

بعض اتجاهات طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية بالجامعات الليبية نحو التغذية الراجعة المكتوبة للأساتذة

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ملخص الدراسة :

تهتم هذه الدراسة بالتعرف على اتجاهات طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية بالجامعات الليبية نحو التغذية الراجعة المكتوبة التي يتلقونها من أساتذتهم. تكونت عينة الدراسة من عدد أربعين طالبة من قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية بالعجيلات. تم تجميع البيانات عن طريق استبيان وتم تحليل النتائج إحصائياً. أظهرت النتائج أن الطلبة يتفاعلون بشكل إيجابي مع ملاحظات أساتذتهم المتعلقة بتصحيح أخطائهم على الرغم من تفضيلهم لبعض طرق إعطاء هذه الملاحظات أكثر من غيرها. يمكن الاستفادة من نتائج هذه الدراسة في تطوير الاستراتيجيات المتبعة من الأساتذة في إعطاء التغذية الراجعة المكتوبة وهو ما بدوره يمكن أن يؤدي لتحسين كتابة الطلبة باللغة الإنجليزية.

Some Libyan EFL University Students' Attitudes towards Teachers' Written Feedback

Abstract

This study investigates the attitudes of some Libyan EFL university students towards the corrective feedback they receive from their writing teachers. The sample consisted of 40 students who were studying in the English department of Agelat College of Education. The data was collected through a close-ended questionnaire and was analyzed statistically. The results of this study revealed that the students' attitudes towards written feedback were positive; despite their preference of some types of feedback over some others; such as assessment feedback. Finally, the implications of the findings of this study can contribute to the development of Libyan EFL university instructors' strategies of

providing their corrective written feedback which may result in improving students' writing in English.

1. Background of the Study

My experience with English writing classes as a student and as a teacher has led me to building a firm belief that writing represents a challenging skill for FL learners to develop and for language teachers to teach. Therefore, I decided to write my first paper about this aspect of language teaching and learning. The focus of this paper will be on investigating some Libyan EFL university students' attitudes towards the feedback they receive from their teachers on their writing assignments.

Providing feedback on students writing is supposed to be a main task for English writing teachers. There are many types of feedback and the related literature as will be discussed in the next section show a lack of consensus about the superiority of one type over another. By contrast, there is an agreement about the importance of feedback and its fundamental role in developing students' writing.

Students often have different opinions about the effectiveness of their teachers' feedback and they always prefer certain strategies have preferences correcting their errors. Therefore, gaining information about students' attitudes towards corrective feedback may help teachers in adopting the right strategies for providing their written feedback. The focus of this paper therefore will be on investigating some Libyan EFL university students' attitudes towards the written feedback they receive from their teachers. The findings of this study will have useful implications for improving teaching writing, in general, and for developing appropriate strategies for providing teachers' written feedback, in

particular. These objectives can be achieved through enhancing the teachers' awareness about the most effective ways for providing their feedback and leading the students to change their attitudes towards such constructive feedback.

2. Literature Review

This section introduces the conception of corrective written feedback through investigating the related literature. Written feedback is one of the most effective ways for improving EFL students' writing. This type of feedback can be provided through different sources. Instructor's written feedback represents the most frequently source of feedback (Williams & Jasmine, 2003). According to Keh (1996:13) "feedback is a fundamental element of the process approach to writing" and can be defined as "input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision". In other words, it includes the comments, questions, and suggestions given to writers for the purpose of improving their writing (Flower, 1979).

Molavi (2014) investigated the impact of Iranian EFL teacher's written feedback and the learners' attitudes towards it. The results showed that different feedback types can affect writing improvement differently. The results of this study also reveals that statement feedback is the most effective comment. Regarding the attitudes of students, it was found that they are significantly influenced by the types of feedback. Al-Sawalha (2016) examined how Jordanian EFL students at Jerash University react to their teachers' written feedback and the effect of feedback on the writing processes. The data was collected from twenty students from third year. The findings of the study indicates that students vary in their attitudes toward teachers'

written feedback. The majority of them perceived this feedback as useful for developing their writing. This study concludes that teachers' written feedback has a positive impact on improving students' writing quality. Banan (2010) conducted a study in the American University of Sharjah to investigate the nature and the focus of English teachers' written feedback. And to identify the nature of students responses to their teachers' written. The results showed that the teachers focused on formal aspects of writing at the expense of content issues. The findings revealed that the most frequent types of revision comments were formal and therefore the students did not benefit from the feedback.

