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**REVISITING SAUDI UNIVERSITY EFL LEARNERS'
ENGAGEMENT TO TEACHERS WRITTEN CORRECTIVE
FEEDBACK FROM A SOCIO-COGNITIVE PERSPECTIVE¹***REVISITANDO O COMPROMISSO DOS ALUNOS DA EFL DA
UNIVERSIDADE SAUDITA COM OS PROFESSORES FEEDBACK
CORRETIVO POR ESCRITO A PARTIR DE UMA PERSPECTIVA
SÓCIO-COGNITIVA*

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ABSTRACT

The empirical studies addressing learners' engagement to teachers' corrective feedback on their writing tasks in the Saudi EFL context as well as its impact on the students' improvement of writing skill are still a few. Therefore, the proposed research project aims to empirically address the Saudi EFL learners' responses to teachers' written corrective feedback on their writing tasks. Addressing the EFL learners' engagement in the teachers' written feedback is a key issue in improving learners' writing skills. As a result, the proposed project attempts to measure Saudi learners' engagement with their learners' feedback from a multi-dimension perspective; learners' uptake, affective engagement, cognitive engagement, and meta-cognitive engagement, and behavioral engagement. Investigating the learners' responses to their teacher's feedback, the proposed project uses a socio-cognitive method that contributes to realizing the differences in EFL responses toward their teacher's corrective feedback. The proposed study relies on different sources of data that include students' writing assignments, semi-structured questionnaires. The sample of the study consists of 90 elementary level students belonging to the applied college at PSAU, 30 pre-intermediate students belonging to Business administration College, and 30 intermediate level students belonging to the college of humanities and sciences. The collected data reflect to what extent learners are engaged with the corrective feedback of their teachers, which can be partly accounted for their ideas and experiences about the written corrective feedback and second language writing

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and the learning context in which the feedback was received and processed. The findings of the research projects proposes that the EFL instructors should have a deeper understanding of the students' cognitive and behavioral, engagement, feedback processing. This deeper understanding of students' responses to written correct feedback would largely contribute to improving learners' writing skills.

Keywords: Corrective feedback, EFL instructors, Learners' Engagement, Behavioral Feedback, Cognitive Feedback.

RESUMO

Os estudos empíricos que abordam o envolvimento dos alunos no feedback corretivo dos professores sobre suas tarefas de escrita no contexto EFL saúdita, bem como seu impacto no aprimoramento da habilidade de escrita dos alunos, ainda são poucos. Portanto, o projeto de pesquisa proposto visa abordar empiricamente as respostas dos alunos saúditas de EFL aos comentários corretivos escritos dos professores sobre suas tarefas de redação. Abordar o envolvimento dos alunos de EFL no feedback escrito dos professores é uma questão chave para melhorar as habilidades de escrita dos alunos. Como resultado, o projeto proposto tenta medir o engajamento dos alunos saúditas com o feedback de seus alunos a partir de uma perspectiva multidimensional; a aceitação dos alunos, o engajamento afetivo, o engajamento cognitivo e metacognitivo, e o engajamento comportamental. Investigando as respostas dos alunos ao feedback de seus professores, o projeto proposto utiliza um método sócio-cognitivo que contribui para perceber as diferenças nas respostas de EFL em relação ao feedback corretivo de seus professores. O estudo proposto se baseia em diferentes fontes de dados que incluem tarefas de redação dos alunos, questionários semi-estruturados. A amostra do estudo consiste em 90 alunos do nível elementar pertencentes à faculdade aplicada na PSAU, 30 alunos pré-intermediários pertencentes à Faculdade de Administração de Empresas e 30 alunos do nível intermediário pertencentes à Faculdade de Humanidades e Ciências. Os dados coletados refletem até que ponto os alunos estão envolvidos com o feedback corretivo de seus professores, que pode ser parcialmente contabilizado por suas idéias e experiências sobre o feedback corretivo por escrito e escrita de segunda língua e o contexto de aprendizagem no qual o feedback foi recebido e processado. Os resultados dos projetos de pesquisa propõem que os instrutores de EFL devem ter uma compreensão mais profunda do cognitivo e comportamental dos alunos, do engajamento e do processamento do feedback. Esta compreensão mais profunda das respostas dos alunos a um feedback escrito correto contribuiria em grande parte para melhorar as habilidades de escrita dos alunos.

