



The Role of FSB in Enhancing EFL Writing Quality in High-school Online classes

Zahra Akbarifar ¹

1-MA Alumnus of South Tehran Branch, Payamenoor University, Tehran, Iran

Abstract

This study investigates the role of FSB in enhancing EFL writing quality in high-school online classes. To do this, 70 students from the population of Iranian EFL learners studying English in the Sadat language institute and Narges high school in Tehran, Iran were selected. This study was conducted with Iranian female. The sample population was divided into two groups; namely, control and experimental. Prior to scheduling class visits to collect the data, the researcher explained to the instructors the purpose and procedures of the study. Students were also informed about the right to voluntary participation, the anonymous nature and the confidentiality of their data. It took the participants approximately 15 min on average to complete the questionnaires. A 't-test' on the mean scores of both groups indicated a significant difference between the scores of the post-tests, meaning that the FSB was significantly effective in the experimental group's writing quality. Findings led to the conclusion that the experimental group outperformed the control group in writing quality. The product of this study can help curriculum designers; language instructors and practitioners appreciate the importance of FSB and to introduce FSB to students to expand their writing quality on tasks of language systematically.

Key words: "EFL learners", "FSB", "writing quality".



Introduction

Writing can be regarded as an activity which is so difficult for most of the learners, especially Iranian EFL learners. Therefore, they allocate much time for accomplishing those subject materials which are related to writing specially their compositions. Most of the time, they are not able to deliver their work and also they ignore to participate in the writing classes because writing process seems unpleasant for them.

Recently, feedback seeking behavior (FSB) is considered as the important factors in the second language studies. FSB refers to the actions and strategies that an individual employs to gather information and reduce uncertainty about his or her performance in the context of a goal pursuit. Ashford (1983) defined FSB as “the conscious devotion of effort toward determining the correctness and adequacy of behaviors for attaining valued end states” (p. 466).

Not unlike the present study, Ashford and Cummings (1983) proposed the theoretical model of FSB in organizational settings to move beyond the concept of feedback as an organizational resource and reconceptualize it as “a valuable resource for individuals throughout their tenure in organizations” (p. 371). FSB has attracted many researchers in different branches of psychology (Anseel et al., 2015) but has not been investigated in the field of EFL. Examining FSB, which is generally viewed as “an effective self-regulation strategy to improve performance” (Anseel et al., 2015, p. 318), in the context of language learning can highlight the role of learner in the feedback process and help paint a more holistic picture of how CF works in language learning and instruction. Therefore, this prospective study was going to investigate the role of FSB in enhancing EFL writing quality in high-school online classes.

Statement of the Problem

English is taught as a foreign language globally. Learning English and becoming proficient is a need for most of people living in 21st century. In Iran, its importance is at a very high level and students start learning English from the primary education. Although a great deal of attention is given to oral and aural skills, writing as a challenging task is also very important and requires all the learners to consider it. So as English Teachers and learners, we should be aware of writing’s importance and its role in our both general and academic lives. Writing requires a considerable amount of cognitive, Linguistics and socio-cultural proficiency. It is also time taking and energy consuming. That is why it is neglected in most of our classes. But we should know that if the writing skill is poor, its effects will be seen on other skills as well (Ashford, 1983). So not only a great training should be given to it but also the proper assessment methodology should be hired. Online classes have always been a choice of teaching, but they got their popularity in recent months during Covid-19 pandemic. Most of the classes are held online and as there is not the chance of face to face classes many activities are neglected. Among those, writing is the best choice to be neglected. So we need to devise ways of considering writing in our online classes and have this in mind that we can never ever put it aside. Also assessment and feedback which is given to the learners’ needs should be considered as well. Writing assignments are an effective means of assessment that can improve learning and teaching in any discipline. Therefore, this prospective study was going to investigate the role of FSB in enhancing EFL writing quality in high-school online classes.



Research Hypothesis

H01: FSB has no any significant effect on enhancing EFL writing quality in high-school online classes.

Method

Participants were 70 students from the population of Iranian EFL learners studying English in the Sadat language institute and Narges high school in Tehran, Iran. This study was conducted with Iranian female learners only whose age range was from 15 to 18. The sample population was divided into two groups; namely, control and experimental. At first, the participants were asked to write a composition in order that the researcher would check their writing quality (including prewriting, drafting, rewriting and editing) at the outset of the study regarded as the pretest. Then, results of the pretest kept in order to comparing with those of the post-test. After the pretest, the researcher was going to perform ten sessions as an instructional phase in order to enhance the writing quality of participants. At the beginning of each session, the researcher would familiarize the participants in the experimental group with the four steps of writing skill and the control group was taught traditionally. Then, in the same session they were going to write a composition of about 250 words. FSB in writing was going to be considered based on a checklist in the table and the improvement was going to be investigated according to it. At the end of the ten instructional sessions, participants in both groups completed a post-test FSB questionnaire. It took the participants approximately 15 min on average to complete the questionnaires. Data were collected using a questionnaire which was developed for the purpose of this study and based on the guidelines proposed by Dörnyei and Taguchi (2009). The questionnaire comprised of two parts. The first part included items measuring the participants' language mindsets, feedback-seeking strategies, and value and self-presentation cost of feedback seeking. The responses to the items were collected on a five point Likert scale. The researcher gave "0" point to "Strongly disagree" and "4" "Strongly agree" choices of the questionnaire.

