

A Stitch In Time Saves Nine: Fostering Student Creativity In Writing Through Feedback

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Article Info	Abstract
Article History Received: April 20, 2021 Accepted: November 30, 2021	<i>The purpose of this study is to look at the topic of creativity in writing through the use of feedback from EFL teachers in their classrooms. In Jordan, a sample of ten EFL instructors was interviewed and observed. Nine participating instructors expressed their thoughts on using feedback to enhance students' EFL writing originality, based on the researcher's interviews. Eight instructors utilized feedback in their courses to enhance their originality in EFL writing, according to the researcher's observations. It is suggested that future study look at why some instructors opt not to use creative writing activities (feedback) in their classes. Future research should look into other schools where the Ministry of Education's policy on creativity in writing is implemented to see if comparable training is being followed and how successful it is. A comparison of public and private schools would emphasize the disparities in instruction and provide valuable information on how to improve students' writing originality. This study also suggests that an experimental study be conducted to assess the effects of utilizing methods (such as feedback) to improve students' writing creativity, and that a modified TTCT be used as a pre- and post-test to do so.</i>
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Introduction

Creativity, according to the behaviorist paradigm, is an individual's response to external stimuli. This perspective suggests that creativity can be taught and aided through stimulation, reinforcement, and reaction (Craft, 2001). In creativity assessment, behavioural IQ test concepts have been widely applied. In this context, a reinforcer is "anything" that reinforces the correct answer, such as a complimentary verbal phrase, a good grade, or a sense of greater achievement or satisfaction (Krashen, 1982). According to the affective-filter hypothesis, a second language learner's emotions act as changeable filters that allow or prohibit acquisition input requirements. Also, according to Krashen (1994), learners who are highly driven, self-assured, have a positive self-image, and have minimal anxiety have a better chance of succeeding in learning a second language than those who are not.

When it comes to writing creativity, researchers have emphasized the need of a helpful learning environment and feedback. In an online community, Stein et al. (2013) looked at the impact of a coaching and feedback intervention as well as social presence on higher-order thinking. Coaching was placed before the conversation, and feedback was given right away. The findings showed that in a group receiving coaching and feedback, the frequency of higher-order thinking would grow more over time than in a group that did not get coaching and feedback. The findings showed that the Community of Inquiry framework may be used for more than only course design, facilitation, and evaluation, and can also be used as a coaching guide.

Literature Review

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Vygotsky's work was primarily concerned with the transmission of human culture and the projection of pictures. Vygotsky, like Bruner, focuses on how language influences learning and how social contact improves learning. Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD) proposes that the student is guided to a higher level of performance by the assistance of his peers and teacher - a similar basis to Bruner's scaffolding learning. In his ZPD, Vygotsky proposed a model for the learning-development link, positing that development is a continuum of behavioural growth.

In this regard, a teacher's behavior supports a learner's learning and development through a process known as scaffolding, in which the teacher provides instruction, materials in the learning environment, and other experiences to reinforce the learner and allow him to acquire and progress toward new competencies (Berk & Winsler, 1995).

Behavioral development has two stages on a continuum between assisted and autonomous performance: learner achievement with the assistance of a competent instructor and learner achievement with

the support of a knowledgeable teacher. The student's independent acquisition is aided by the teacher's direct support, and the Zone of Proximal Development increases as the learner progresses toward independence (Bodraive & Leong, 1996).

Along with problem solving, Vygotsky's ZPD has been broadened to cover performance in other competency areas. The goal of teaching is to assist the student in this zone, as well as to offer inspiration and support for success in areas outside their present skills. Learners need techniques and approaches that give them something to think about and write about when it comes to writing creativity. Learners' writing and interactions contribute to their intellectual growth, particularly their literacy development, when they are encouraged to think and write (Dyson, 1995).

This is why it's critical to create a classroom climate that encourages students to work together. The teacher's responsibility is to encourage a student's involvement with a project, including how that learner comes up with improvisation ideas and what he chooses to do with them. Furthermore, Vygotsky's theory and understanding of how social contact affects learner development provide support for not providing learners with static tasks. Learners' intellectual growth is not challenged by static activities. The ZPD, in particular, establishes the foundation for a number of modern educational pedagogical approaches.

