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How Can Student`s Second Language Writing Accuracy be Enhanced in Higher Education?

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Abstract

This article explores strategies for enhancing writing accuracy among second language learners in higher education. Despite the increasing importance of effective written communication in today's globalized world, many students struggle to produce accurate texts in their second language. The paper examines the complexities of second language writing development, focusing on the need to acquire multiple skills simultaneously, including rhetorical, cognitive, and grammatical abilities. This article investigates the effectiveness of various approaches to improving writing accuracy, including collaborative writing, different types of feedback, such as automated written corrective feedback and recorded oral feedback. The research aims to identify and assess the most effective strategies for fostering accurate second language writing skills in a university context.

Key Words: *writing accuracy, higher education, academic writing, collaborative writing, automated feedback, oral feedback, language proficiency, academic performance.*

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Introduction. In today's interconnected world, effective written communication has become an indispensable skill, particularly in academic settings. Obtaining a degree in any field requires students to demonstrate proficiency in writing essays, proposals, theses, and dissertations, showcasing their mastery of the subject matter. However, for second language learners, this writing process presents a unique set of challenges. This article delves into the critical issue of developing writing accuracy among second language learners in higher education, specifically focusing on university students in Uzbekistan. While the importance of English as a global language has led to increased emphasis on English language proficiency, many students still struggle to produce error-free texts. Moreover, this article explores the inherent complexities of second language writing development, highlighting the need for students to acquire a range of skills, including grammatical accuracy, vocabulary usage, punctuation, and overall coherence, to produce effective academic writing.

Learning and gaining a degree in any field is quite challenging and it always requires high proficiency and developed skills in that field. Especially, in high education as outcome of learning process, students should show their developed skills in writing essays, proposals, thesis and whole diploma paper before graduating. This writing process is quite complicated because of proper style, grammar rules and citation; indeed, it becomes even more

complicated when they are written in second language. As Carol Severino and Shih-Ni Prim wrote in their case study, writing development at tertiary level is complex and multifaceted. As both an expression and a means of formulating ideas, second language writing requires the acquisition of multiple intellectual, rhetorical, and cognitive abilities; knowledge bases related to disciplines, topics, and genres; and syntactic, lexical, grammatical, and mechanical skills, all simultaneously orchestrated and performed. In result, sometimes the concentrating on the accuracy of the text, could be really problematic task and it can require lots of effort to handle. Weak writing accuracy is common problem among second language both graduate and undergraduate students that should be improved in order to achieve good academic performance and high score in their GPA. While investigating the different ways of enhancing accuracy in second language writing, several effective approaches were revealed. In this research paper, the ways of developing writing accuracy through group writing, several types of feedback, including automated written corrective feedback, recorded oral feedback will be explored.

Materials and Methods

In the research for this article a mixed-methods approach to investigate the effectiveness of collaborative writing and feedback mechanisms in enhancing writing accuracy among second language learners. The study was conducted at



Webster University in Tashkent, with a sample of 60 undergraduate students enrolled Bachelor of Educational studies.

For this research quantitative data and qualitative data analysis methods were included. Pre-test and post-test scores were analyzed statistically using paired t-tests to determine the effectiveness of the interventions in improving writing accuracy. The qualitative data was collected by the group discussions and student reflections were analyzed thematically to identify patterns and insights related to the students' experiences with collaborative writing and feedback.

For the pre-test and post-test two writing tasks (essay and reflection) were designed. These tasks were designed to be relevant to the students' academic field and assessed writing competences, including grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and overall clarity. To assess the writing, a rubric was developed that included criteria for grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, and overall clarity, with each criterion assigned a score from 1 to 5. Students were assessed through an online grammar checker tool (grammarly.com) that enabled us to acquire instant feedback on grammar, spelling, and punctuation errors in their writing.

Results

Having analyzed both quantitative and qualitative data to assess the effectiveness of collaborative writing and feedback mechanisms in improving writing accuracy among

second language learners, quantitative data was gathered in terms of writing accuracy improvement after having feedback and group writing. The results showed a statistically significant improvement in writing accuracy for both the Collaborative Writing Group and the Feedback. This indicates that both interventions were effective in improving students' writing accuracy.