2.1 Role of Feedback

Feedback on writing errors is essential in language learning. As Alavi and Kaivanpanah (2007: 181) put it “providing language learners with clear feedback plays a crucial role in developing learners' language abilities and helping them direct their learning”. In other words, it is considered as vital in improving and consolidating learning (Hyland, 2003). Feedback on students' writing has a clear influence on students' achievement in writing tasks (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). Feedback reveals what learning areas require more attention and positively motivates learners to further learning (Pica et al., 1996). This notion was also emphasized by Zacharias(2007). Therefore, giving the written feedback is seen as an essential task for writing teachers. Coffin et al. (2003: 102) maintain that “the provision of feedback on students' writing is a central pedagogic practice”. However,, over-correction of errors, mostly at early stages of learning, can be counterproductive and deceitful (Chaudron, 1988). Feedback is a keystone in both teaching and learning

processes. On the one hand, teachers can improve their strategies of providing in response to the feedback they receive from students. On the other hand, students can improve their writing by benefiting from the feedback they receive from teachers. This is positive as it encourages both teachers and learners to improve and give their best in the language classroom.

2.2 Types of Written Feedback

Different strategies can be used by teachers for providing feedback. Many factors determine the selection of the most appropriate strategies and types of feedback and this makes this process very challenging. For example, most writing teachers still not sure about the effectiveness of ‘meaning-focused’ or ‘form-focused’ feedback.

The type of feedback and the way of providing it has a strong impact on motivating EFL students to write. Many scholars correlate the lack of motivation and development in EFL writing with the teachers’ methods of providing feedback (Covill, 1997; Zamel, 1985). Some of the arguments raised in the literature emphasize that some students are not motivated to write because they do not get appropriate feedback from their instructors. It is reported that the writing teachers tend to focus on the form and the content which makes this kind of feedback general, unclear, and unhelpful (Zamel, 1985; Covill, 1997). This can reduce students’ interest in writing and negatively affect their writing quality. It is important therefore for the writing teachers to carefully select the most helpful feedback which motivates students and helps them improve their writing. Thus, there is a need for exploring some common types of feedback and investigating EFL learners’ attitudes towards them.

2.2.1 Meaning-Focused Feedback

Teachers of writing sometimes choose to focus on meaning when they provide feedback on students' writing. It is mainly based on evaluating the extent of the writer's ability to be meaningfully engaged in analyzing and interpreting the topic. Many scholars believe in the importance of this kind of feedback and provide the evidence for its positive impact on improving students' writing. For example, Farrah and Zaru (2014) emphasized that better writing is achieved when students are engaged in meaningful and problem-solving activities. It is believed that learners can be more motivated if they responded to meaning rather than form as this will make them feel that they are involved in constructing knowledge. Zamel (1982 :195) explained that "methods that emphasize form and correctness ignore how ideas get explored through writing and fail to teach students that writing is essentially a process of discovery." Similarly, Covill (1997) tested and confirmed the assertion made by many writing experts that teachers' written comments on students' writing should primarily concern the ideas or content ; not the mechanics or surface features.

2.2.2 Form Focused Feedback

Ferris (1999, 2002) claimed that error correction feedback would be of great value to second language writing learners and that grammar correction was favored by second language writers. Chandler (2003) reported some positive results for the form-focused feedback in writing in helping learners to produce better writing in comparison with other types of feedback..Olson and Ratteld (1987:273) investigated the effect of content comments and surface comments on students' writings on two groups of

students. The content comment aimed to encourage students to focus on the needed content and ideas. On the other hand, the surface comment focused on problems such as word choice, spelling, punctuation, and/or language use. They reported significant differences among groups for holistic scores and for learning course content. The treatment group that received content comments wrote significantly better essays than the control group. Believing that revision and feedback is the key to effective writing, Nelson and Carson (2006) found that writing learners prefer to get feedback from their teachers and that peer feedback is beneficial, especially when students are trained to provide their comments.

2.2.3 Direct Witten Feedback

Ellis (2009) believed that this type of feedback provides learners with explicit instructions and guidance about how to correct errors. This technique is useful when learners are unable to self-correct their errors. Ferris and Roberts (2001) suggested using direct feedback with learners of low levels of proficiency as they often do not know how to correct the erroneous forms. However, Ellis (2009) pointed out that direct feedback requires minimal treatment by learners themselves. This suggests that this type of feedback may not contribute to long-term learning. Nevertheless, Sheen (2007) found that direct feedback can be efficient in the acquisition of articles. Ellis (2009) also emphasized the advantage of direct corrective feedback in offering learners explicit information. The risk of the direct feedback is that teachers may misinterpret students' meaning and evaluate their writing accordingly. For (Ferris, 2002), direct feedback is appropriate in the following situations: 1)- for beginner students;

2)- when errors are ‘untreatable’, i.e., errors not amenable to self-correction such as sentence structure and word choice and 3)- when teachers want to draw students’ attention to other error patterns which require correction.