Palavras-chave: Feedback corretivo, Instrutores EFL, Envolvimento dos alunos, Feedback comportamental, Feedback cognitivo.

Introduction

The previous studies have focused on the teachers' written feedback and their impact on the improvement of EFL learners' skills of writing. These studies were mainly interested in examining different types of feedback such as peer feedback, computer feedback and teacher feedback (e.g. Hyland and Hyland, 2006;). Other studies focused on how important is the teachers' written corrective feedback on the learners' language acquisition and writing development (Bitchener and Ferris, 2012). Some studies have focused on the quality of providing written feedback to the students (Suzuki et al., 2019). Moser (2020, p.58) addresses the guidelines necessary for giving the feedback and how to engage learners in the process of feedback from teacher's perspective.

There are many studies that have examined the written feedback from teachers' perspective (e.g. Lee, 2008; Heift, 2004). There are few studies addressing the students' engagement to feedback. (Lee, 2019; Yang, 2021). There are also a number of studies that have examined in a greater depth the instructions and revisions of the instructors to the written tasks of their students (Chong, 2018; Li and Vuono, 2019; Mao and Lee, 2020). The studies concerned with the learners' response to feedback are not new. The learners' engagement to the feedback of the teachers is subject to many interpretations and includes several sub-categories such the complexity of the feedback processing (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010), the linguistic analysis (Sheen, 2010), learners' readiness to accept their errors and avoid falling into them in the future (Evans, et.al p. 453). There are several studies that focus on the learners' response toward their teachers' feedback. Ellis (2010) argued that the students are not only responded to their teachers' feedback but they are also engaged with it. The modes of engagement range from behavioral, affective, and cognitive. Han & Hyland (2015) divided the types of the students' responses to the teachers' feedback into sub-categories. For example, the cognitive engagement includes the mental process of the learners' processing of the feedback, their viewpoints and opinions and so on. The affective engagement comprises the emotion produced by the learners when receiving their feedback and how it affects their feelings and attitudes.

The study attempts to shed insights onto the role of written corrective. Feedback strategy in developing learners' critical thinking skills of assessing assumptions, preconceived ideas, fixed molds of thoughts regarding themselves and those governing their beliefs, values, judgments and feelings of others without deconstructing their frames of reference. Saudi university students have recently become more vulnerable to different cultural and ethical values, and new value system because of the overwhelming impact of social network sites, the repercussion of which is to deconstruct their frames of reference.

Written corrective Feedback aims to reflect a special perspective for adult education and a cognitive framework for conceiving of how adult learning is perceived largely as a method of adapting to requirements of the wider socio-cultural context. Transformational Learning Theory originally developed by Jack Mezirow and it is described as being “constructivist, an orientation which holds that the way learners interpret and reinterpret their sense experience is, central to making meaning and hence learning” (Mezirow, 1991).. Communicative learning involves how individuals communicate their feelings, needs and desires. Adults use critical thinking and questioning as they process new learning (Mezirow, 2003, 2000,; Taylor, 2007). Transformative learning theory is an effective tool in higher education and adult learning and one of its goals is to focus the attentions of educators on the best educational practices in these contexts. The main problem is that written corrective Feedback is still ambiguous theory and in Saudi Arabia and educators face difficulty when trying to put it into practice where there is a clear gap between theory and practice. Therefore, this paper aims to bridge the gap between written corrective Feedback theory and its applications. The study uses Chickering and Gamson's (1987) seven principles of good teaching practice and the curve of active learning strategies. These principles are considered to be the cornerstone in enhancing the applications of written corrective Feedback theory in Saudi Arabia. The study is based on authentic examples taken from real-life College setting in Saudi Arabic institution of higher education and these learning examples include face-to-face, online, and service-learning contexts. The significance of this study lies in the fact that Saudi Arabia has recently started a sweeping stage of modernization and has become more open to the world and the rigidity of thought

has started to be deconstructed and education is the best method for deconstructing the rigidity of thought.

Review of literature

The number of studies that address the applications of written corrective Feedback to the Saudi educational environment are very scarce and they do not address the relationship between the transformative education and the adult learning in Saudi Arabic and how it can affect the students' perception of their external world and their assumptions and their preconceived ideas. written (Kuh, 2008; Kuh & O'Donnell, 2013).

