



The Effect of Peer Feedback on Writing Errors of Persian-Speaking Learners of Arabic: A Case Study of Female Undergraduate Students in Arabic Language & Literature at Isfahan University

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Abstract

It seems that one of the reasons Iranian students have problems in writing in Arabic is that their experiences do not activate their prior knowledge or consolidate their new knowledge. Having the experience does not active or consolidate unless it follows feedback that is given by the teacher, classmates, or the learner themselves. This paper focuses on the second type, peer feedback, explaining that peers greatly influence each other, and that peer feedback gives many opportunities to remember a person's prior knowledge to identify, correct, and explain their classmates' errors. This paper is based on the assumption that peer feedback reduces Iranian students' writing errors; therefore, 23 undergraduate female students in Arabic Literature & Language were selected at Isfahan University during online second semester 2021-2022 for Writing II as an available sample in the experimental group using the quasi-experimental method. The pre-test was conducted by writing a short text before the first session, which showed that the female student were used to making mistakes in the correct writing of alhamze, adjective + noun, noun + noun phrases, and in conjugation. Every session, a few assignments were presented to the class to identify errors and explain them as a class activity, in addition to studying the example made by classmates of the new structure when it was being taught. A post-test was conducted after the last session by everyone writing a short story on a chosen picture. Finally, the post-test showed that the focus on encouraging female students to correct their classmates' words and structures leads to reducing linguistic errors in their writing as well.

Keywords:

- Writing Skills,
- Writing Errors,
- Peer Feedback

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1. Introduction

Writing plays a crucial role in communication and is an advanced stage in language learning. Neglecting the importance of written expression can impair the learning of language skills. Writing is a productive skill that requires various mental processes to convey thoughts and emotions fluently and clearly. It helps learners to master the language by understanding and producing written speech that is free of errors and linguistic issues. As a result, non-Arabic speaking teachers and learners are highly focused on mastering Arabic writing.

Effective teaching of written expression involves receiving feedback from the teacher, peers, and the learner themselves in various ways. The purpose is to revive and revitalize the learners' old knowledge. The learner cannot progress unless they actively engage in the exercises that accompany the feedback. These exercises can be done individually or in groups, enabling both types of learning. Thus, we have experimented with using peer feedback as a method for teaching writing skills, to determine its impact on the development of expressive performance.

1.2. Research Question

Our research aims to determine the effectiveness of peer feedback in reducing writing errors among Persian-speaking female students.

2. Literature Review

The term "feedback" refers to the information learners receive after completing a task. The aim is to help raise their level of understanding and benefit from its positive effects in facilitating learning and teaching. Feedback helps the learner master the subject matter and increases their motivation to learn (Al-Habashna, 2014). Feedback does not directly improve the level of understanding or enhance skills, but rather focuses on the content that has already been taught, building on the learners' previous knowledge (Kulhavy, 1997).

Feedback can come from the teacher, peers, or the learner themselves. Peer assessment challenges students to review their linguistic knowledge, identify errors, and improve metacognitive skills.

The educational procedure involves three stages: evaluation, teaching, and activation. During the evaluation stage, the teacher uses strategies to attract the learner's attention, such as play and discussion, so that the learner can participate based on their previous knowledge. Next, the teacher asks one or more questions to determine whether the new information is clear or not. If the students need more explanation, the teacher teaches the same content again.

During the activation stage, students apply the new information through role-playing, discussions, debates, and opinion polls to solidify their understanding of the topic.

3. Methodology

A quasi-experimental method was used to assess the students' linguistic deficits and determine their linguistic level. The pre-test involved writing a short text. During the semester, the teacher presented home exercises in each session to help identify

her classmates' mistakes and explain the reason for them. The post-test involved writing a short story based on a chosen picture, using the learned terminology.

Several studies have been conducted to improve the written expression skills of Arabic language learners, particularly by addressing their deficits and providing effective strategies. Feedback has been identified as a key solution that activates prior knowledge and enhances expressive skills. Some notable studies in this area include "The Power of Feedback" by Hattie and Timperley (2007), "Study of the effect of direct and indirect feedback on the written performance of students in the Arabic language branch at the bachelor's level" by Zarei et al. (2017), and "Oral feedback in disseminating Arabic as a second language: Between teachers' practices and learners' attitudes" by Al-Olayan (2020). However, this study focuses on the role of peers in providing feedback and reducing writing errors among Persian-speaking students of the Arabic language from Iran.

4. Results & Discussion

In the pre-test, female students made spelling errors such as incorrect use of hamza al-wasl and qat', writing words sealed with yā', bound tā', and kāf at the end of words. This is even though students in their first or second semester of a Bachelor's degree learn spelling rules, but do not practise them seriously. The second most common error is related to morphology and grammar, including masculine and feminine inflection and descriptive phrases.

Possible reasons behind the frequent occurrence of spelling errors are:

1. Lack of practice of correct letter-drawing in various cases of the word in exercises.
2. Absence of texts that address these points well.
3. Lack of Arabic dictation courses for Iranian students. This may be because we assume that there are similarities between Persian and Arabic letters.

In the post-test, female students made more mistakes in writing hamza than in what was related to the subject and predicate, inflection, masculine and feminine, descriptive phrases, definite and indefinite, additional phrases, writing rounded ta'.

The data results indicate that they need more training to become more accurate. Effective learning is only achieved through repetition and practice (Hubner, 1969). According to the information gained, female students' participation and reliance on peer feedback have a remarkable effectiveness in reducing errors and linguistic lapses in writing in Arabic as a foreign language.

The comparison between the pre-test and post-test shows a significant decrease in morphological, grammatical, and spelling errors in their writing. However, we still find these errors in their written expressions, especially spelling errors that occupy a large space compared to the other two types, morphological and grammatical. This percentage was also observed in the pre-test.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to test two hypotheses: firstly, that peer feedback can positively impact the consolidation of linguistic information, and secondly, that peer feedback is effective in reducing writing errors among students. The adopted strategy aimed to create a collaborative atmosphere that would stimulate and consolidate old and new information throughout the semester. The cooperative atmosphere allowed students to revive their forgotten knowledge and consolidate their new knowledge.

According to the post-test data, the results suggest that female students' participation in correcting expressive errors in vocabulary and methods used in their colleagues' written assignments has a positive effect on reducing their writing errors. Focusing on students' ability to evaluate tasks and increasing their accuracy in the classroom gives them ample training opportunities to refer to their linguistic knowledge. This, in turn, helps them benefit from it while critiquing the tasks of their colleagues, thereby increasing their efficiency in producing error-free texts.

6. References

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