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Nature and Importance of Teacher's Feedback in the Writing Process

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الملخص :

يتناول هذا المقال أهمية استخدام الأستاذ للتغذية الراجعة باعتبارها إجراء ناجحاً في تحسين القدرة على التعبير الكتابي عموماً و تطوير صناعة الكتابة باللغة الانجليزية على وجه الخصوص ، و هو ما يجب أن يكون انشغال كل أساتذة التعبير الكتابي في سياق اللغة الانجليزية سواء أكانت لغة ثانية أم أجنبية .

ABSTRACT

The present article deals with teachers feedback as being an important procedure in writing development in general and in the writing process (as an approach) in particular. It should be the concern of teachers of writing in both English as a Foreign /Second Language contexts

Introduction

Recent research in English a Foreign/Second Language (E.F.L/E.SL) context showed that feedback plays an important role in writing development in general and in the writing process in particular and leads to greater development in writing. It has been a lasting concern of teachers of writing and researchers in both English as a Foreign Language and English as a Second Language contexts. Teacher feedback, leads to greater

improvements in writing. It is our belief that an effective teaching and practice of the writing skill should be partly based on an accurate understanding of what feedback entails. Some of the points raised in the present article will undoubtedly clarify the importance of teachers feedback and will assist students in a more effective way to improve their writing.

Definition of Feedback

Feedback is the input from a reader/teacher to a writer/student with the effect of providing the latter with information for revision; in other words, it is the comments, questions and suggestions a reader gives a writer to produce reader “based prose” (Flower 1979) as opposed to “writer-based” prose. It is via feedback that students learn to appreciate the various aspects of the process of composing. *The feedback which the learner gets on his or her piece of writing plays a very important role, both in motivating further learning and in ensuring that the teacher’s texts gradually come warer and never to written feneny.* (Hamp Lyons 1987 :143).

It is vital to the process of learning. Research shows it enables students to assess their performances, modify their behaviour and transfer their understandings (Applebee and Langer Brinks 1993).

Keh (1990) distinguishes three types of feedback:

Peer evaluation, conferences, and written comments.

- Peer evaluation: is a possibility to stress the role of the student in the writing process. To emphasize the role of the students is an important issue and has to be carefully planned and incorporated in the writing activity. Students need to know all about evaluation ; that is to say, what to evaluate and how to do it. McDonough and Shaw (1993:191) pointed out that peer evaluation “will only be effective with guidance and focus”. It can help our students to see what they produce critically and more consciously.

- Conferences: Bowen (1993) sees that conferencing is an efficient way of dealing with writing in that the latter is freed from its isolation and integrated with another skill, speaking. It is a good opportunity for the

students to meet with their teacher and ask questions about the different aspects of writing. One of the interesting characteristics of writing workshop and the way it creates a working atmosphere is that the teacher is given the opportunity to confer with students on a regular basis. (Weaver 2006:92). Here, the students need to focus on two important points. First, to make of conferencing a successful technique to improve writing and have some knowledge and ideas about what a successful text consists of and how it should be presented. Second, teachers and/or students need to give an encouraging and positive feedback and offer suggestions for improvement.

Written comments are helpful in that they help students correct their writing and find solutions to their problems. In this regard, giving clues whether in the form of questions, suggestions, codes symbols or error sheets was considered more effective than correction of mistakes. (Brock and Walters 1993:97) .We believe that written comments give a certain security to writing students if they are clear and not misleading.

Oral Conferences are considered of a particular value, both in terms of being more effective for facilitating improvement than written comments and as a means of encouraging successful practices and texts. In order to allow students to develop ways of writing which are not only effective, but in which they feel comfortable, such approaches need both support and time.

We believe that feedback has a very important effect on students in that it helps them become aware of their errors and the very many problems of writing. Leki (1992) points out that students need to learn how to revise more effectively whether the learners are international students, or immigrants or minority students in tertiary institutions. Leki (1992 : 165).

Dheram (1995 :160) also sees that "feedback seems to be as central to the process of teaching and learning writing as revision is to the process of writing". Dheram (1995:160). Similarly, Raimes (1985) found that L2 students appreciate teacher-editing and feedback. Radecki and Swales (1988) also see that L2 learners appear to expect and accept greater

intervention, and to make greater improvements when they get such feedback.