2.2.4 Indirect Written Feedback

According to Lalande (1982), indirect feedback provides learners with the competence of problem solving and guided learning and fostering them to ponder on their own errors and therefore, it is more likely to convey to long-term learning (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). However,, students with low proficiency may not have enough linguistic knowledge to correct their errors even when they are pointed out to them (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005). Chandler, (2003) claimed that the indirect approach might fail because it provides learners insufficient information to rewrite and correct complex errors (e.g. syntactic errors). He added that whereas direct feedback enables learners to instantly internalize the correct form, indirect feedback may leave the students unsure if their own hypothesized corrections are indeed accurate. Research results indicate that indirect feedback (i.e., indicating errors without correcting them) brings more benefits to students’ long-term writing development than direct feedback (Ferris, 2003). Ferris (2002) concludes that indirect feedback is generally more appropriate and effective than direct feedback.

2.3 Teachers’ Beliefs about Written Feedback

Teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning often shape their practices in classrooms (Griffiths 2007). Feedback is such an arduous and yet important task for teachers and therefore uncovering the beliefs that underlie teachers’ practices can help in identifying the factors that contribute to effective feedback.

The majority of the studies that focused on feedback addressed the act of teacher feedback, and not much is known about teachers' beliefs about written corrective feedback and the extent to which these beliefs are translated into practices. Relevant research demonstrated that teachers' beliefs often shape their practices (Borg 2001; Burns 1992).

Examining ESL/EFL writing teachers' beliefs about feedback can provide researchers and teachers with useful insights about the underlying principles of teachers' practices considering the close connection between teachers' beliefs and practices (Burns, 1992). This is critical because ESL/EFL writing teachers' beliefs can influence their feedback on students' writing, which, in turn, is likely to shape their students' self-perceived writing efficacy (Hedgcock&Lefkowitz, 1994), revision and writing quality (Tsui and Ng, 2000). Researchers comparing and contrasting ESL/EFL writing teachers' beliefs about feedback with students' beliefs and perceptions have identified that teachers and students share similar beliefs and perceptions about feedback (Montgomery & Baker, 2007; Schulz, 2001).

2.4 Students' Attitudes towards the Written Feedback

Language teachers should be ware of their students' attitudes towards the feedback they receive on their writing. In certain cases , teachers use certain strategies for correcting errors which do not meet students' preferences. This can result in decreasing students' interest in writing and in developing negative attitudes towards their teachers' written feedback; Hyland (2003) pointed this issue and stressed the necessity of accounting for students' preferences regarding the correction strategies. Katayama(2007) also noticed that the focus of most studies was on the

investigating the effect of feedback on students' writing and neglecting exploring students' attitudes towards corrective feedback. Needless to say, different students have different preferences and attitudes regarding the written feedback. Those differences were found in many studies. Zacharias (2007) stated that his participant students reported that teachers' written feedback was not a main cause for developing their writing. Truscott (1996) explained that students may adopt negative attitudes towards corrective feedback and this can be reflected in rejecting it. In Touchie's own words (1986), "teachers should not correct all students' errors since it could be disruptive in their learning process and discourage them from communicating." He emphasized the need for correcting serious errors. Language accuracy in students' writing may reflect the gradual improvement of students' writing which can result from receiving corrective feedback (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 2002; Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

3. Research Methodology

This section explains the research approach of the study and describes its design. It introduces the participants, explains the method of research 'the questionnaire', the data collection procedure and data analysis.

3.1 Participants of the Study

The participants of this study consisted of 40 students studying in the English Department of Agelat College of Education. They were randomly selected from the four years.

