

The Effect of Direct Written Feedback on the Paragraph Writing Accuracy of the Students Focused on English Majors at Bonga College of Education

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Abstract

Problem: This study aimed at investigating the effect of direct written feedback on college students' paragraph writing accuracy, focusing on Bonga College of Education. **Method:** The research design employed in this study was quasi-experimental. Data were collected through written tests from fifty -four second-year English major students. In order to analyze the data, a quantitative method was employed. The analysis of the quantitative data was done using SPSS version 20. For analyzing the data, descriptive statistics, independent samples t-tests, and paired samples t-tests were employed. **Result:** The findings of the study revealed that direct written feedback significantly improved students' paragraph writing accuracy as a result of the treatment. The value of the obtained level of significance for the experimental group had a significant effect. The result of the control group revealed that there was no significant difference in paragraph writing accuracy. This means that the conventional way of giving feedback did not make a significant difference in the students' writing accuracy. **Conclusion:** Based on the findings of this study, it is recommended that English Teachers should feel confident that providing direct written feedback in writing classroom. Also, the students should put into practice the written feedback that is provided by the teachers to improve their skill.

Keywords: *Written Feedback, Direct Written Feedback, Paragraph Writing Accuracy.*

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Writing is essential for intellectual growth (McDonough and Shaw, 1993). The value of being able to write effectively increases as students' engage in practicing writing skills. Writing is seen as closely linked and as an indication that students have mastered the productive skills required for college work (Weigle, 2002). In the academic context, the students find that their actual needs in terms of writing go way beyond the minimum entrance requirements. Thus, writing requires much more care, patience, skill, and cooperation in its learning. With regard to this, Hedge (1988) explains that effective writing requires a number of things: a high degree of organization in the development of ideas, a high degree of accuracy to avoid ambiguity, careful choice of vocabulary, etc.

Therefore, written feedback has a crucial benefit, and it plays a great role in learning writing skills. Thus, one of the goals of written feedback is to help students improve their writing accuracy to the point where they recognize what is expected of them as writers. This is because feedback is meant to provide students with accurate and helpful information regarding

the location of errors in their texts, the type of errors, and how to correct them. If feedback is not provided timely and appropriately, students may have trouble understanding teachers' feedback, fixing errors, and improving their writing competence (Brookhart, 2010).

Freedman (1987) believes that if students fail to perform well in writing, further written feedback is necessary to help them take corrective action on their writing to improve it and reach an acceptable level of proficiency. This means that feedback is a crucial factor in improving the learners' writing accuracy. It includes correcting the students' errors and giving explicit suggestions to shape their future writing. In this regard, **Swain (2000)** states that written corrective feedback (WCF), as an explicit teaching procedure, can contribute to mastery of grammar and help learners improve accuracy in their writing.

Teacher-written feedback is effective for students' writing accuracy when it is given to them in the process of writing. Students will recognize and identify the error that they have made through teacher feedback so that they can write better. Truscott (1996, 2007) argues that classroom time should not be spent on grammar instruction and correction because it is ineffective in cases where the teachers' corrective feedback focuses on the nature of inter-language development; and this does not fit to students' developmental sequences; even if it is effective, it is likely to be beneficial only to the development of explicit or metalinguistic knowledge and it is unlikely to affect students' implicit or procedural knowledge since language learning is a complex and gradual process. Yet, to be more effective, learners should be encouraged to analyse and evaluate themselves as opposed to receiving direct teacher feedback.

Research Aims and Questions

This study primary goal was to investigate the effect of direct written feedback on college students' paragraph writing accuracy, and answering the following objective:-

- ❖ To find out the effect of direct written feedback on the paragraph writing accuracy of the students in focus;

Research Approach and Design

The study design was a quasi-experimental and used quantitative methods for data analysis. Therefore, the data were collected through a written test from fifty –four second year English major students. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 20. To achieve the stated purpose, a pretest was administered to the target group to check their homogeneity. Then the researcher assigned two raters from volunteer English teachers and trained them for two hours on how to rate students' paragraphs. The extent of the agreement was checked by using Kappa statistics.

The researcher first developed a training manual on direct written feedback for the experimental group before beginning the intervention. The experimental groups were instructed on writing for three hours a week for a total of twelve weeks, the instruction focused on vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics according to the selected rubric. Similarly, the control group considered writing for three hours a week for a period of twelve weeks, but they received feedback that was more conventional than direct written feedback. At the end of the experiment, both groups involved in the study did a post-test, which had similar writing tasks with the same structure, quality, and difficulty level as the one given in the pre-test.