ZPD is a sociocultural theory that is not new in terms of its application to cognitive and linguistic development, but it is new in terms of its application to second language acquisition (Schinke-Llano, 1995). Peer teaching, according to Schinke-Llano (1995), plays an important role in fostering collaborative learning by transforming the classroom into a place where the instructor is a source of both information and help, and the learner is appreciated for his contributions.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development made a significant contribution to understanding the social origins of higher mental processes by demonstrating the gap between a learner's capacity without aid and his ability with assistance from others (peers or teachers). This scaffolding includes task structuring through teaching, small group discussion, modeling, reflection, and feedback until the learner is capable of learning on his own (Krause, Bochner, & Duchesne, 2006).

In other words, the foundation of effective teaching is built on developing functions (Shayer, 2003), which involves instructors providing learning settings in which instruction directs growth. As a result, education should be focused on learning how to learn, developing skills and methods for continuous learning, and creating meaningful learning experiences that are relevant to the learner's life and development as a person (Williams, Watts, MacLeod, & Mathews, 1997).

Researchers have stressed the need of a supportive learning environment and feedback when it comes to writing creativity. Stein et al. (2013) evaluated the influence of a coaching and feedback intervention, as well as social presence, on higher-order thinking in an online community. Coaching took conducted prior to the lecture, and immediate feedback was offered. The findings revealed that a group that received coaching and feedback had a higher frequency of higher-order thinking over time than a group that did not get coaching and criticism. The findings revealed that the Community of Inquiry paradigm could be used for more than only course design, facilitation, and evaluation. It could also be used as a guide for coaching.

Peer feedback, according to Jiang (2012), is an important activity that allows writing professors to help students get better feedback on their works and to provide students practice with many skills that are important for their writing growth. Peer feedback is one of the most successful writing strategies evaluated in EFL classes. Various researchers have looked into this problem using various approaches and in various circumstances. Pre-peer feedback and post-peer feedback can be used in some EFL classes to test activities that cater to peer feedback.

According to Morris (2008), peer feedback can assist a student in moving from an actual to a prospective level. To promote language acquisition, peer feedback necessitates a collaborative discourse in which two sides debate meaning (Rollinson, 2005). Peer feedback allows students to negotiate meaning, offer comments and recommendations, and make adjustments in order to better understand their own strengths and limitations (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Methods

Interviews and observations were used on a convenience sample of ten EFL teachers in Jordan in order to fulfill the study's goals. The semi-structured interview was used in this study because it is "one of the most powerful methods in which we strive to comprehend our fellow human beings," according to Creswell & Creswell (2017). (p. 645). The researcher in this study chose the non-participant observation role, in which she sat on the perimeter or in another favorable location (e.g., the rear of the classroom) to observe and document the phenomena under investigation. The replies were coded as follows: teacher X – for example, (TA) stands for 'Teacher A.' In the interviews, same coding was also used. The analysis of the qualitative data is described in the next paragraphs, with the names of the informants obscured by the use of the aforementioned coding.

Results and discussion

Results of interviews

The theme that emerged from the replies of the teachers was feedback. Teachers believed that employing feedback techniques was essential in teaching writing, according to the analysis of interview data. Nine teachers shared their perspectives on the use of feedback as a method for encouraging students' EFL writing creativity. The professors emphasized the significance of providing students with feedback while educating them about writing. Depending on when and what sort of feedback is required, the individual who is capable of providing the most effective feedback on writing may differ. Depending on the scenario, peers or teachers may be approached for comments. The following are the teachers' perspectives on the strategy. "Students want feedback, particularly during writing tasks," TC said. If the teacher waits until the pupils finish their writing assignments, it will be too late, and the student will become discouraged" (TC, Interview, November 7, 2018). Other teachers, such as TJ, believed that feedback was an effective strategy to use in EFL classrooms, and that "Teachers should familiarize themselves and train their students on how to use feedback in an effective manner to achieve both proficiency and competence as English writers" if it was used correctly (TJ, Interview, November 27, 2018). TF thought that peer feedback might improve the level of conversation and, as a result, the quality of learning in the classroom. He stated that:

When students are given the responsibility to edit their peer's papers and correct them, they appear more confident and motivated in their writing courses. This is because feedback could enable writers to connect with a broader range of audience and not just confine the connection with the teacher. It could also encourage and facilitate resource and thoughts exchange, and allow students to assess and evaluate their peer's works ...(TF, Interview, November 13, 2018).

Some others like TG took the matter further and advocated e-feedback. TG depended on e-feedback, which transfers the concepts of oral response into the electronic arena (TG, Interview, November 25, 2018). Additionally, TH gave students feedback through effective instructions.