Freire (1968) argued that students resemble empty banks which require to be filled with knowledge. However, he does not consider students mere negative recipients of knowledge. Rather, they are very active recipients who are capable of transforming automatically their knowledge. That is to say, adult learners are capable of building and constituting knowledge and this process is known as critical pedagogy. In this way, the process of education is reciprocal where learners and educators are involved in learning process. Transformative theorists, such as Paulo Freire argued that skills of critical thinking and cognition have been crucial issues in transformation learn where learning is no longer focused on reproducing knowledge.

Mezirow (1997) argues that written corrective Feedback is mainly concerned with the vision for adult education as it provides a conceptual framework for learning about how learning can be adapted to the emerging needs of society and how learning can help learners adapt themselves to and demands of the broader, socio-cultural context.

Rosebrough and Leverett (2011) argues that world has witnessed an explosion of knowledge and fast-paced developments both in knowledge and students that requires the application of the transformative teaching and gives instructors the ability to develop their courses and their style of teaching to be compatible with the rapidly changed cultural realities of our world.

Hand (2008) argues for the necessity of using the transformation learning in the globalized world were borders among countries and continents have been

crossed and the process of cultural exchange have been increased and the world cultures have become hybrid and they have several shared elements. All of these factors have contributed to scaffolding the necessity of the transformative learning.

Hoggan, C., & Kloubert (2021) remark that written corrective Feedback can become effective when a learner face new learning experiences which they are not used to encounter, as they will start unconsciously developing their critical thinking and try to change their previous styles of analysis in order to conceive of the nature of these new learning experiences.

Ferris (2012) examined the impacts of the application of a written corrective Feedback framework on the cognitive development doctoral on the higher students' studies students' cognitive development. The using of written corrective Feedback have contributed to improving the critical skill of the researchers, their analysis and their reflections of their writings as they have become able to address more complex ways of thinking, and evaluating knowledge from different perspectives.

Hullender (2015) introduces the applications of written corrective Feedback in Central Michigan University as the students were required to apply knowledge from course work in real-life service learning environments. The results of paper show that written corrective Feedback requires time, space and encouragement from the instructors to fit for its purpose.

Meaning structures (perspectives and schemes) are a major component of the theory. Meaning perspectives are defined as "broad sets of predispositions resulting from psychocultural assumptions which determine the horizons of our expectations" (Mezirow, 1991). They are divided into 3 sets of codes: sociolinguistic codes, psychological codes, and epistemic codes. A meaning scheme is "the constellation of concept, belief, judgment, and feelings which shapes a particular interpretation" (Mezirow, 1995, p.223).

Objectives and the Questions of the study:

The study attempts to achieve the following objectives:

- Addressing the problems of the learners' inability to accept different ideas and different values.

- Drawing the attention of the academic institutions in Saudi Arabia to the importance of incorporating the transformation teaching into the methods of teaching.
- Focusing on the importance of training learners on how to deal effectively with the different values and strange ideas and thoughts without being negatively influenced by them
- Providing a convenient methodology of teaching that enable learners to adapt themselves both epistemologically and culturally to the different cultural values imposed on them.

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The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- How can written corrective Feedback enable the learners to accept new ideas and different cultural values?
- How can written corrective Feedback help learners adapt themselves to the new values and different cultural paradigms?
- How can the transformation learning keep the frames of reference unchanged?
- How can written corrective Feedback strategy be used in the Saudi academic institutions?

Theoretical Framework and methodology

Mezirow (2003) remarked that learning process does not draw heavily on extracting or memorizing knowledge. The process of learning is not based on the current existing knowledge. However, learners start their learning process from their assumption, their pre-knowledge, their contextual realities through which they transform and learning their knowledge. In this way, they transform the existing knowledge into new knowledge. Incorporating existing knowledge into the previous knowledge of the learners requires a series of steps through which learners can transform the current knowledge into new knowledge. These steps include the following: Disorienting dilemma, self-examination, sense of alienation, relating discontent to others, explaining options of new behavior, Building confidence in new ways, planning a course of action, knowledge to implement