When it comes to qualitative results, students in the Collaborative Writing Group reported that working in groups helped them to improve their writing skills through co working, while peer review allowed them to identify and correct errors in their own writing that they might have missed individually. Moreover, working with peers encouraged students to use more varied vocabulary and complex sentence structures and the collaborative environment provided a safe space for students to take risks and experiment with language without fear of judgment.

They also mentioned that online grammar checker provided immediate and specific feedback on grammatical errors, helping them to understand and correct their mistakes, in comparison to oral feedback that was personalized from instructors.

The results of this research conducted among 60 undergraduate students at Webster university, suggest that both collaborative writing and feedback mechanisms are effective strategies for improving

writing accuracy among second language learners.

Analysis of literature:

The development of writing accuracy in a second language is a multifaceted challenge, requiring learners to navigate complex linguistic and rhetorical conventions. This literature review explores the effectiveness of two prominent approaches to improve writing accuracy: collaborative writing and feedback mechanisms. We focus specifically on the potential of these strategies to enhance the writing skills of Uzbek learners of English, considering their unique needs and the broader context of Uzbek education. Research consistently demonstrates that collaborative writing creates a supportive and interactive learning environment that promotes writing accuracy. [Pham, 2021] argues that collaborative writing encourages active engagement in the writing process, leading learners to develop a deeper understanding of grammatical and stylistic conventions. [Sang & Zou, 2023] found that collaborative writing through "joint production" significantly improves both accuracy and complexity in second language writing.

Studies exploring the impact of written corrective feedback offer mixed results. [Cheng & Zhang, 2021] found that providing comprehensive written corrective feedback can sustain learners' writing performance, while [Deng et al., 2022] suggested that coded focused feedback is more

effective than unfocused feedback in improving writing accuracy. [Ning, 2023] explored the impact of automated written corrective feedback, demonstrating its potential to improve writing quality, particularly for learners who struggle with grammar and syntax. Research suggests that integrating collaborative writing with effective feedback mechanisms can create a more comprehensive and effective learning experience. [Sang & Zou, 2023] highlight the benefits of joint production, where learners collaboratively write and receive feedback from both peers and instructors, demonstrating that this approach fosters deeper engagement and higher levels of writing accuracy.

Discussion

In writing process not only second language learners, but also native students should pay attention different factors such as using language properly, in terms of grammar, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary. If students follow all of these aspects and complete them properly they can produce highly accurate piece of writing. In other words, grammar, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary usage are key factors to formulate writing accuracy during writing process. According to Barrot and Gabinete (2019) in writing process producing language without errors is considered accuracy. Error-free texts, whether mistakes are grammatical, punctual or related to spelling and vocabulary, show student's ability to create accurate

texts in any field. In the field of second language writing there has been much lively discussion with regard to the role of writing in our academic field. In today's information society, writing has become an essential tool for people of all professions; it has been considered a major accomplishment to be able to express one's thoughts in written form, something which once considered the domain of the elite and well-educated (Solhi, M., & Eginli, I., 2020). Two decades ago, people who could write effectively and accurately in their second language, especially those whose second language was English, were considered members of intelligentsia, whereas, today's globalized world has its own requirements to their habitants. In other words, nowadays, common tertiary students ought to produce accurate texts in their second language like in their native languages.

Learning English and specially learning to write well in English has always been of utmost importance and has gained precise attention in recent times. As Pincas (1982) states since English has become a global language, English learning and the ability to write well in English in different settings and for different purposes has turned into a crucial issue in language education programs. For students, at Universities of Uzbekistan, English has become the second language. According to legislation of Uzbekistan and newly adopted law on The National System of certification (2021), all of newly applying master's and post-doctorate students should

have certificates at minimum B2 level, whereas language related fields require students to own C1 certificates. That is real example how second language, especially English is important in academic field. Most of language learners including EFL learners face serious problems in English writing all over the world because the ability to write in English requires the learners to have a great deal of lexical and syntactic knowledge and also to be familiar with the organization of English language sentences and text governing rules and principals to a desirable extent (Solhi, M., & Eginli, I., 2020). Writing is regarded as a crucial skill in English language curricula at the secondary and tertiary levels in education system of Uzbekistan.