Some methodologists consider self-correction as an alternative to teacher's correction. Taylor (1981) suggested that it is important for students to be their own critics. Students are asked to rewrite their own assignments, in this way the importance is given to the first draft. Rewriting is important in that it enables students to solve the problems they face; rewriting their own compositions gives students confidence in their ability to solve problems in their own writing.

It has been suggested by Zamel (1984) that when adopting feedback students must be given time to do multi-drafts assignments so that each draft brings them closer to approximating what they want to say [achieve]. Buttruf and Sommers (1980) mentioned in Zamel (1985), see that rather than responding to texts as fixed and final products, we teachers should be leading students through the different cycles of revision. Krashen (1984) mentioned in Robb et al (1986) also advocates delaying feedback on errors until the final stage of editing. Researchers like Robb et al argue that salient feedback has a more significant effect on students' overall ability than direct feedback. "The more direct methods of feedback do not seem to produce results commensurate with the amount of effort required of the instructor do draw the student's attention to surface errors". (Robb et al 1986 : 201).

The importance of correction and feedback and revision in the writing process made most students expect and value it after they produce any piece of writing. Research has proved that there seems to be a strong connection between active correction of errors and the improvement of students in the writing skill. Ferris (1995) put a focus on the importance that students give to writing accurately and their perceived need to obtain corrections from the teacher.

Truscott (1996) mentioned the important factor –opposing grammar correction- that of the necessity of dealing with every linguistic category (lexicon, syntax and morphology) as equivalent, since they represent

separate learning domains that are acquired differently through varying processes. Nevertheless, researchers like Ferris and Roberts (2001) and Robb Ross and Shorbreed 1986 agree that corrections are useful for students as long as they are systematic and consistent. When Chastain (1990:14) carried out a study about the effects of graded and ungraded composition found that although there was no significant difference between the number and types of errors. He put it as follows: *in some ways the expectation of a grade may influence student's writing in some positive ways....students in this study wrote longer papers containing longer sentences and a higher number of complex sentences.*

Because of the role it plays in improving writing, correction of written production has provoked some controversy. Many studies carried out by scholars such as Ferris and Roberts, (2001), Zamel 1985 and Lalande (1982) advocate differing approaches to written correction falling under main categories :

a- Explicit or direct: where the teacher indicates the error and provides the correct form.

b- Non-explicit or indirect: where the teacher only marks the error in some way by underlining or using a code and leaves it to the student to correct (it).

Some researchers like Chastain (1990), Scott (1996) and Ruiz Funes (2001) see that the best way of dealing with students' errors is just to indicate the type of error without giving the correct answer and it is to the student to solve the problem by correcting what should be corrected. Here, we think that such a procedure is a good and encouraging classroom practice.

In a different study Ferris (1999) sees that errors can be classified as treatable (patterned and rule-governed), or untreatable for which there is/are no specific rule(s) that students can refer to, to avoid making mistakes. For these errors she recommends a combination of direct correction and a set of strategies exclusive to this type of error.

Our students need to know that it is very important to understand that there is no ideal model for writing and that they cannot be compared to native speakers or more proficient students. Teachers also need to know that our students are dealing with a Foreign Language and therefore are not able to produce a perfect piece of writing as natives do. In this respect, Yates and Kenkel (2002:34) point out "To compare the learner's knowledge to native speaker knowledge commits the comparative fallacy and provides incomplete insight into what principles the learner had."

When dealing with students' writing, teachers should bear in mind that it is extremely important that any correction or feedback procedure should reflect the kinds of tasks the students go through in the classroom. Their ultimate goal is to judge the performance of the students by checking for correct usage and grammar and being mainly concerned with organization of ideas and the quality of content as well when correcting students' writing.

