between the writing tasks, no explicit instruction on the targeted linguistic errors was given by the researcher, but some form of instruction was given by the classroom teachers because they form part of the curriculum at this level. Also, it was not possible to control for any additional input or production practice that may have occurred outside of class time and that was initiated by the students themselves.

Targeted linguistic errors: The three linguistic errors chosen by the researchers to be targeted in the research were those which occurred most frequently during the first writing task. It was decided that the three most recurrent error categories would be focused on this study. The range of error categories are presented in table1. As table1 reveals, the greatest difficulty occurred with the use of prepositions (29.23% of all errors), followed by the past simple tense (11.96% of the total errors) and simple present tense (11.45% of total errors).

Data analysis procedure: Each participant was exposed to all combination of levels of two qualitative within participants factors; (1) linguistic error at three levels (prepositions, past simple tense, definite article), and (2) time at four levels (week 2, 4, 6, 10). In addition, there was a between participant factor: feedback at three levels (evaluative, formative and none). For each combination, participants were measured on quantitative variable: accuracy performance. This was calculated as the percentage of correct usage of each

targeted linguistic form. For example, three correct uses of the linguistic form Simple Past from ten obligatory occasions gave an accuracy performance of 30%. In order to investigate interactions between factors as well as the effects of individual factors, a two way repeated-measures ANOVA was chosen as an appropriate statistical procedure.

Additionally, if a test revealed statistical significance, post hoc tests to evaluate differences among specific means were also calculated.

RESULTS

Firstly, the researcher was interested in seeing if there was a different effect for any of the feedback options on the targeted error categories when they were considered as a single group rather than as three separate error categories. A repeated measures two way ANOVA test revealed a substantial main effect for feedback f (2, 57) = 28.48 p<0.05 partial eta square =0.5. AsFig.2below indicates that typical performance of the participants over the 10 week period differed according to each feedback options.

A repeated measures two way ANOVA test confirmed that the effect of interaction between feedback and time was statistically significant, Wilks Lambda= 0.56 f (22, 94) =

13.74, p<0.05 partial eta square=0.76. A repeated measure two way ANOVA test also showed that time was statistically significant Wilks Lambda=0.18 f (11,47)=19.38 p<0.05 partial eta square=0.81. For preposition, the average accuracy

performance did not vary according to the type of feedback provided. The highest average score was for the group that received no treatment (none), time 1 and the lowest average score was for Evaluative feedback, time1. There was no significant difference in 4 times of the group that received no treatment (none), also there was no significant difference between times 1 to 4 in group that received formative and evaluative feedback. In general preposition didn't have a regular improvement pattern.

The highest average score for simple past is in evaluative time4 and the lowest average score in none time3. There was a significant difference in participants who received evaluative feedback in four weeks and this type of feedback caused improvement in their accuracy, but those who received formative feedback did not have a regular pattern of improvement, although a level of improvement is observable between weeks 4 and 10 it doesn't mean higher accuracy in students writing. The interaction of time and feedback type also was not significant. . The group that received feedback didn't have a regular pattern of improvement as well.

Regarding simple present, the highest average score was in evaluative feedback, tme4, and the lowest score is for formative, time2. The results show that both formative and evaluative feedback caused improvement in student's accuracy, but the group that received no feedback was not successful and this type of feedback made no statistical difference.
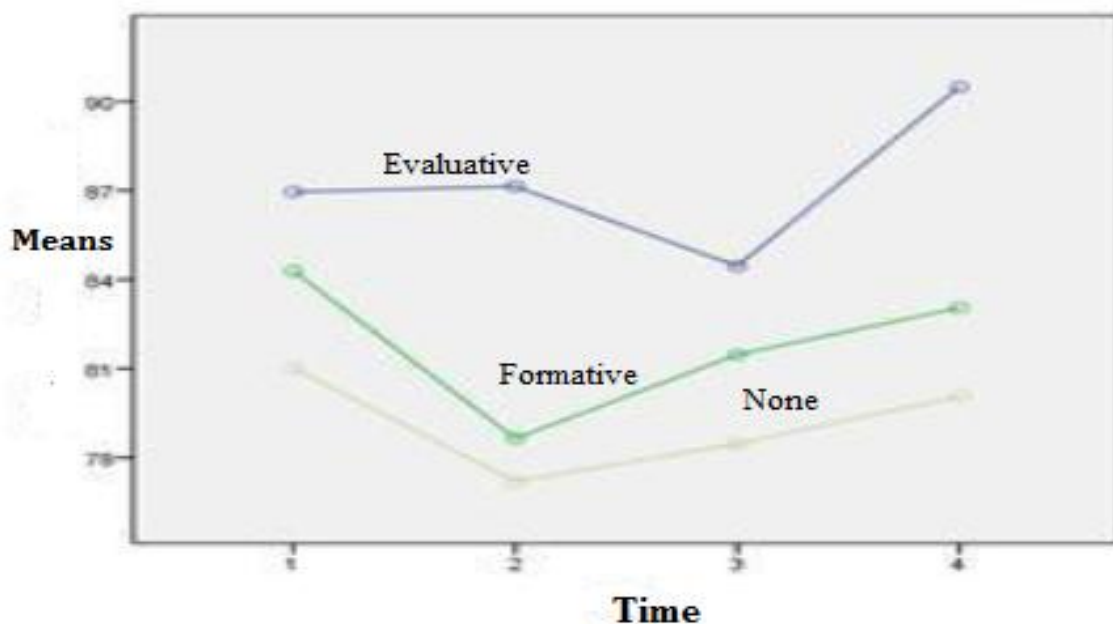

