THE EFFECT OF TEACHER, PEER, AND SELF-EDITING ON IMPROVING GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY IN EFL LEARNERS' WRITING

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the effect of teacher, peer, and self-editing on the improvement of grammatical accuracy in writing, using three groups of participants. The first group engaged in teacher-editing, the second group engaged in peer-editing and the third group engaged in self-editing. The results revealed that, compared to the peer-editing and self-editing groups, the teacher-editing group significantly reduced the rule-based errors in the revised drafts. The results revealed that the performance of the teacher-editing group was better than that of the other two groups, while the performance of the peer-editing group was better than that of the self-editing group regarding the correction of specific language errors in the revised drafts. This study contributes to teaching pedagogy by encouraging teachers to use editing, especially teacher-editing in the writing classroom and to focus on the correction of a few language errors so as to bring about language development.

Key-words:

Text editing, performance, correction, specific errors, written expression abilities.

Introduction

With the advent of the process writing approach in second language pedagogy, editing has been considered as an important tool for improving grammatical accuracy in writing. It is known that peer-editing helps students to become successful editors, because peer-editing gives an opportunity for students to learn about their own problems in writing. Different types of editing have been found to have variable effects (Ashwell, 2000; Diab, 2010). Many studies (e.g. Min, 2006) provide support for the effect of peer-editing on the reduction of errors, suggesting that the effect of peer-editing is more significant than that of teacher- and self-editing in the development of grammatical accuracy in writing. Reports by other researchers (Paulus, 1999; Lee, 2008; Ashwell, 2000), however,

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suggest that the effect of teacher-editing is stronger than that of peer-editing and self-editing in the reduction of errors in the students' revised drafts. The findings of a study by Paulus (1998) demonstrated that both teacher-editing and peer-editing affect the revision process, though students preferred teacher-editing to peer-editing. Krashen (1982) believes that peer review provides situations for students to use language meaningfully in class. Mangelsdorf (1989) claims that peer interaction causes learners to improve their L2 knowledge in general and helps students to negotiate with each other and exchange thoughts and ideas.

The present study aims to find out the possible effects of teacher, peer, and self-editing on EFL students' grammatical accuracy in writing. The study is an attempt to explore the effects of teacher, peer, and self-editing in form focused instruction on reducing errors in the use of four grammatical structures under study in the learners' writing (i.e., subject-verb agreement, conditional sentences type 2, should have plus past participle and causative clause). Editing here refers to correcting grammatical errors by teachers, peer, and the students themselves. By addressing the implicit feedback and its effect on grammatical accuracy in students' writing, the research focuses on the four grammatical structures. Therefore, the significance of the study is multifaceted. First, it highlights that editing is an appropriate tool for improving student writing and that the three types of editing have different effects on students' writing. Secondly, this study underlies the importance of form-focused instruction for the improvement of grammatical accuracy in students' writing. Thirdly, an optimal combination of form-focused instruction and teacher, peer, and self-editing is addressed for the reduction of errors in writing.

The studies conducted on teacher, peer, and self-editing show mixed results. A study by Diab (2010), on the effect of peer-editing and self-editing on the reduction of rule-governed and non- rule-governed errors showed that there were differences in the effect of peer-editing and self-editing in the reduction of non-rule-governed errors. Moreover, peer-editing was found to be more useful than self-editing in reducing rule-governed errors. However, Tsui and Maria Ng (2000) reported that students in their study preferred teacher feedback to peer feedback because they had confidence in the teacher's comments, experience, knowledge, and the correctness of teacher feedback. Although the learners in their study

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incorporated a relatively high percentage of teacher comments in their writing, the advantages of peer-editing, they suggest, should not be ignored. They believe that peer feedback helped L2 learners to recognize their strengths and weaknesses in their own writing and engaged L2 learners in negotiation and collaboration with each other. Tsui and Ng (2000) consider some roles for peer comments that teacher comments may not be able to fulfill: (a) Engaging learners in the negotiation of form. (b) Helping students to become successful self-editors. (c) Helping students to know their own strengths and weakness in writing.

According to Mendonca and Johnson (1994), teachers should provide L2 students with opportunities to talk about their essay with their peers, as peer reviews seem to allow students to explore and negotiate their ideas, as well as develop a sense of audience. They believe that teachers must give opportunities for students to choose their partners and claim that peer reviews are a good form of feedback in L2 writing instruction.