Teacher Feedback as a Major Social Affective Strategy

Researches that were carried out in the E.S.L. classroom indicate that teachers most frequently respond to the mechanical errors the students make (Applebee 1981. Zamel 1985 reported in Robb et al 1986). In formal schooling as Bordren (1973) and Graff (1980) mentioned in Freedman et al (1985) pointed out, formal schooling denies writing as a form of communication. The new outlook at writing as a cognitive communicative act calls for a new outlook at error correction.

When correcting, teachers are required to be more message oriented. Raimes (1979) says that when we pick up the composition of an E.S.L. student, we do not have automatically to look for errors. She suggests that E.S.L. composition teachers must always, and at all levels, look at a piece of writing as a message conveying the ideas of the writer.

The same thought was voiced by Hatton (1985: 109) who said that correction should deal with content before form and that "correction should give feedback, therefore it should be specific and emphasize areas where

progress is being made"); that is to say, correction is supposed to be on the positive than the negative side.

Nature and Role of Teacher Feedback

When we speak about feedback, it is essential to mention the role the teacher plays in this operation. Reid and Kroll (1995: 18) highlighted the complex nature of the teacher's role towards students' writing based on the factors that follow. "Teachers often play several roles, among them coach, judge, facilitator, expert, respondent and evaluator as they offer more response and more intervention than an ordinary reader".

Sommers (1982) found that most teachers' comments are vague and do not provide specific reactions to what students have written. Because of this, she says students revision show mediocre improvement and some revised essays even seem worse than the original ones. Additionally, when commenting on teachers' responses to students' drafts, she stressed the need "to develop an appropriate level of response for commenting on a first draft and to differentiate that from the level suitable for a second or third draft." Sommers (1982:332). Comments therefore should be adapted to the draft in question. As far as the early drafts are concerned, "the teacher's goal should be to engage students with the issues they are considering and help them clarify their purposes and reasons in writing their specific texts" Ferris (1997:315). This relates to Ferris, and Tate (1997) summarized the Key principles of teacher response in process-oriented writing classes as follows:

- 1- Allow time for **multiple drafts**.
- 2- Give between-draft feedback.
- 3- Focus on ideas rather than grammar on early drafts.

However, Fathman and Whalley (1990:187) found that "grammar and content feedback can be provided separately, or at the same time without overburdening the student "

In their study that included 72 students enrolled in intermediate E.S.L composition classes who were divided into four groups and received a

different kind of teacher feedback on their (writing) compositions as follows. Group 1 received no feedback, group 2 received grammar feedback only, group 3 received content feedback only and group 4 received grammar and content feedback; they found that students receiving joint grammar and content feedback could improve significantly in both grammar and content when rewriting. However, the students' writing was limited to 30 minutes based on a story of eight (08) pictures, and may not reflect students' experience with academic writing.

Although Ferris et al (1997:155) describe responding to student writing as potentially: "the most frustrating, difficult and time-consuming part of the job.". They stress its crucial role. In their study they found that teacher feedback varied over time according to the type of text and stage depending on the draft; they reached the following implications.

1. Teachers should be sensitive to the needs, abilities, and personalities of their students when providing feedback.
2. Different types of assignments lead to different responses.
3. Teachers should be able to reduce the amounts and types of feedback given over a course so that to build on feedback an instruction already given, respond to student improvements and develop increasing independence in revision and editing skills.

As far as the distinction between teacher and peer feedback is concerned, Ferris et al see that: *Feedback from peers has different purposes and effects than feedback from an expert or authority; teacher-student conferences, because they involve primarily spoken interaction, operate under different dynamics and constraints than does written teacher feedback.* (Ferris et al 1997:159).

This means that the two types of feedback cannot be directly comparable, or true alternatives mainly because oral versus written communication, and the teacher's level is undoubtedly better than that of the student. Ferris et al (op.cit:160) come to the conclusion that for most

circumstances teacher feedback would be more desirable and is of a greater importance. They argue that : *though most L1 and L2 experts remain enthusiastic about peer feedback and one to one writing conferences as instructional options, they are not always more desirable than written teacher commentary, given individual student variation listening/speaking ability in learning style preferences, and in cultural expectations of the teacher- student relationship.*

It is not easy for teachers to provide (the) students with a useful feedback that enables them to improve their writing. The question that many be asked by these teachers is whether to focus on form (grammar and the mechanics of writing), or on content (ideas organization, meaning, clarity and the amount of details). "The major question confronting any theory of responding to student writing is where we should focus our attention". Griffin (1982:296).