Fig. 1. Mean performance for types of feedback irrespective of linguistic form

Table 1. Mean performance score (percentage of correct usages) for preposition

Group	Feedback	Mean	SD	N
T1pre	Evaluative	80.20	7.578	20
	Formative	80.65	4.392	20
	None	83.50	5.482	20
	Total	81.45	6.046	60
T2pre	Evaluative	74.10	6.672	20
	Formative	80.90	5.776	20
	None	79.50	7.435	20
	Total	78.17	7.155	60
T3pre	Evaluative	73.30	7.049	20
	Formative	82.70	5.526	20
	None	83.85	6.158	20
	Total	79.95	7.795	60
T4pre	Evaluative	79.65	9.751	20
	Formative	78.80	5.606	20
	None	79.20	6.279	20
	Total	79.22	7.319	60

Table2. Mean performance score (percentage of correct usages) for simple past

Group	Feedback	Mean	SD	N
T1past	Evaluative	89.15	5.896	20
	Formative	91.25	6.950	20
	None	77.55	8.357	20
	Total	85.98	9.282	60
T2past	Evaluative	93.40	5.374	20
	Formative	83.55	8.513	20
	None	78.80	9.801	20
	Total	85.25	10.059	60
T3past	Evaluative	93.10	4.217	20
	Formative	88.75	6.812	20
	None	69.45	7.864	20
	Total	83.77	12.166	60
T4past	Evaluative	95.70	3.827	20
	Formative	89.35	7.936	20
	None	82.30	6.967	20
	Total	89.12	8.431	60
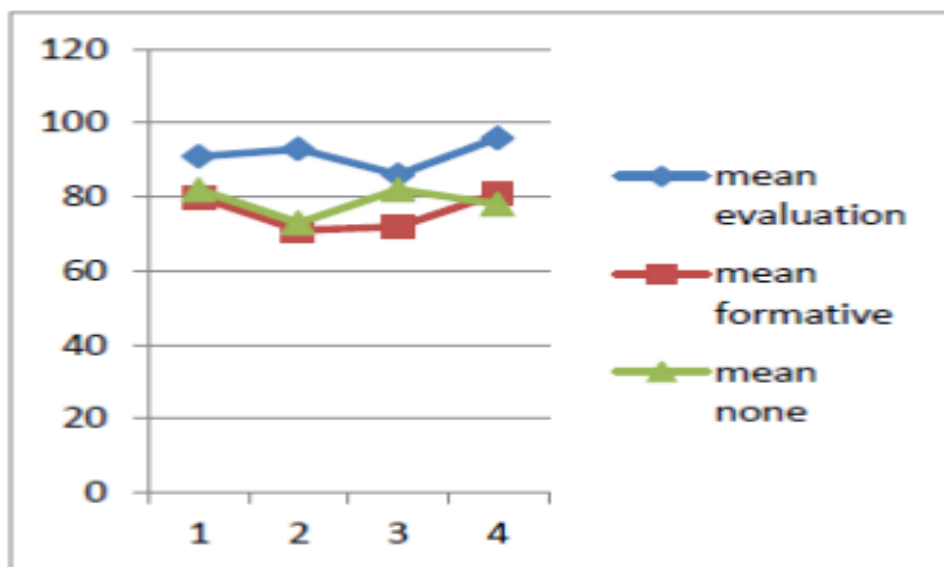
Fig. 2. Past simple performance score by feedback