The findings of a study by Mendonca and Johnson (1994) support the observation that peer reviews engage students in negotiations with their peers and this process develops students' writing skills. Evidence from a number of studies (Tsui & Ng, 2000) suggests that teacher comments and peer comments are different methods for the improvement of student writing, which complement each other and together form a very useful way for improving students' written expression. The teacher's comments increase the students' awareness of the macro-structures of a text and peer comments increase the students' awareness of the strengths and weakness of their own writing.

Truscott (2004) believes that error correction is not useful and should not be considered as a tool for improving students' writing ability and students' knowledge of language. According to Truscott (1996), teacher error correction is not compatible with the smooth flow of acquisition or the sequence of acquisition that learners must go through to acquire a second language.

The current study

Participants

The participants in this study were 18 male MA students majoring in management and computers at the Takab branch of Azad University, who had already passed a standard advanced-level English proficiency test. The

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reason for the selection of these participants was that writing is the most difficult skill to learn and only advanced learners are able to translate their thoughts, ideas, and feelings into readable texts (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

Procedure

The instruments used in this study were two sets of grammar tests likely to elicit the required structures from the participants. The participants' pre-test scores and two paragraph essays that were written by the participants were used to divide the participants into lower and higher level groups. The treatment included the four grammatical structures which required the participants to read the texts and to write a summary. Finally, the learners' writings were edited in three groups.

The pre-test was designed to elicit the required structure from the participants. Then, they were asked to write two paragraphs about their own favorite topic. The teacher provided the learners with form-focused instruction about four grammatical structures, namely subject and verb agreement, causative clauses, conditional sentences type II, and should have plus past participle.

After the form-focused instruction, 18 learners were divided into three groups of 6. The first group received teacher-editing, i.e. the teacher edited the errors in the learners' writing. The second group received peer-editing, i.e., peers edited the errors in each other's writing. The third group used self-editing, i.e., they self-edited their own errors in their writing. This study was conducted in 10 sessions and each session lasted for about 50 minutes.

Moreover, during each session, the participants in the three groups read the teacher-selected texts, which included many instances of the grammatical structures under investigation. Then, the learners were to reconstruct the text and provide a written summary. After the summary was written, editing was done by the teacher in the first group, by peers in the second group, and by the students themselves in the third group. After the editing was done, the learners received their edited writings and reviewed their errors.

The type of feedback used in the teacher and peer-editing groups was coded feedback, which required the students to point out any of the four language errors under investigation, to indicate its line number, and write its code and correct it. One of the important strategies of indirect feedback for error correction was coded feedback (Bitchener, Young, and

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Cameron, 2005) which "points to the exact location of an error, and the type of error involved is indicated with a code" (p.193). A follow-up test was administered 35 days after the pre-test.

Results

A one way ANOVA was employed to compare the effects of the three types of editing (i.e., teacher-editing, peer-editing, and self-editing), and two groups on the learners' reduction of errors in the four grammatical structures under investigation.

This study was an attempt to investigate the effect of teacher-editing, peer-editing, and self-editing on the improvement of grammatical accuracy in the learners' writing. The participants were selected through non-random accidental sampling. The Teacher-editing group received editing and implicit coded feedback from the teacher, and the peer-editing group received editing and implicit coded feedback from their peers, while in the self-editing group the participants themselves had to correct and edit their own writing. After ten sessions, the participants were given the post-test with grammatical questions similar in format to the ones in the pre-test and asked to write a three-paragraph summary of the text prepared by the teacher. The data gathered from the pre-test and post-test included accuracy scores for the written production of the four structures, and the average of all accuracy scores of for the four structures. Therefore, each participant had two scores; one score for the grammatical questions and their writing, as well as one average score. The analysis of the data is presented below.

The first question in this study concerned possible differences between the effect of teacher-editing, peer-editing, and self-editing on the improvement of university students' grammatical accuracy in writing. Table 1 shows the adjusted means for the three groups. The average score for the teacher-editing group is 3.83, with a standard deviation of 0.75, higher than that for the peer-editing group, which is 2.50, with a standard deviation of 0.54, as well as for the self-editing group, which is 0.83, with a standard deviation of 0.75.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics for the three groups

					95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Teacher	6	3.8333	.75277	.30732	3.0433	4.6233
Peer	6	2.5000	.54772	.22361	1.9252	3.0748
Self	6	.8333	.75277	.30732	.0433	1.6233
Total	18	2.3889	1.41998	.33469	1.6828	3.0950

The multiple comparisons in Table 2 show the results for the three groups. The findings revealed important differences between the teacher-editing group and the peer-editing group ($F(5,15) = 28.372$ $p < .012$). Moreover, there is a significant average difference of 1.33. According to Table 2 there is a significant difference between the teacher-editing group and the self-editing group ($F(5,15) = 28.372$ $p < .000$). There is also a significant average difference for the two groups ((I-J) = -3). This shows that the effect of teacher-editing is greater than that of peer-editing and self-editing in the improvement of grammatical accuracy in the learners' writing.