Although not much attention is paid to correctness in the Process Approach in that the importance of content passes first through the different drafts, "many teachers maintain a strong interest in correctness in spite of this recent focus on process". Applebee (1981:21).

Our teachers seem to be concerned mainly with specific problems and surface features of writing and their reaction is limited to the errors and mistakes occurring at the sentential level without bothering much about discourse. Zamel sees that teachers: *attend primarily to surface level features of writing and seem to read and react to a text as a series of separate sentences or even clauses rather than as a whole unit of discourse. They are in fact so distracted by language related local problems that they often correct these without realizing that a much larger meaning-related problem has totally escaped their notice.* (Zamel cited in Jordan 1997 : 171).

Furneaux (1998) sees that feedback focuses initially on content and organization. When these are satisfactory, comment on language is given on penultimate drafts for final amendment. All in all, we can add that our

teachers should help students become proficient writers by providing them with the appropriate feedback that leads them to review their work productively. Such an aim can be attained only if appropriate contexts for such feedback are created.

Teacher Feedback in a Process Approach

The product oriented view of writing regards writing as a linear fragmented procedure “where much feedback to students on their writing appeared in the form of a final grade on a paper accompanied by much red into throughout the essay”. (Grabe and Kaplan 1996 :378), and that the rise of the Process Approach marked the beginning of a new era in L2 writing pedagogy.

The new perspective of giving response to student writing is characterized by providing feedback, and emphasis of writing is now on the whole discourse; the stress is often on function rather than form, on the use of language rather than on its usage. The role of teachers is no more that of an authority but as helpers (assistants) to help students be responsible for what they produce. They are the facilitators who offer guidance and support. We want to say that the feedback system in the Process-oriented Approach is quite different in that it regards composing as a complex developmental task.

It concentrates more on how discourse is created through the discovery and negotiation of meaning than to the production of error free sentences. Language is viewed as a means to explore the students' ideas. The focus in the Process Approach is how to give “reader based” feedback (Elbow 1981), the point about grammatical accuracy is left or postponed to the final stage. By offering feedback on both content and form, the writing activity becomes more comprehended in that it helps students form the first stage, i.e that of jotting down ideas to the final stage of refining of the whole written paragraph or essay. Thus, making the work of providing feedback to students become more demanding.

Teacher Feedback to First Language Students' Writing

Zamel (1987) pointed out that how teachers respond to student writing is another indication of how writing is taught (p.700). Just like we frequently ask ourselves how best to teach language; we also ask the question how best to respond to students' writing and try to find an answer to that. According to one estimate, teachers spend at least twenty to forty minutes responding to an individual paper. (Zamel 1980:80). This Kind of information leads us to accept/agree that responding to written productions is time consuming and, even more worrying that, often of little use to students (Sommers 1982. Hillocks 1986).

Traditionally, responding to student writers' work equals marking. Hedge (1988: 37) sees that it is: *a considerable part of the work-load of the average English language teacher. It usually takes place under pressure of time and leaves teachers with a dissatisfied feeling that they can only make a minimal contribution to the improvement of an individual student's writing.*

Leki (1990) in a review of issues in written response, observes that L1 research studies have concluded that the commentaries teachers make when responding to writing are frequently too general, too specific and usually focusing on surface level features. In an earlier study, Zamel (1985:79) had already confirmed that: "Teachers marks and comments usually take the form of abstract and vague prescriptions and directives that students find different to interpret".