3.2 The Questionnaire

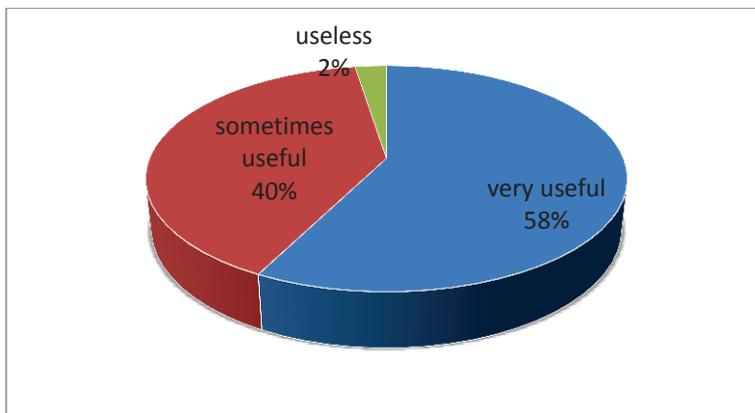
"Questionnaires are any written instruments that present response with a series of questions or statements to which they

are to react either by writing out their answers or selecting from among existing items" (Brown, 2001,p.6). .There are three types of questionnaires: open-ended, semi structured and closed-ended with regard to the way are designed .(Cohen et al,2007). The questionnaire used in this study is a close-ended. This type of questionnaire is easy and quick to answer, easy to compare and easy to analyze. It was divided into two sections : the first section asks for students' views about the teachers' written feedback and to what extent they find it useful. The second section contains 17 statements for investigating the students' reaction towards this feedback. The data for this study was collected during the period from 19 to 22 of March.

3.4 Data Analysis

This section presents the data of the first part of the questionnaire and the 18 figures that show the percentages of the students' responses to all statements of the questionnaire.

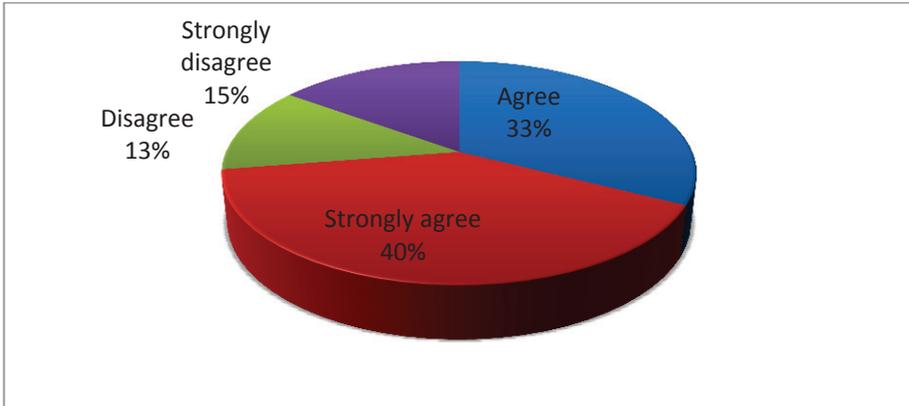
Figure 1- How useful is the written feedback that you receive from your teacher on your writing ?



This figure illustrates that 58% of the students reported that the written feedback is very useful . while , 40% of them think it is

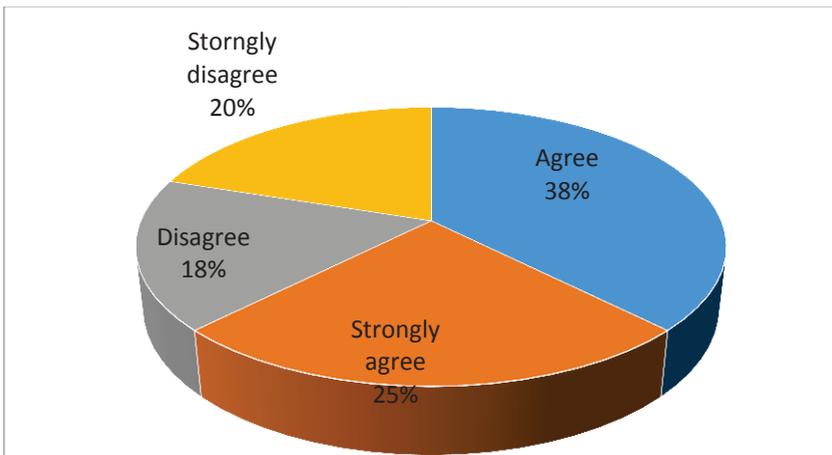
sometimes useful. However , 2% of the participants did not find it useful .