Table 2: Multiple comparisons

(I) group	(J) group	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
teacher	peer	1.33333	.39907	.012	.2968	2.36999
	self	3.00000	.39907	.000	1.9634	4.0366
peer	teacher	-1.33333	.39907	.012	-2.3699	-.2968
	self	1.66667	.39907	.002	.6301	2.7032
self	teacher	-3.00000	.39907	.000	-4.0366	-1.9634
	peer	-1.6667	.39907	.002	-2.7032	-.6301

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As Table 3 shows, there is a significant difference among all the experimental groups, F (5,15) = 28.372 p < 0/000. It demonstrates that this difference is not due to chance, but that the effect of treatment yielded group gains.

Table 3: ANOVA results

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	27.111	2	13.556	28.372	.000
Within Groups	7.167	15	.478		
Total	34.278	17			

These findings are compatible with the findings of previous studies, that showed a greater effect for teacher-editing than that of peer-editing and self-editing on the improvement of grammatical accuracy in the learners' writing (Ferris, 2006; Ferris and Roberts, 2001). The results are consistent with those reported by Paulus (1999), who studied the effect of teacher-editing and peer-editing on the reduction of grammatical errors in students' writing and found that students did use teacher-editing more often than peer-editing in their revisions. The findings are also in line with those reported by Diab (2010), who showed the effect of peer-editing was greater than that of self-editing because error feedback provided by peers informed learners about incorrect grammatical structures in their writing. The findings, however, are incompatible with the findings of previous research studies that found a greater effect for peer-editing than that for teacher-editing on the improvement of grammatical accuracy in the learners' writing (Mendonca & Jonson, 1994).

Conclusion

This study investigated three types of editing and found higher gains for teacher-editing, in comparison to peer and self-editing, although peer-editing and self-editing also led to some gains. Therefore, this study lends support for the use of teacher-editing. The outcome of the present study can be interpreted in the light of Ferris and Roberts' (2001) observation that underlining and coding errors are more effective than only underlining errors in revising grammatical errors. The present study can be considered an additional support for teacher-editing.

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The present study contributes to teaching pedagogy by encouraging teachers to use teacher-editing in their writing classroom and to focus on the correction of few language errors so as to bring about language development. Since this study was limited in terms of its sample size, structures under investigation and techniques of error correction, it is necessary to carry out further research in this regard. Considering the fact that this study was limited to only one technique of error correction, it is suggested that similar studies be conducted with other techniques of error correction (e.g., implicit versus explicit, coded versus un-coded feedback). Since the present study focused on only four structures in English, similar studies could examine the accuracy gains regarding other structures. Also, similar studies could have participants majoring in other fields of study. Finally, this study can be replicated with learners at higher and lower levels of language proficiency.

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Rezumat:

Editarea efectuată de profesor, colegi sau autorul însuşi şi efectele sale asupra sporirii corectitudinii gramaticale a textelor redactate de studenţii de limba engleză

Acest studiu îşi propune să exploreze efectele activităţii de editare a textului de către profesori, colegi sau studenţii înşişi asupra îmbunătăţirii corectitudinii gramaticale în exprimarea scrisă, analizând trei grupe de participanţi. Primul grup a beneficiat de editarea profesorului, al doilea grup a fost angajat în editarea inter-colegială, iar al treilea grup în auto-corectare. Rezultatele au relevat că, în comparaţie cu grupele de editare inter-colegială şi individuală, la grupul bazat pe editarea de către profesor erorile de limbă din lucrările revizuite au fost diminuate semnificativ. Rezultatele au arătat că performanţa grupului ale cărui texte au fost editate de către profesor a fost mai bună decât a celorlalte două grupe, în timp ce performanța celor care și-au editat reciproc lucrările a fost superioară celei a grupei angajate în autocorectare, în ce privește greșelile specifice de limbă din textele revizuite. Studiul contribuie la pedagogia dezvoltării deprinderilor de exprimare scrisă, încurajându-i pe profesori să utilizeze activităţi de editare axate pe corectarea greşelilor de limbă şi dezvoltarea abilităţilor lingvistice.

Cuvinte cheie:

Editarea textului, performanță, corectare, greșeli specifice, deprinderi de exprimare scrisă.

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