She advises teachers to avoid vague comments when responding to students writing so that the latter could benefit from the information presented to them, sine it is crucial and necessary to the perfection of the writing skill. She adds "teachers therefore need to develop more appropriate responses for commenting on student writing." Zamel (op.cit:79)

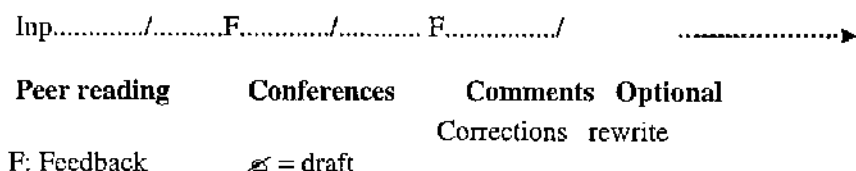
Applebee (1981) led the first national survey of writing instruction and among his findings of particular study is that the majority of the

teachers focused on the mechanics of texts and only 1/5 of the students reported the habit of addressing ideas and content. This, we believe, clearly passes on an extremely restricted idea of writing. If we agree with Keh (1990:294) when she observes that feedback is described as "Input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision... what pushes the writer through the writing processes on to the eventual end product."

We therefore must come to the idea that responding solely to the mechanic aspects of the text will lead the attention of our students to those aspects of composing and consequently encourages them not to give importance to text organization and content.

Keh (1990) observes that feedback as revision is mostly encouraged by three different procedures:

Peer feedback, conferences, and teachers comments (See Figure 3.1 below and its implementation)



Figur.1 Implementation of Feedback (for one paper)
(Keh 1990. p.295)

Then she suggests what she thinks the best way to put them into practice, peer feedback being the first source of information the apprentice writers receive about their writing.

Feedback is advantageous and relevant particularly when writing is viewed from a process-oriented perspective. It helps novice writers to gain self-confidence when they feel they are able to comment on each other's written work. It is also an opportunity for them to develop critical skills in

the teacher as a reader, not as a writer, other than their teacher who stops to be the evaluator of the learner's writing. The other advantage of using peer feedback is that it is immediate, that is, takes place in the classroom which is not the case of teacher feedback that often waits till the next lesson.

Although Keh considers peer feedback a useful stage in the writing process, she adds that it should not be understood as a better or a substitute for teacher feedback. The author further explains that this first type of feedback is followed by a second draft. Conferences is the moment when the teacher and student interact and the former feels it possible to address the student's real needs. *The teacher reader is a live audience, and this is able to ask for clarification, check the comprehensibility of oral comments made, help the writer sort through problems, and assist the student in decision-making.* Keh (1990:298)

Finally, the teacher makes written comments, and here the teachers should adopt a slightly different attitude by avoiding writing comments that do not help the student writer or confuse him. Keh observes that: "the first step is for the teacher to respond as a concerned reader to a writer—as a person, not as a grammarian or a grade giver." Keh (1990:301)

Keh's perception of the importance of paying attention to the nature of comments on student's writing is shared by Kehl who instigates the teacher to communicate "In a distinctly human voice with sincere respect for the writer as a person and a sincere interest in his improvement as a writer." Kehl (1970:976)

To put this orientation into practice, our teachers need to help students to develop a sense of awareness and confidence in themselves and counteract the negative influence of the traditional approach where the teacher is always viewed as an authoritative person where comments cannot be discussed. On the contrary, and if we want to be more effective, we need to explore how students interpret comments, employ them in revision and learn from the process of doing so. Praise and positive reinforcement, too, are

be incorporated in our teaching strategies to promote a better teacher-student relationship. (see Daiker 1989). In other words, our teachers should take into account the point the student reached and not where we want him/her to arrive.

Students' Perception of Teacher's Feedback

Language learners' perception of their teacher feedback on their work, or their view about which forms of feedback they believe help them to improve their writing skills are not usually given importance by teachers when providing feedback on students productions. Nor have they been object of a known and significant amount of research at least in Algerian universities. Although it is our strong belief that teacher's response to students' writing plays an important role in encouraging writing and developing students' wish to revise and to rewrite

Cohen's study (1987) focused on the E.F.L and E.S.L learners reaction to teacher's feedback.

It is an investigation that dealt with the extent to which E.F.L and E.S.L learners process teacher feedback on their compositions. Cohen also looked at what teachers' responses tended to deal with and what forms of feedback might cause difficulty to students to interpret. He selected 217 students from New York State University attending different courses in English as a foreign language and English as a second language. He collected data via a questionnaire that consists of questions that primarily focus on the nature of teacher feedback and on the strategies of how students view it.