Figure 2 – The teacher's comments are too negative



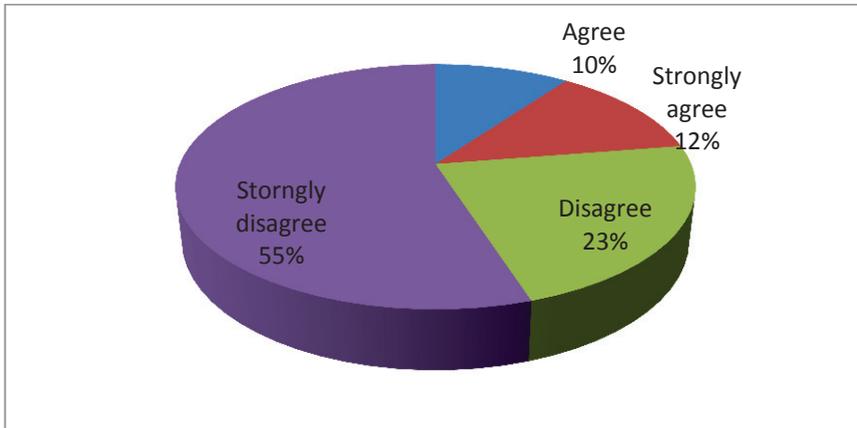
The results shown on the figure above indicate that the majority of the participants(73%) consider the teacher's comments as being too negative, while 27% of them disagree on this statement.

Figure 3- I am satisfied with my teacher's feedback



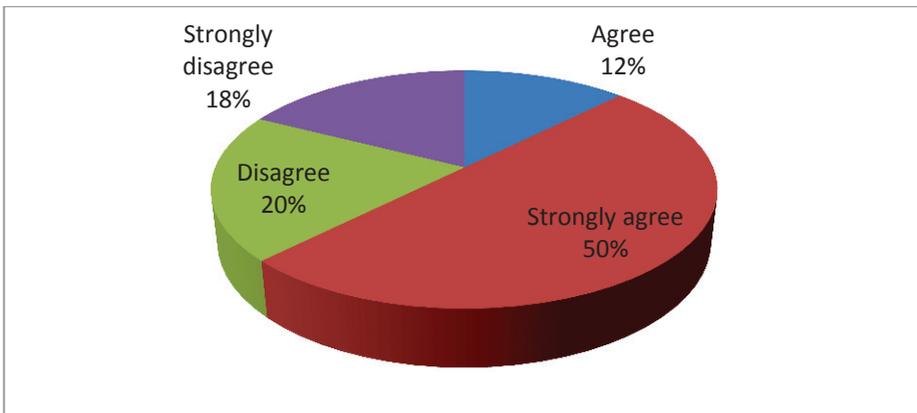
The results shown on figure 3 indicate that 63% of the participants are satisfied with their teacher's feedback, whereas, 37% of them are not pleased with it.

Figure 4- I like it when the teacher corrects all my errors .



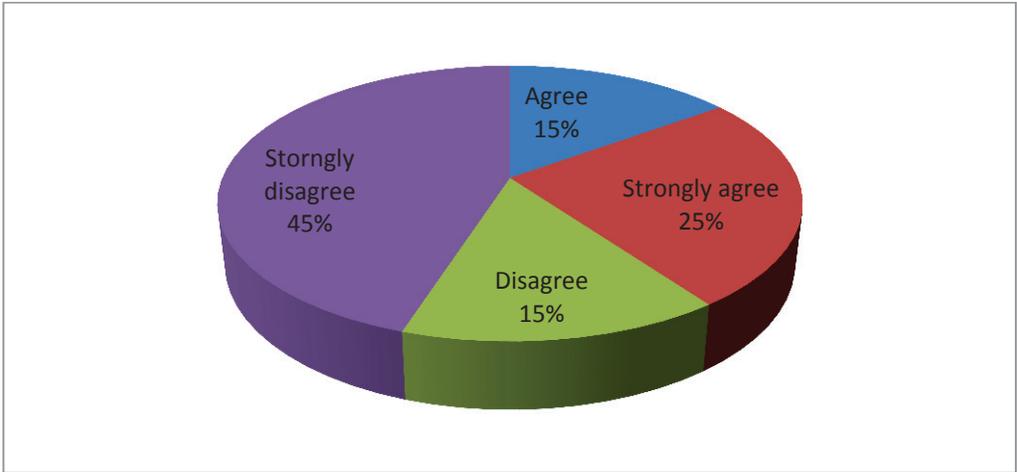
It is shown on figure 4 that 78% of the students did not like their teachers' correction of their all errors and that only 22% of the students like this strategy.

Figure 5- I like it when the teacher corrects only the most serious errors .