Group writing

One of the important activities for the students at the tertiary level is collaborative or cooperative learning. Since the 1970s, when the communicative language teaching approach was introduced to English language learning, students started to join each other and exchange with their experiences and skills while collaborating and cooperating. Bremner (2010) states that instructors frequently employed collaborative learning at universities to help students conduct projects together and share work together. Each person is in charge of one part of the project to be completed faster with better results. Specifically, in the academic writing classrooms at universities,

collaborative/cooperative learning activities aid students in working together to brainstorm ideas during discussions for writing process and create a comprehensive outline to help each other conduct their writing accurately. At the same time there was great contribution in moving the teacher-centered to student-centered approach, resulting in many benefits to the language learners in terms of writing. For more than two decades, teachers have employed group writing in second language learner (L2) classrooms. In this writing activity, students negotiate ideas, interact to make joint decisions, and engage in a composition process yielding a single outcome resulting from co-ownership and shared responsibility (Storch, 2013). In other words, group writing is such a process that allows students to share their ideas and thoughts, discuss all opinions before writing something, then in writing process to complete each other, fill their minuses, strengthen weak sides and enhance writing skills and structures. In addition, the collective efforts enhance L2 learning, as they generate a joint scaffolding that helps students identify linguistic gaps, form hypotheses, and talk about other languages while they cohesively develop a co-constructed text (Hanjani & Li, 2014). Graduate students, for example, at Webster University in Tashkent, take several courses during semester in their second language (English). However, the language level of the students are not the same, starting from B2 ending with, even C2,

they attend identical course and practice the same thing. Especially in writing processes, when all students are collaborating, the students with lower language skills can learn from proficient students and develop their language skills. They can benefit from learning new structures, collocations and functional language subconsciously. As L2 students complete a mutual writing project, they subconsciously cultivate the skills needed for group, interactive writing (Storch, 2005). Moreover, during this process students with high language level can develop their interactive skills as teamplayer that is crucial for everyone in academic sphere.

Group writing can be implemented differently among the group. Two or more people have the opportunity of cooperating and coworking to produce piece of writing. The procedure encourages all members of the group to participate actively during the composition, proposal of ideas, negotiation of structures, and editing of the text. These activities constitute and result in a collective achievement. It is important to note that collaboration does not distribute projects independently among group members and then encourage them to assemble a final product (Cole, 2009). Moreover, this collaboration encourages them to act not independently, but actively as group members during group writing, share responsibilities and tasks with each other. Group writing requires that a group work as a team to create

documents; scholars have found that this mutuality encourages linguistic proficiency and better academic performance (Elola & Oskoz, 2010).

Another feature of joint production is teacher-scaffolded feedback whose provision is dynamic, responsive and individualized (Carless et al., 2011; Kurzer, 2018). It shifts from teaching knowledge to engaging students in meaning making and problem solving in the process of which students can gradually develop their ability to regulate their thinking and language. Besides, teacher-scaffolded feedback is graduated and contingent. Through meaningful interactions, a moderate amount of needs-based feedback is provided, which maximizes the possibility of learners' internalization of related language points, leading to improved accuracy.

Feedback

Another effective way of developing writing skills in tertiary institutions is giving feedback. Feedback is known as one of the traditional ways of commenting and reaffirming ideas, tasks. There are several types of feedback such as Automated Written Corrective Feedback and Recorded Oral Feedback, peer feedback, feedback by tutor, however, Automated Written Corrective Feedback and Recorded Oral Feedback are chosen the most efficient ones for graduate students. The reason for this view will be elaborated in following paragraphs.