Results Discussion

The research question of this study aimed at seeing if FSB affects Iranian EFL learners' writing quality. The assumption of normality distribution of the data was checked using one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test "Table 1".

Table 1- One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test of Normality for Questionnaire Scores

Time	Group	N	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pre-test	Experimental	30	.529	.921
	Control	30	.399	.967
Post-test	Experimental	30	.805	.536
	Control	30	.613	.844

According to "Table 1", the two FSB pre-test scores for both experimental group ($p = .92, p > .05$) and control group ($p = .96, p > .05$) have normal distribution. Moreover, the FSB post-test scores for both experimental group ($p = .53, p > .05$) and control group ($p = .84, p > .05$) enjoy normal distribution.

Hence, the researcher was justified to apply independent samples *t*-test and paired samples *t*-test as two parametric statistical tests in this study. The related descriptive statistics were prepared “Table 2” before discussing the results of *t*-test.

Table 2-Descriptive Statistics of Two Group's FSB Questionnaire Scores (Pre-test)

Group	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	30	2.664	.323	.059
Control	30	2.594	.295	.053

As “Table 2” represents, the mean and standard deviation of the experimental ($\bar{x} = 2.66$, $SD = .32$) and control ($\bar{x} = 2.59$, $SD = .29$) groups on pre-test of FSB questionnaire. “Table 3” below demonstrates the results of independent *t*-test comparing the experimental and control groups' FSB scores on the pre-test.

Table 3-Independent Samples T-test for FSB (Pre-test)

Factor	Levene's Test for Variances		T-test for Means			Mean Diff.
	<i>F</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>T</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)	
Equal variances assumed	.950	.334	.871	58	.387	.069
Equal variances not assumed			.871	57.541	.387	.069

According to “Table 3”, the equality of variances assumption is met as the significance level (.33) for Leven’s test is above.05. Also, the table indicates that there was no statistically significant difference ($t(58) = .87$, $p = .38$, $p > .05$) in FSB scores for experimental ($\bar{x} = 2.66$) and control ($\bar{x} = 2.59$) groups on the pre-test, in which the *t*-observed was less than the *t*-critical (2.00). So, the researcher came to the conclusion that the students in the two groups have the same level of FSB in writing at the outset of the study. More, the researcher performed another independent *t*-test “Table 4” to compare experimental and control groups' FSB scores on the post-test.

Table 4-Descriptive Statistics of Two Group's FSB Scores (Post-test)

Group	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Std. Error Mean
Experimental	30	2.833	.215	.039



September 18, 2023

Tbilisi - Georgia

Control	30	2.643	.268	.049
---------	----	-------	------	------

“Table 4” represents the mean and standard deviation of the experimental group ($\bar{x} = 2.83, SD = .21$) and control group ($\bar{x} = 2.64, SD = .26$) on the post-test of FSB questionnaire. According to “Table 5” below, the significance level (.29) associated with Leven’s test is less than .05, so the assumption of equal of variances is met.

Table 5-Independent Samples T-test for FSB (Post-test)

Levene's Test for Variances			T-test for Means			
Factor	F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diff.
Equal variances assumed	1.125	.293	3.035	58	.004	.19067
Equal variances not assumed			3.035	55.399	.004	.19067

As seen in “Table 5” above, independent *t*-test found a statistically significant difference ($t(58) = 3.03, p = .004, p < .05$) in writing FSB scores for experimental ($\bar{x} = 2.83$) and control ($\bar{x} = 2.64$) groups on the post-test, in which the *t*-value of 3.03 is below the *t*-critical of 2.00. Subsequently, the null hypothesis of the study that says “FSB has no any significant effect on enhancing EFL writing quality in high-school online classes” was rejected, and therefore the researcher can claim that FSB influences Iranian EFL learners' writing quality. For deeper analysis, a paired samples *t*-test was run comparing the writing FSB means on the pre-test and post-test in each group, the results of which are laid out in “Table 6”.

Table 6-Paired Samples Test for Pre-test and Post-test of Writing FSB in Two Groups

Group	Gained Score	SD	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
			Lower	Upper			
Experimental	.169	.351	.038	.301	2.641	29	.013
Control	.048	.335	-.076	.174	.794	29	.434