Concerning students' strategies to deal with teacher's feedback, the results showed that students had a limited source of strategies to deal with teacher feedback. Some of them reported that they just made a mental note of those comments. Taking down notes and points referring to other papers, looking over corrections and doing nothing were the most common

strategies to process feedback. Just 9% of the learners reported that they considered teacher's comments and therefore incorporated them.

The two aspects of teacher feedback that were given the greatest importance by the learners were grammar and mechanics in that 89% and 83% of the students respectively paid the most attention to them, these two aspects were followed by vocabulary 79%, organization 74% and finally content 61%. The conclusion we can draw from these findings is that students paid considerable attention to aspects of writing in which teacher's response was scarce like content and organization 32% and 44% respectively.

Cohen's research study can be summarized in two points:

1- Students have limited strategies to deal with teacher's responses to their work; that is, feedback has a limited impact on students.

2- Teacher's feedback tends to concentrate more on structure and vocabulary rather than meaning and content.

Ferris (1995), who based her research in L1 and L2 writing on the works done by Krashen 1984, Hillocks 1986 and Freedman 1987, found that teacher feedback on multiple draft compositions is more effective when given on preliminary (or immediate) rather than final drafts. She also cited L2 studies by Chaudron 1994 and Zhang and Halpern (1988) supporting the effectiveness of teacher feedback on preliminary drafts for subsequent revised texts. Chaudron has compared differences in student revisions based on two evaluation methods: teacher comments and peer evaluations. The former consists of pointing out, but not correcting the different occurring errors; that is, grammatical and mechanical; in addition to weaknesses in content, the latter followed guiding a short summary on the merits and problems of the text graded by the teacher and finally passed on to the students. The same essay was given to all and it was found that neither evaluation method was superior in promoting improvements to the writer's text. "no overall difference" Chaudron (1988: 47)

Ferris study (1995) in a university E.S.L setting with multiple drafts found students perceptions of teacher feedback highly encouraging in that students consider their teacher a real source of help. Ferris (1995: 50) noted that: *Students do attend to, grapple with , and appreciate the efforts their teachers make in responding to their writing. Most importantly, this study indicates that the priorities of process-oriented writing instruction-multiple drafting emphasis on content, and willingness to utilize a variety of strategies (including collaboration with others) to solve problems and respond effectively to teacher feedback-are being understood and accepted to some degree by the E.S.L composition students .*

Seemingly , what preceded supported findings by Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994) of an L2 study in a pedagogical setting where multiple drafts were required, but the question whether writers might appreciate feedback at other points in the writing process either from teachers or peers was left to others to investigate. Hayashi (1998), a Japanese researcher examined this area and took into consideration the effect of the combination of teacher feedback and peer response on errors in written work. In her study, peer correction was largely limited to grammatical errors and received a mixed response over the three groups of Japanese freshmen, which Hayashi applied to differences in students' achievement goals and proficiency. 80% of those surveyed admitted that teacher feedback was helpful and positive.

In conclusion of her study, Hayashi, sees that teacher feedback gave the best results if given on final drafts and peer response alone was less effective than when supported by teacher feedback. Here, we share the same idea with her because we also believe that our students need teacher feedback and expect a lot from him/her.

Students' reactions to teacher feedback vary from a student to another and we can expect numerous and different attitudes towards it. The setting is one of the factors contributing to different responses to teacher comments.

Hedgcock and LeBlowitz (1994) reached the conclusion that college level E.S.L. students were generally more interested in feedback relating to content, while college level English as a foreign language learners paid more attention to form. These results reveal that E.F.L. learners see little use for L2 writing skills. It can be expected that many E.S.L. students may value comments on content more highly than those regarding sentence level errors and may put more emphasis and make more revision on this area. Ferris and Tade (1997) see that the reason for this distinction originates from the different uses that each of these groups had for English.

The philosophy of the classroom and how English is viewed by our students is another factor that should be taken into account when we consider how students respond to teacher feedback. In a classroom that adopts a Process-oriented Approach, students have different preferences and expectations than those in a classroom that adopts a Product Approach; i.e. that requires only one draft.