plans, experimenting with new roles, and reintegration. When an adult learner is faced with a new knowledge, he feels confused which creates disorienting dilemma. The learners try to get rid of such a disorienting dilemma; they therefore use their own self-examination. Self-examination urges learners to check and recheck their preconceived ideas, assumptions and prior knowledge that have to do with the subject matter. They adopt clarification and explanation strategies to decrease the ambiguity. However, they feel alienated and unable to assimilate such new knowledge and they feel uncertain about their thinking skills which may undermine their self-confidence. Accordingly, learners circulate an environment of suspicion, and a state of discontent among their peers. To address such thinking barriers, learners start to recall their previous knowledge, their life experience, and use their critical thinking through which they can develop new options and project positive attitude. Adopting a positive attitude enhance confidence of planning a course of action. Planning course of actions requires learners to bridge the gap between their prior knowledge and the new knowledge through using reflection, contemplation, rechecking their own knowledge, doubting their confirmed belief in their previous knowledge, putting their experiences into practice. During this stage of self-reflection, critical thinking, rechecking existing knowledge and experiences, doubting confirmed knowledge and linking previous knowledge to the new knowledge, the learners are able to transform their old knowledge into new knowledge as their old styles of knowledge are integrated with new knowledge, creating harmony and consistency between old knowledge and new knowledge which is coupled with clarity of thought. The learners have been efficiently turned into self-directed learners that skillfully deal with disorienting dilemma.

Principles of Good Practice

It seems that Mezirow's theory of written corrective Feedback tends to be more theoretical than practical and it is difficult to put it into practice as an independent theory of learning. Its core seems philosophical and contains abstract ideas and principles that require transformation. Therefore, the present study suggests using the principles of good practice introduced by Chickering and

Gamson (1991) as a framework that helps learners put Mezirow's theory of written corrective Feedback into practice. The principles of good practice aim to enable student practice written corrective Feedback and make them able to practice the principles of written corrective Feedback which are described in the previous section as abstract and theoretically -oriented.

Principles of Good Practice &The Application of written corrective Feedback in Saudi Classroom

Learners and educators are responsible for the effective use of transformative learning; instructors, however, should take the initiative in applying written corrective Feedback through establishing friendly and positive relationships with the learners, which can be achieved by recognition and respect for everyone. Instructors should make learners feel their value and their important role in learning process as they should secure a convenient communicative environment in which adults are encouraged to express their opinions and give their responses without being feared of falling into mistakes. Therefore, the first principle is to create an engagement between learners and their teachers. The second principle is encourage cooperation among students, which can be achieved through group work, team work, collaborative work and so on. Collaborative work help students solve problem and exchange views and opinions and reach a good solution to their problems. The core issue in written corrective Feedback theory is that it connects discontent with others that help mitigates discontent through exchanging suggestions, ideas, opinions and views. The third principle which should be adopted inside classroom is the use of active learning strategies whose main objective is to involve students in learning process. These active learning strategies start from simple to complex learning strategies which can be easily adapted to various contexts. The simple active learning strategies may include writing, self-assessment. Complex learning strategies include questioning, pair assessment, group assessment, and interactive learning. (Faust & Paulson, 1998). The adult learners are responsible for their learning and it seems that they are self-independent learners who always seek acquire knowledge through their own experiences therefore, they can respond effectively

to the principle of prompt feedback, which is the fourth principle. When teacher shows prompt feedback to learners' questions, thoughts, and suggestions, views, the students will be highly stimulated to learn and enhance their self-confidence. written corrective Feedback strategies are based on time task process, which is considered to be the fifth principle. Time based task is one of the most efficient and best strategies for transformative learning. Students should be highly motivated and encouraged in the learning process. When students are motivated to learn, they can convey high quality learning expectations, which is the sixth principle. These expectations foster the processes of addressing the issues of disorienting dilemma through focusing on the learners' expectations of learning qualities. Expectations help students create goals and objectives and pursue them and in this way, it improves obtaining knowledge. The seventh principle is to make learners respect diversity and respect people from different cultures, different beliefs and different opinions.