It is crucial to clarify to students the mistakes they make in an encouraging manner. For instance, a teacher may say that the draft is somewhat unclear and if the student can write it in a more straightforward and understandable words, readers would appreciate it more (TH, Interview, November, 11, 2018).

Along the same manner, TE gave feedback via drafts handed back to students with positive feedback written on them.

A good teacher refrains from just pointing out the student's mistakes and correcting work with a red pen while embarrassing the student in front of the class, but instead, advises the student how to make the draft better. A good teacher offers ideas and encouragement to enrich the student's learning and to boost their creative juices (TE, Interview, November, 19, 2018).

Many of the teachers, however, responded that feedback was important, although responses were varied. Teachers reported using e-feedback, peer feedback and immediate feedback. They were convinced that feedback was one of the most effective strategies to be used in classes and it also benefited them, as teachers, to know the level of the students, and provided them with this information in a timely manner. However, TB complained of being unable to use the strategy. TB stated that he did not use any type of feedback owing to constraints in time. He claimed that there is not enough time to provide feedback to the students.... It is a waste of time.... There is a problem with feedback as it generally concentrates on grammatical and spelling errors instead of content (TB, Interview, November, 4, 2018).

He also commented on peer feedback saying:

... peer assessment is not relevant for beginner students, as their writing skills are not fully formed to generate reasonable comments. Letting the students make comments in this period of time is very risky for their and others writing development as they may give inaccurate and incorrect comments (TB, Interview, November, 4, 2018).

Results of Observations

Eight teachers employed feedback in their classes to maximize student creativity in EFL writing in this sub-theme and some even used peer feedback. Specifically, TD solicited his students' participation in learning from each other. He told his students about the benefit of feedback and told them that by helping each other, the students would achieve a greater understanding and appreciation of experiences. Students were observed engaging in collaborative work, and the teacher gave them instant feedback when needed (TD, Observation 1, December 11, 2018).

Similarly, TH was observed giving the students positive feedback at every phase of the task at hand. He used one-on-one conversations to assist the students in improving their writing abilities (TH, Observation2, December 17, 2018).

The observed teachers also employed multiple drafts coupled with feedback. The majority of the observed teachers employed actual feedback in many ways. Some used peer feedback while others used teacher feedback and even e-feedback. In particular, TG conducted an in-class writing activity, which involved writing a thank-you note, first by allowing students to write the draft on the computer, then by discussing the drafts with him, and having them make revisions on the next draft. The students were allowed to make revisions through the use of computers (TG, Observation1, December 12, 2018). In sum, the teachers believed in the strategy's ability to improve students' EFL writing creativity.

Along the same manner, TE used peer feedback in his classes. Students were asked to work in small groups or in pairs to make assessment activities for each other in the classroom. Students were asked to find problems in the essay they were given, to write some crucial comments, to provide scores and to give their signatures on the project when they finished their reviews (TE, Observation3, December 24, 2018).

Similarly, TJ briefed students with instructions prior to feedback. In the first round of review, students were required to make comments on the content, after that they were required to focus on general grammar, mechanics and vocabulary use. After the students finished commenting, the teacher collected all work so that he could go through the work to check it (TJ, Observation3, December, 23, 2018).

Discussion

The person who is capable of offering the most effective feedback on writing may differ according to when the feedback is needed and what type of feedback is needed. Peers or teachers may be consulted for feedback based on the situation. (TC and TE) believed that teachers feedback is an effective strategy to be used in EFL classrooms and if used in an effective way. TJ believed that Peer feedback may be able to increase the discourse quality and in turn, the learning quality in the classroom. He stated that: They are convinced that feedback is one of the most effective strategies used in classes as it also benefited teachers to know the level of the students, provide them with this information at a timely manner. However, TB complained of not being able to use the strategy owing to constraints in time.

Eight teachers used feedback in their courses to enhance their originality in EFL writing, based on the researcher's observations. Feedback was used by eight teachers, and some even used peer feedback. For example, when it comes to peer feedback, TE has been spotted asking his pupils to work in pairs or small groups in the classroom to complete peer feedback exercises. He instructs the students to identify flaws with the essays' substance, provide comments, and assign grades. In addition, after the reviewers are through with their work, they should sign it. TJ noticed that before students began reviewing the written works, they should be given a comprehensive guidance. In each review, he had the pupils focus on many areas of writing. Teachers who have utilized peer feedback in their courses have a variety of responsibilities when it comes to implementing peer feedback activities. Teachers served as trainers, organizers, demonstrations, and models, as well as checkers and commentators in general.