“Table 6” clarifies that paired samples *t*-test detected a statistically significant increase ($t(29) = 2.64, p = .01, p < .05$) in writing FSB scores from pre-test ($\bar{x} = 2.66, SD = .32$) to post-test ($\bar{x} = 2.83, SD = .21$) in the experimental group. In fact, gained score in writing FSB was .16 (out of 4) with a .95% confidence interval ranging from .038 to .301. Similarly, *t*-test failed to find any statistically significant



increase ($t(29) = .79, p = .43, p > .05$) in writing FSB measures from the pre-test ($\bar{x} = 2.59, SD = .29$) to post-test ($\bar{x} = 2.64, SD = .26$) in the control group. In other words, gained score was only .05 (out of 4) with a .95% confidence interval ranging from -.076 to .174. In this study, FSB was investigated. The results revealed that the FSB had a positive effect on the writing's quality of the learners as a whole, in contrast with other studies (Byrd, 2003; Kepner, 1991; Lalande, 1982; Paton, 2002, De Guerrero and Villamil, 2000) which focused on the mechanics of writing. These results generally support the importance of the overarching Cost-Value framework in understanding the motivational mechanisms of feedback seeking (Anseel et al., 2015; Ashford, 1989; Ashford & Cummings, 1983). However, in contrast to studies in employment settings (Anseel et al., 2015), Cost-Value Framework emerged as a negative predictor of Feedback Monitoring in this study. This could be due to differences in the notion of feedback monitoring in employment settings versus L2 writing classrooms. Whereas in employment settings monitoring could be a more implicit strategy to improve performance, there seems to be cost associated with this method of feedback-seeking in L2 writing classes. This could relate to the learner's interpretation of feedback monitoring in the classroom context. Whereas the target of the feedback monitored in employment settings could be either the individual or the individual's coworkers and not necessarily a sign of the individual's weakness, in L2 writing settings WCF is normally given directly to the learner and on his or her own writing performance.



Conclusions

This study aimed at investigating the role of FSB on Iranian EFL learners' writing quality. Not many studies have focused how individual learners orient toward or seek WCF, a gap which was described by Ferris (2010) as “one of the most surprising oversights in written CF research” (p. 196). In addition, learners have typically been cast as passive recipients of WCF rather than as active participants in their own learning process (Hyland, 2011). The present study bridged these two gaps by introducing the notion of feedback-seeking behavior from organization psychology and examining it in relation to learners' mindsets from educational psychology. The results of this study confirmed that depending on their implicit beliefs about the malleability of their intelligence, L2 learners associate different costs and values with feedback seeking, which, in turn, influence their decision whether or not to seek feedback and by what method. In other words, L2 learners consciously, intentionally and strategically choose whether or not to engage with or solicit WCF depending on their cost value calculations, which are highly influenced by their mindsets. These findings confirm the basic premise of this study that learners are proactive agents of learning in the feedback process and their strategic and agentic involvement in this process is influenced by both dispositional and contextual motivational mechanisms. As a teaching resource, feedback is seen as corrective messages that are transmitted to a recipient concerning his or her linguistic knowledge or skills. Perceived as a learning resource, feedback is personally-relevant information that students seek in any information environment, inside or outside the instructional settings, to meet their valued L2 writing goals. Such feedback can include referent information about what goals are valuable and appraisal information about how learners are progressing toward achieving those goals. This change in perspective opens a wide range of research venues and extends the attention from teachers and the type of feedback they provide to the process of feedback and learners' involvement in that process, that is their FSB. It also highlights the importance of exploring ways to promote such behavior through different personal and contextual adaptations such as goal setting, improving classroom relationships, task requirements, and evaluation standards to decrease the perceived cost of feedback seeking and increase its associated value. This view of feedback can complement the mainstream WCF research by investigating how FSB can lead to the success or failure of the feedback process.



References

- [1] Anseel, F., Beatty, A. S., Shen, W., Lievens, F., & Sackett, P. R. (2015). How are we doing after 30 years? A meta-analytic review of the antecedents and outcomes of feedback-seeking behavior. *Journal of Management*, *41*, 318–348.
- [2] Ashford, S. J. (1983). Feedback seeking in individual adaptation: A resource perspective. *Academy of Management Journal*, *29*, 465–487.
- [3] Ashford, S. J., & Cummings, L. L. (1983). Feedback as an individual resource: Personal strategies of creating information. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, *32*, 370–398.
- [4] Ashford, S. J. (1989). Classroom: Goals, structures, and student motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *84*, 261–271.
- [5] Byrd, D. (2003). Practical tips for implementing peer editing tasks in the foreign language classroom. *Foreign Language Annals*, *36*(3), 434-441.
- [6] De Guerrero, M. C. M. and Villamil, O. (2000). Activating the ZPD: mutual scaffolding in L2 peer revision. *The Modern Language Journal*, *84*(1), 51-68.
- [7] Dörnyei, Z., & Taguchi, T. (2009). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- [8] Ferris D.R. (2010). Second language writing research and written corrective feedback in SLA: Intersections and practical applications. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *32*, 181–201.
- [9] Hyland, K. (2011). *Second language writing*. NY: Cambridge University Press.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667251>.
- [10] Kepner, C. (1991). An experiment in the relationship of types of written feedback to the development of second language writing skills. *The Modern Language Journal*, *75*, 305-313.
- [11] Lalande, J. (1982). Reducing composition errors: an experiment. *The Modern Language Journal*, *66*(2), 140-149.
- [12] Paton, F. (2002). Approaches to productive peer review. In D. Roen, Pantoja, V. Yena, L., Miller, S., and Waggoner, E., (Eds.), *Strategies for teaching first year composition* (pp. 290-300). Urbana: NCTE.