Application: Transformative LEARNING

This section adopts the application of active learning using written corrective Feedback principles. The setting is based upon classrooms and blending learning. The setting is Prince Sattam bin Abdul-Aziz University, Al-kharj Community College, Diploma in Occupational Health & Safety, Adult learning. The age of the students ranged from 20 to 50 years and the number of the students is around 50. The duration of session is 2 hours. Students are taught courses in principles of safety and risk management. The students expressed their desire of learning about risk management, how to deal with several types of risks and what are the connections between risk management and safety? Prior to the lesson, the students were engaged in one week study of the principles of risk management and how to evaluate activities of high risk and how to minimize these risks. The learning objective of this activity was to be cognitively prepared to understand the course through acquiring elementary knowledge about risk management and occupational safety. In this two hour sessions, some of the ten phases of learning adopted by Mezirow's (2003) will be adopted.

Phase 1: Disorienting Dilemma

The students are asked to design a lesson that includes principles of risk management and their impact on occupational safety. Many of the students have been away from regular education for many years. Their academic knowledge is less than low level. Some students undergo difficulties in reading and writing that hinders the process of effective communication among them. Therefore, students were faced with a problem of miscomprehension of the texts they were trying to understand and they also suffered from miscommunication problems. Students in classroom were divided into groups and each group is headed by a brilliant student who can help struggling students in overcoming the disorienting dilemma.

Phase 2: Self-Examination

What is noticed is that students underwent condition of frustration as they felt so confused and unable to think critically of such issues. Then students started to move to another stage which is self-examination, as each group started thinking how to understand such difficult text and extract the principles of risk management and try to find relations between risk management and safety. They started by checking their knowledge and recheck it. They start questioning each other and build circles of effective communications.

Phase 3: Sense of Alienation

While learners focus their attention on self-examination, they start ask several questions in order to help them learn about the uncertain, dark and ambiguous points of their learning. The purpose of these questions is not to find answers rather than to find clarifications and explanations to the ambiguous and dark points. Feedback phase as their responses implied feelings of anger, frustration, alienation, misunderstanding and lack of empathy. This created a collective feeling of discontent. In this phase, students' misunderstanding, misconception, lack of knowledge on the principles of risk management and their

connection with occupational safety is highly asserted, and condition of discontent was clearly depicted among students.

Phase 4: Relating Discontent With Others

This condition of lack empathy and ambiguity and uncertainty lead to spread frustrations among students. In their groups, the students are so unhappy and frustrated and are not able to give their feedback correctly. Students thought about the emotional difficulties they experienced when trying to giving their response to feedback them (Dirkx, 1998).

Phase 5: Explaining Options of New Behavior

In order to mitigate the degree of discontent, lack of understanding and lack of empathy, students will start adopt alternative pedagogical behaviors in order to help them solve these problems. They may use technology and smartphone apps and internet in order to reveal this condition of uncertainty

Phase 6: Building Confidence in New Ways

Students' written corrective Feedback and their use of critical thinking support their confidence which in turn enhances their understanding and comprehension of the material they are studying and learning about.

Phase 7: Planning a Course of Action

After using their critical thinking, recalling their experience, rechecking their values and assumptions, consulting each other, using applications, using Internet and sources of learning, the students spent 30 minutes planning a course of action. They can build logical and well-organized plan that help them decode the difficult parts in their lessons.

Phase 8: Knowledge of Implementing Plans

After making their lesson plans, students applied knowledge and what they learnt to the plan. Students were able to show the vague and unclear points in their understanding of how to set the principles of risk management and their relation to the occupational safety. The students were able to understand and write their suggestions of these principles and their vision of these could be linked to the occupational safety.

Phase 9: Experimenting With New Roles

After finishing the phases of Mezirow's (1991) written corrective Feedback the students were able to constitute their understanding of the risk management principles and risk management values and bridge the gap between risk management and bridge the gap between risk management and occupational safety.

Phase 10: Reintegration

At the end stage, the students were able to transform their previous information and data to new information. In other words, students were able to use their previous knowledge, life experiences, their mutual and group discussions, their own critical thinking and their values to reach a good understanding of the lesson and provide creative knowledge about the topic of interest.

Conclusion

The study has found out the transformative is essential in Saudi institutions of higher education. The application of written corrective Feedback in Saudi education requires Providing a convenient methodology of teaching that enable learners to adapt themselves both epistemologically and culturally to the different cultural values imposed on them. Disorienting dilemmas often occur in the context

of academic learning environments, as teachers provide space to critically engage with new ideas. Teachers who want to utilize written corrective Feedback in their classrooms can consider implementing the following opportunities for students.

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