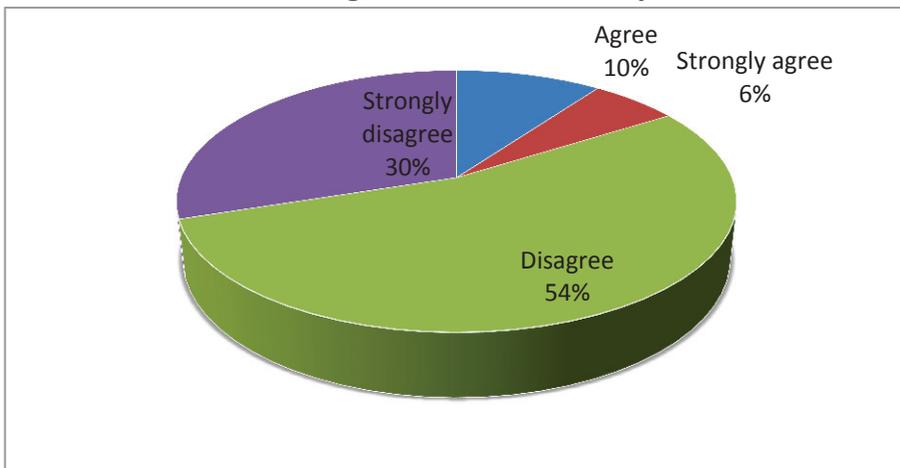
The figure above shows that 62% of the students prefer the teacher to correct only the most serious however, while 38% of them report their disagreement to this notion.

Figure 6- I prefer my teacher not to correct my errors but just to highlight them and ask me to correct them myself



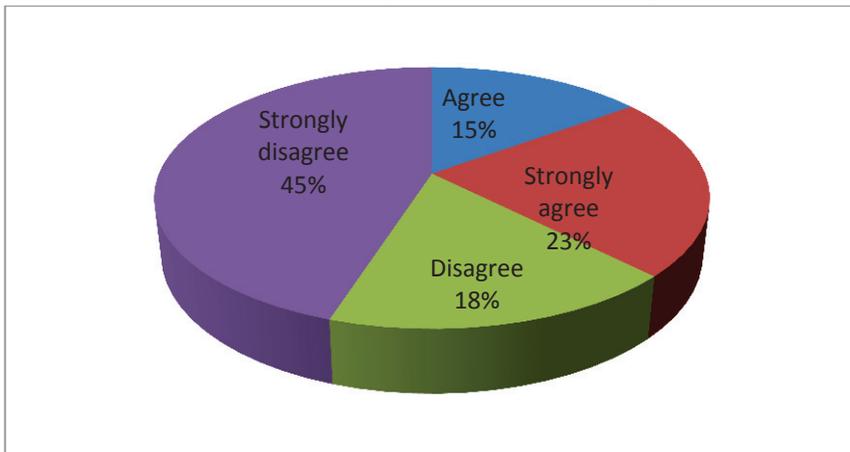
The result shown on figure 6 indicate that 60% of the participants reported that they did not prefer limiting the teacher’s feedback to highlighting the errors and letting the students correct them. However, the other 40% of the participants did not like this notion.

Figure 7- It would be better if the teacher makes some verbal comments instead of using written codes or symbols



As shown on the figure above, 84% of the participants prefer their teachers using symbols and codes rather than verbal comments. However, 16% of them like using verbal comments.

Figure 8- It would be better if the teacher does not correct or indicate any of my errors and just makes some general comments



As it is shown on the figure above, 63% of the students would not prefer receiving general comments, while, 37% of them prefer this strategy.

Figure9- I do not like it when my teacher comments only on my errors and ignores what I did well