Ferris (1995) suggests that because students must rethink and revise previously written essay drafts, they are more likely to pay more attention to their teacher's advice on how to do so than in a situation where they simply receive a graded paper with corrections and comments.

How to Respond to Students' Writing

Responding to students' writing has always had an important consequence for students in that they get motivated to learn more mainly when they systematically receive constructive and supportive responses to their writing.

Research conducted on these responses has shown that teachers respond to most writing as if it were a final product, thus reinforcing a very limited notion of writing. (Zamel 1985). We are saying this simply because with the emergence of the Process-oriented Approach, unlike a Product-oriented Approach, responses no more concentrate on the surface level (for

example: memoranda, spelling, etc. Here, it is important to note that effective comments during the writing process, which involves multiple drafts attending to both content and language at separate stages, (will) help students improve and encourage them to do so. Grabe and Kaplan (1996:378) see that: *One of the major positive impacts of the writing Process Approach has been the thorough rethinking of responses to students writing. A direct outcome of multiple drafts and pre-writing activities has been the exploration of ways in which teachers can assist students most effectively in their writing*

If we assume that we have adapted the Process Approach when responding to student's first draft, We would like to suggest the following guidelines that might help our teachers:

1. Focus should be put on content rather than language errors.
2. Make clear and specific comments and respond with statements as well as questions.
3. The teacher (Respondent) should not impose his own interpretation on student's writing.
4. Consider strengths as well as weaknesses by bearing in mind that commenting positively by showing the strong points can be a beneficial experience for the student.

We believe that when teachers follow the above cited guidelines when responding to students' writing first drafts, it is likely that the latter would take the different comments into account and get motivated to avoid the multiplicity of mistakes they make on their next productions. The operation in the writing Process Approach and between the first, second and final drafts) and through the different stages enable the teacher to assist students in a more effective way to improve their writing.

At beginning levels of writing development, Frank (1979) provides us with other guidelines we consider useful mainly for teachers working with beginning writers

1. Build a helpful spirit and give directions for appropriate criticism (eg. Find the funniest sentence, find two good words, find any sentence that is not clear, think of something that might be added)
2. Start with anonymous pieces from outside the classroom for class criticism and ease into the process of critiquing slowly.
3. Focus on the positive.
4. Separate revising from editing
5. Do drafting together.
6. Work often with short pieces
7. Give specific responses: point out sentences that do not make sense, strong or weak openings, the need for more descriptive words, the over-repetition of vocabulary.
8. Decide what techniques need to be refined.
9. Recycle editing experiences into the next writing activity.
10. Avoid false praise.
11. Do not persist in an activity if student are resistant.

White and Arndt (1991) give examples of «Process Feedback» at various points in their book; according to them process feedback exhibits some or all the following features.

1. Response is made to content as well as to language and the text is treated as a piece of communication and the teacher reacts to it as a reader not just as a language critic.
2. Comments cover what is good about the text as well as what would be improved.
3. Many comments are put forward in the form of suggestions for change rather than instructions.
4. Students are not generally given the full solution to a problem on a plate, but they are firmly steered in a direction where, with thought, they should be able to arrive at a solution.

5. The teacher may assume a role akin to that of a colleague offering assistance to a fellow-writer rather than to that of an instructor.

Conclusion

Effective teachers' comments on students' writing help students improve their writing and encourage them review their work productively. The teachers concerned with students' written productions should bear in mind that giving response provides not only an incentive to improve, but also a guidance about how to do better. When adopting a Process Approach to writing, teachers should give students enough time and more opportunities allowing them to work extensively and provide them with more instruction in writing and the teaching of writing to develop competence and confidence when tackling the writing process.

Overall, it is worthwhile reiterating the following points to serve as guidelines and principles for our teachers:

1. Make feedback an integral part of the writing process.
2. Provide informative and explicit feedback.
3. Feedback should be more accurate.
4. Students need to develop strategies for incorporating feedback in an effective and positive way.
5. Students show a greater degree of positive motivation if they receive feedback that considers positive comments.
6. Teachers should make suggestions that make students carry out revisions in the areas of organization, grammar and mechanics.

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