Second, on teacher's feedback, for example TD students were observed to be engaged in collaborative work and the teacher used to give them instant feedback when needed. TH was observed to supply the students with positive feedback with every phase of the task at hand. He made use of one-on-one conversations to assist the students in improving their abilities in writing. Much work has been done to explore issues in L2 writing feedback and creativity in recent decades.

Vygotsky believed that learning and development occur through interactions between children and their classmates, as well as with instructors and other adults. These social interactions help to build language, which aids in thinking, as well as give feedback and guidance, which aids in further learning. The function of feedback in language acquisition is one component of ZPD. Students are allowed to ask questions, offer comments, and assist their colleagues in learning new content in a scaffolded learning environment. When instructors use scaffolding in the classroom, they become more of a mentor and knowledge facilitator than a dominant subject authority.

According to most research, feedback appears to have a role to play in second language (L2) learning. Negotiated support within the learners' ZPD, according to Nassaji and Swain (1997), is more effective than aid supplied at random. Nine teachers offered their thoughts on using feedback to encourage students' creativity in EFL writing. The lecturers highlighted the need of offering feedback to students while teaching them how to write. Nassaji and Swain (1997) think that feedback can lead to stronger and deeper learning within the Vygotskian sociocultural viewpoint and based on the Vygotskian notion of the ZPD. Furthermore, according to Flower and Hayes (1981), during the reviewing phase, which is the act of assessing, the writer examines either

what has been intended or what has been written. The writer double-checks the written information for anything that could prevent the text from accomplishing its goals.

Conclusion And Recommendations

The current study took a unique and practical approach to promoting creativity in EFL courses in order to improve writing. As a result, this research investigates and gives creative writing education. The study presented certain difficulties because it was conducted in a natural setting. I thought the task was worthwhile since it required me to offer an insight into reality as it occurs in a natural setting. My perspective on writing and its difficulties for language learners has been highlighted and internalized, and as a foreign language learner, I had numerous writing difficulties while doing this research.

The most difficult challenge I had was gathering qualitative data and transcribing the information gathered through interviews and observational notes. For me, this was a novel and time-consuming experience. Transcribing one hour of tape, for example, takes around four hours. In this respect, I met with my supervisors several times, and they gave me advice on how to write well-written qualitative research. They offered a favorable environment, as well as encouragement and assistance, to help me finish this research.

Moreover, along with my experiences and challenges, I learned many lessons concerning creativity in writing. Writing is a complex process via which a writer expresses his/her thought and ideas and transforms them into a readable format. It is by nature, a recursive activity where a writer moves from one stage to the next and repeats the process through natural occurrence. The fundamental components of the creativity in writing process are similar for all students and they require neither special talent nor a high degree of EFL proficiency to be able to become good and creative writers. No student is born as a creative writer as every student may be made capable of becoming an excellent creative writer with due practice and time. What the teacher should do is to support the process by encouraging and correcting their grammar and spelling. In other words, it is important to encourage the students to write in the form of a whole and not by focusing on a certain part of the language.

I also learned that developing collaborative and social writing activities, where students share and contribute in group work, can be applied effectively in this caliber of teaching. While it is without a doubt that teaching writing to foreign language learners could be challenging and even frustrating to teachers, particularly when they are faced with students having low level or no level of English proficiency and fluency, creating an ambiance for the students to celebrate their diversity and respect their background would lead to a fulfilling job.

To sum up, because educational research aims at informing educational practice and policy making, I am convinced that the present study's findings derived from a natural classroom could help to other EFL classrooms. This study is hoped to have successfully managed to highlight the students' creativity in EFL writing, the strategies that improve EFL writing creativity and skills. In other words, this study provided evidence in support of teaching and learning creativity in EFL writing that could develop Jordanian students' writing creativity and be added to the lacking literature in this field.

Future research should look into other schools where the Ministry of Education's policy on creativity in writing is implemented to see if comparable training is being followed and how successful it is. A comparison of public and private schools would emphasize the disparities in instruction and provide valuable information on how to improve students' writing originality. This study also suggests that an experimental study be conducted to assess the effects of utilizing methods (such as feedback) to improve students' writing creativity, and that a modified TTCT be used as a pre- and post-test to do so. It is suggested that future study look at why some instructors opt not to use creative writing activities (feedback) in their classes.

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