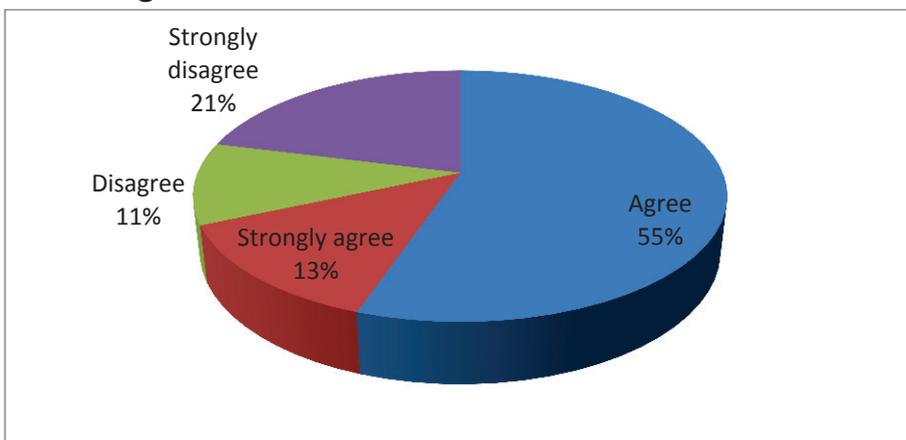
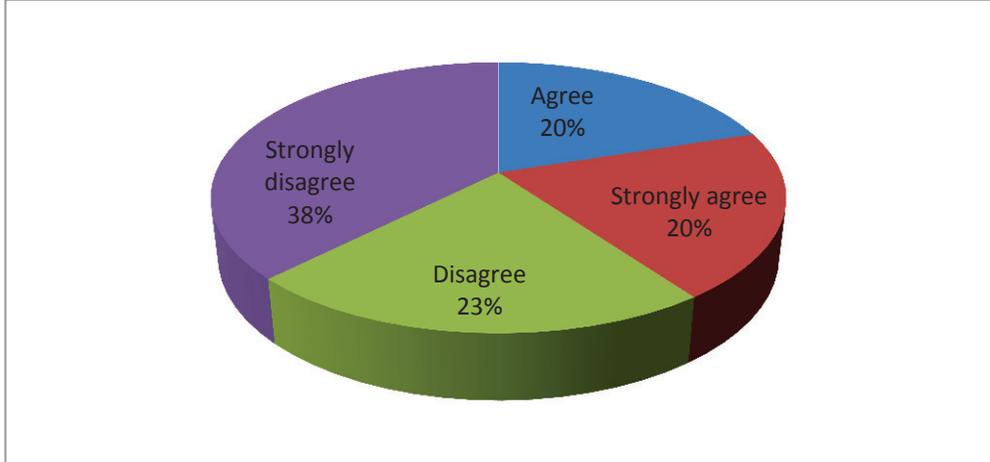


Figure 9 shows that 68% of the participants get disappointed when the teachers' feedback only points out what is wrong and does not praise the good points. Surprisingly, 32% of them did not reject this strategy/.

Figure 10- I could not understand the teacher's written feedback.



The results shown on figure 10 indicate that 60% of the participants do not understand the written feedback. On the other hand , 43% of them did not agree with this statement

Figure11– My teachers' comments improve my writing

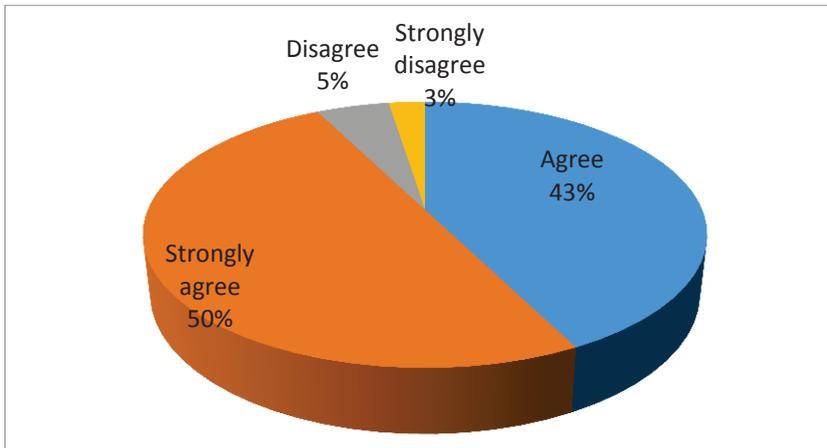
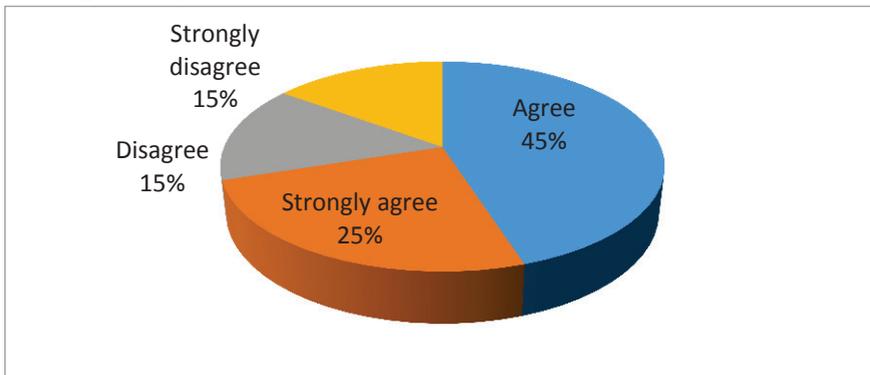