Participants of the Study

The participants of the study are Bonga College of Education English major students. The college offers regular programs for students majoring in the English language. Therefore, English-major students were used as the population for the study. According to the information obtained from English department 56 students (group one 28 and group two 28) in the Department of English during the academic year of 2023. Of these, all students were randomly assigned to experimental (N = 28) and control (N = 28).

Sample Size and Sampling Technique

Purposive sampling technique was used to select the research site and the English Department. This is because there is only one teacher-training college in the Southwest Ethiopia region. In addition, the researcher is familiar with both the research environment and the target audience. Knowing the research site and the participants are crucial aspects of quantitative investigations (Dörnyei, 2007). Therefore, the target respondents selected for this study were (54) Bonga College of Education English major students.

Data Collection Instrument

Paragraph Writing Test

In order to achieve the study's objectives, the researcher developed an expert-validated writing test prior to the intervention. Both the control and experimental sets took the test in their respective classrooms. Each student wrote a paragraph on the topics of "college life" and "autobiography" in the allotted 55 minutes. Then, the two groups of participants wrote paragraphs on the given topic as a pretest (college life). The pre-test data were used to explain the homogeneity of the students in the two groups (experimental and control) in terms of their writing accuracy. Then, two raters rated and valued the participants' texts. In the final phase, the researcher used posttest paragraphs (autobiography) that were similar in structure, quality, and difficulty to those of the pretest. For the purpose of investigating the influence of treatment on the writing accuracy, both the pre- and post-tests data were evaluated and compared.

Data Collection Procedures

The procedure followed two phases. The first phase was that the target population (the experimental and control groups) took a pre-test. This was used to explain the homogeneity of the students in terms of their writing accuracy. In the second phase, to see the effect of the intervention (direct written feedback) post-test was administered.

Data Analysis

Quantitative analysis is carried out to determine the differential outcomes of feedback treatment (Sharma, 1980; Homburg, 1984; Hirano, 1991; Henry, 1996; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). To examine the influence of direct written feedback a comparison was made. Both groups were given a pretest and posttest after the test, the students' scores (grades) were averaged by the two raters; comparisons were made between pretest and posttest within group and between group differences.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Findings on the Paragraph Writing Accuracy before Intervention

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics Results of the Pre-Test

Group Statistics					
	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
pre-test	experimental	28	49.4643	7.17497	1.35594
	control	28	47.8214	5.29538	1.00073

Table 2: Independent Samples T-Test Result on the Paragraph Writing Accuracy (pretest)

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
pre-test	Equal variances assumed	3.168	.081	.975	54	.334	1.64286	1.68524	-1.73585	5.02156
	Equal variances not assumed			.975	49.684	.334	1.64286	1.68524	-1.74259	5.02830

As demonstrated in Table one, the treatment group had the, mean value for paragraph writing accuracy before the intervention was 49.4643, whereas the mean value of the control group was 47.8214. It was found that the outcomes of the two groups were nearly the same in paragraph writing accuracy. This implies that the two groups were comparable in terms of on writing accuracy before the intervention. Besides, to further find out if two groups were homogenous in on paragraph writing accuracy before the intervention, an independent sample t-test was conducted (Table 2). According to the independent sample t-test result shows that there was no statistically significant difference among the two groups on paragraph writing accuracy (p -value = .081), which is greater than 0.05. This implies that differences in on paragraph writing accuracy between the two groups after the intervention can be attributed to the effect of the treatment (direct written feedback in the treatment group).

Findings from Students Paragraph Writing Accuracy (Post-Test)

Between-Group Differences in the Paragraph Writing Accuracy (post-test)

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics Results of the Post-Test

Group Statistics					
	group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
post-test revised	experimental	28	56.0357	5.03493	.95151
	control	28	46.8393	3.65922	.69153

Table 4: Independent Samples T-Test Result on Paragraph Writing Accuracy of the Students (Post-test)

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
post-test	Equal variances assumed	5.350	.025	7.818	54	.000	9.19643	1.17626	6.83817	11.55469
	Equal variances not assumed			7.818	49.301	.000	9.19643	1.17626	6.83301	11.55985

Table 3 reveals that the average writing accuracy of students was 56.0357 and 46.8393, respectively. These results indicate that remarkable differences in writing accuracy were found between the two groups after the intervention (direct written feedback in the experimental group). In addition, an independent samples t-test was performed to see if the results of the experiment revealed any differences between the two groups in terms of how paragraph was organized accurately ; (p-value = .025) at significant level of $p < 0.05$, which is less than 0.05. This finding is the result of the treatment (direct written feedback) from which the students in the experimental group benefited. Therefore, direct written feedback had a significant positive influence on the organization of the students' paragraphs, as indicated in Table 4.