Table3. Mean performance score (percentage of correct usages) for simple present

Group	Feedback	Mean	SD	N
T1present	Evaluative	91.50	6.645	20
	Formative	80.95	6.909	20
	None	82.00	4.984	20
	Total	84.82	7.778	60
T2present	Evaluative	93.90	5.665	20
	Formative	71.50	7.164	20
	None	73.30	9.958	20
	Total	79.57	12.799	60
T3present	Evaluative	86.95	8.684	20
	Formative	72.95	6.817	20
	None	82.10	5.711	20
	Total	80.67	9.166	60
T4present	Evaluative	96.10	4.898	20
	Formative	81.00	8.278	20
	None	78.70	7.760	20
	Total	85.27	10.477	60
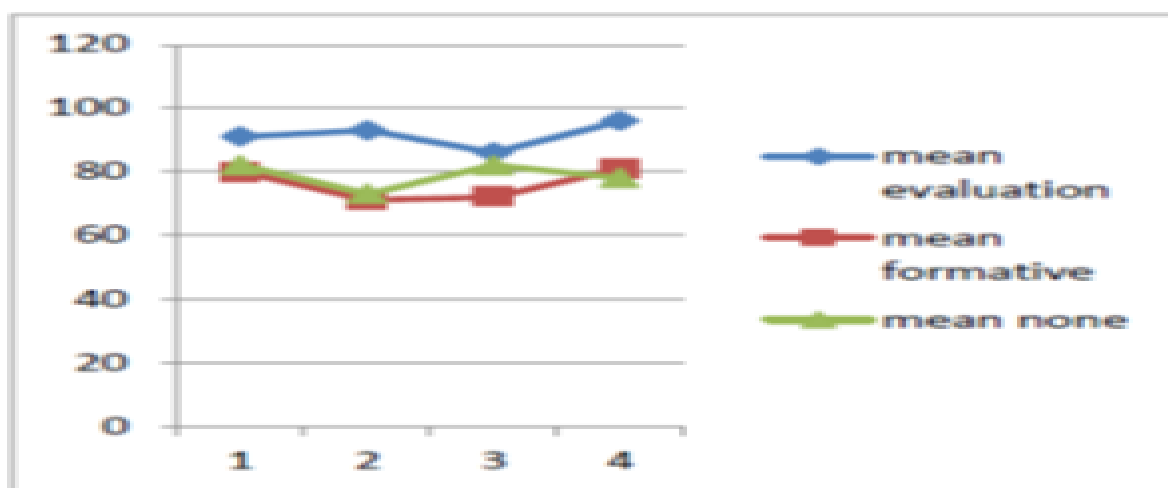
Fig. 3. Simple present performance score by feedback

DISCUSSION

Although some scholars denied the effect of written corrective feedback and believe that feedback cannot be helpful, some others (Ferris, 2002) favor a role for written teacher feedback, the result of this study firstly showed that generally feedback is a helpful strategy by nature.

This study aimed at investigating the effects of different written corrective feedbacks (evaluative or formative) and tried to give preference to one of them by analyzing three linguistic items including prepositions, simple past tense and simple present tense during four weeks.

It seems that formative feedback may raise the level of consciousness in students, and this raising awareness may lead to a higher level of accuracy, the result of the present study proved that however raising consciousness through formative feedback may be helpful in some levels e.g. formative feedback was partially effective on simple past but this effect was not

as strong as the evaluative one, it may cause a level of confusion for low proficiency or pre-intermediate students, for instance regarding simple present and preposition, formative feedback didn't have a regular pattern of improvement during 4 times and showed fluctuation and instability, on the other hand results showed that for this level of students, evaluative feedback was more efficient, as the result showed, regardless of preposition category, evaluative feedback followed a regular pattern of improvement for both simple past and simple present categories which makes it possible to say clarity of evaluative feedback which directs the students linguistic errors may openly reduce the level of confusion at least for pre- intermediate student writers, but generally it does not mean that evaluative feedback is the best way of providing teachers corrective comments on students pieces of writing, may be a combination of evaluative and formative or any other sort of feedback is more efficient

but this issue needs to be investigated in further researches.

The present study gathered to answer following question: To what extent does the type of corrective feedback (Evaluative and Formative) on linguistic errors determine accuracy performance in new pieces of writing?

It was found that Iranian pre-intermediate students expect and appreciate their teachers comment on their pieces of writing that means teachers' corrective feedback has a positive effect on their next drafts. It was also found that some linguistic errors are more treatable than others e.g. in this study both formative and evaluative feedback were more efficient for simple past and simple present than prepositions, and average score did not vary according to the type of feedback provided for this error category, but we can see a noticeable change in the level of accuracy as a result of giving evaluative and formative on two other categories.

However the result of the present study confirmed that both evaluative and formative feedback were effective but the result also revealed that evaluative feedback follows more regular pattern of improvement and conclude that although formative feedback, based on its nature, raise the level of awareness among student writers, it may also cause confusion, on the other hand Iranian low proficiency student writers prefer the clarity of evaluative feedback which directly addresses their errors.

To sum up, evaluative feedback reduced the number of targeted linguistic errors among selected group of student's more than formative feedback.

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