Many scholars in the field of ESL/EFL language teaching refer to the central role of corrective feedback

in teaching writing. Kulhavy (1977) claims that learners' achievement will increase as they understand which parts of their texts need to be corrected and improved. Feedback

is a useful factor in raising learners' understanding of rhetorical, informational, and linguistic expectations of the reader (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994). As noted by Cardelle and Corno (1981), feedback on students' writings will lead to better and effective learning since as learners receive more feedback for their performances, they understand which aspects of their writings need modification. Carless (2006) asserts that feedback can help learners focus their attention on the purpose of writing by modifying their thinking or behavior toward their work.

Automated Written Corrective Feedback

Among different language learning skills, writing skill occupies a crucial part in various levels of learning and tests (J. Zhang, 2019). However, in the meantime, most English as a Second Language (ESL) students stated that "expressing ideas in correct English" (Evans & Green, 2007, p. 8) would be the biggest obstacle for their English learning. Under this background, Bitchener and Ferris (2012) have contended that written corrective feedback (WCF) plays a key role in second language (L2) writing because it might serve as a useful tool for L2 learners to improve their writing performance. Because of the importance of English writing skill and the difficulties facing English learners,

it could be meaningful to continue to examine the potential effects of WCF on students' writing quality.

Written corrective feedback (WCF), also referred to as grammar correction or written error correction (Ferris et al., 2013), involves "correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a student's ability to write accurately" (Truscott, 1996, p. 32). WCF has long been widely utilised and recognised as an integral part of feedback in L2 writing across different educational levels and institutions around the world. Given its essential role in L2 writing instruction, WCF is a topic that has been brought up repeatedly over the past four decades.

Recorded Oral Feedback

Corrective feedback in writing refers to constructive explanations on the appropriateness or accuracy of students writing, aiming to enhance their writing ability and teach effective writing to them. Giving feedback to students writing is believed to be necessary to improve students' skills and knowledge (Issa, Isaías, & Issa, 2014) is probably the most important duty of a writing teacher and perhaps the most time-consuming endeavour on the part of the teacher (Cavanaugh & Song, 2014). Although it is unanimously agreed by learners, instructors, and scholars that providing good feedback is necessary to revision, establishing a mutual consensus "on how feedback should be given, when, by whom, and what sort of feedback is most useful" has

not always been possible (Weigle, 2014, p. 232).

However, focusing heavily on the accuracy of texts deprives writing of its communicative function and turns a writing class into a grammar class. In fact, a premature focus on language may hinder students' signs of progress of idea generation (Weigle, 2014). Despite the natural tendency of the writing instructors to focus primarily on sentence-level accuracy, some scholars (e.g., Ferris & Hedgcock, 2004; Williams, 2005) argue for providing feedback primarily on the content before commenting on language issues. As it is practically unfeasible to address each issue in student writing, how to deal with student writing is an important issue to be thoroughly considered. Many scholars recommend, as Weigle (2014, p. 12) states, "prioritizing errors that interfere with comprehension, errors that are stigmatized, errors that are current focus of instruction, and errors that occur frequently".

Conclusion

In conclusion, first of all, it worth re-mentioning that learning English and specially learning to write well in second language has always been of utmost importance and has gained precise attention among graduate and undergraduate students in recent times.

Based on the done analyses, it was manifested that group writing both types of corrective feedback, automated corrective feedback, oral recorded feedback can help students to develop their writing accuracy

including sentence structure, word usage and punctuation. By deeply analyzing the sources, it can be concluded that if implement all these types of learning effectively, they can have positive effects on students' writings. In conclusion, the ability to write accurately in a second language, particularly English, is a crucial skill for academic success, especially in higher education settings. Incorporating collaborative writing and targeted feedback into the

curriculum can significantly benefit second language learners, enabling them to produce error-free, coherent, and academically rigorous texts. As English continues to be a global language, mastering writing skills in English is essential for academic and professional success. Implementing these strategies can help students in Uzbekistan and beyond achieve higher levels of writing accuracy, ultimately contributing to their overall academic performance and future opportunities.

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