Within-Group Differences on the Paragraph Writing Accuracy

Table 5: Comparing means of pre and post-test of experimental group

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Experimental	pre - post-test	-6.57143	4.24202	.80167	-8.21631	-4.92655	-8.197	27	.000

Table 6: Comparing means of pre and post-test of control group

Paired Samples Test									
		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Control	pre - post-test	.98214	5.64618	1.06703	-1.20722	3.17150	.920	27	.365

To compare the students' writing accuracy within groups, a paired sample test was run. The result of the analysis in Table 5 indicates that the experimental group's significant value is 0.00, indicating that accuracy-wise they significantly differed statistically ($p < 0.05$). The intervention was shown to have a significant positive impact on the writing accuracy of the students in the experimental group. The results for the control group in Table 6 indicate that the significant value is .365, which indicates there was no significant change in means utilized

before and after the test for this group ($P > 0.05$). This implies that the conventional method of feedback used with the control group did not significantly improve the students' paragraph. Generally, this finding reveals that the experimental group significantly improved their writing accuracy as a result of the treatment, i.e., learning to write through direct written feedback.

DISCUSSION

In this study, influence of direct written feedback on student's paragraph writing accuracy was measured on validated writing tests. According to Brown (2001), providing direct written feedback helps learners achieve mastery of vocabulary, mechanical, grammatical and syntactic forms. Hence, teachers should use direct written feedback to enable students to master accuracy in writing. In this study, the experimental group's value on writing accuracy supports Brown's (2001) ideas. The study found that direct written feedback improved the experimental group students' writing accuracy, suggesting that the alternative hypothesis, "Students who receive direct written feedback on their writing accuracy significantly better than students who receive feedback through the conventional method," is accepted. This finding confirms Hashemnezhad's (2012) view that direct written feedback improves students' writing accuracy. Bitchener and Knoch (2010) believe that direct written feedback is tops effective than other types of feedback. Chandler (2003) maintains that DWF is more immediate, reduces confusion, gives the learners the information, they need to resolve complex errors, and offers explicit feedback on a learning point. This statement sounds logical because when students get supportive feedback on their work, they most likely feel increased motivation. Thus, it can be concluded that direct written feedback is an effective tool for enhancing students' writing accuracy. According to Truscott's analysis of research by Kepner (1991), Semke (1984), and Sheppard (1992), written feedback had little impact on students' paragraph writing. However, the fact that this study proved that direct written feedback significantly improved students' writing accuracy, helps the students revise their draft properly.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions have been reached in light of the data and the study's goals: The results showed that, previous to the intervention, the experimental and control groups' writing performance in terms of writing accuracy was quite equivalent. This demonstrates that before the treatments, paragraph writing accuracy of the two groups were comparable. Yet, the results demonstrate that there was significant improvement in writing accuracy between the two groups following the intervention. The students' writing was grammatically correct, and most vocabulary of the students' paragraph is readable. Students' appropriate use of mechanics among the sentence was appropriate for the topic. Most of the students improve their writing accuracy through direct written feedback. Their writing was fulfilled by a correct statement. This can occur as a result of learning to write through direct written feedback.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As can be seen from the findings, direct written feedback had a significant influence on writing accuracy and can lead to successful teaching and learning of writing. As well as enhancing students' writing skills, it can be a useful technique and helps teachers better manage their class schedule. Therefore the English teacher can apply direct written feedback to achieve the best result from the students' writing. Additionally, it is recommended that the same English teachers should regularly provide direct written feedback on student's paragraph and

the students should also put into practice the written feedback that is provided by the teachers to improve their writing skill. The feedback should not be a one-time activity from the teacher to the learner. Finally, curriculum developers, syllabus designers, teaching materials writers, and the government should incorporate direct written feedback as a form of pedagogy into the curriculum.

Abbreviations

DWF..... Direct Written Feedback

EFL.....English as a Foreign Language

WCF..... Written Corrective Feedback

Declaration

- 1. Availability of Data and Materials:** The dataset used and analyzed in this study is available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.
- 2. Competing Interest:** The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest associated with this research.
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- 4. Authors Contributions:**

The correspondent author, Masresha Mekuria, identified, conceptualized, collected, analyzed, and developed the research issue. Tekle Ferede helped the correspondent author by conceptualizing, analyzing data, developing, evaluating, and approving the research issue. Dagne Tiruneh also analyzed the data, evaluated it, and approved the research issue. The correspondent author, Masresha Mekuria, did the write-up with close supervision and support from TF and DT, and all the authors actively contributed in manuscript development.

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