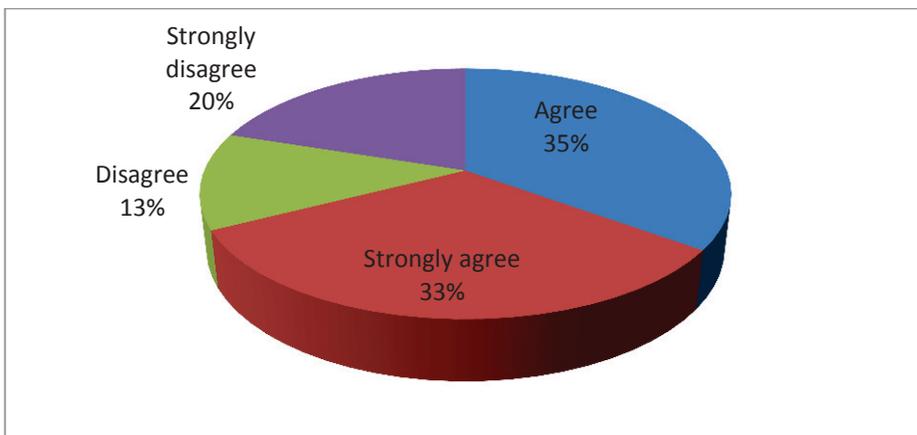
Figure 11 shows that 93% of the participants believe that their teachers' feedback plays an essential role in improving their writing. On the other hand, 7% of them declared that their writing did not improve.

Figure 12 –I have no problem in rewriting my assignment according to my teacher’s feedback.



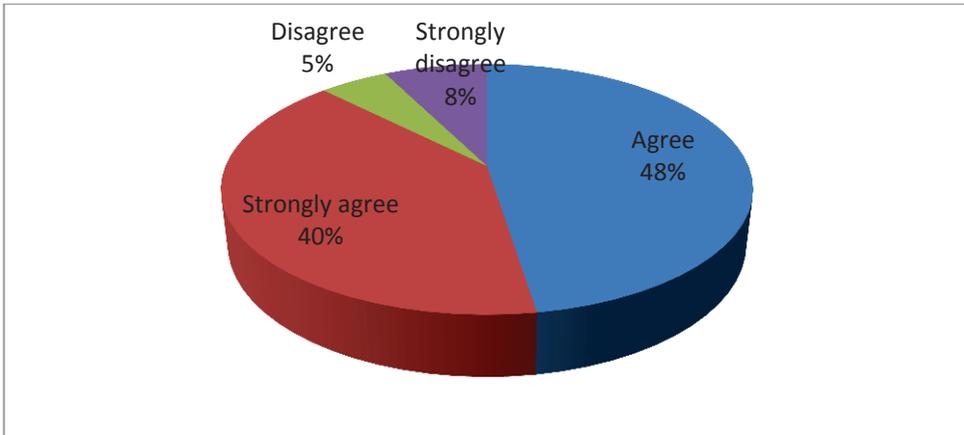
The results shown on figure 12 indicate that 70% of the participants accept rewriting their assignments after receiving the teacher’s feedback, whereas 30% of them did not like this notion

Figure 13- The details of feedback always show me what to do next.



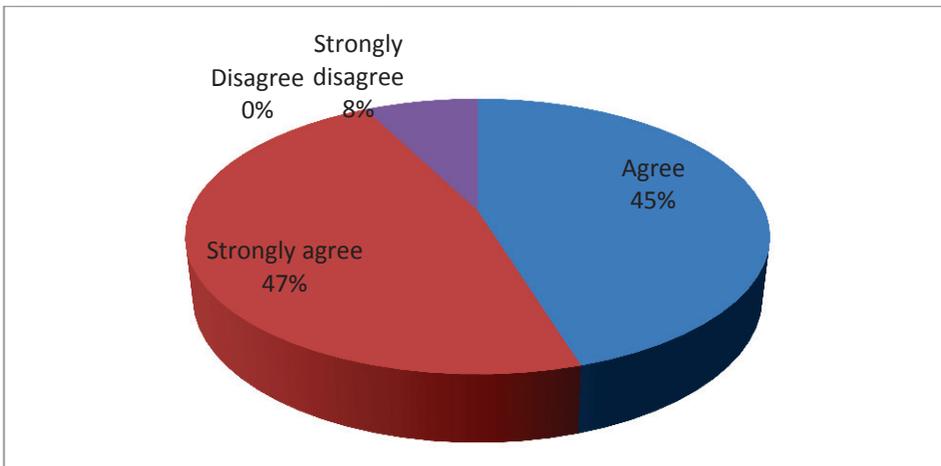
The results shown on figure 13 indicate that 68% of the participants believe that the feedback offers good guidelines for further while, 32% of them do not think so

Figure 14- I read all the written comments carefully.



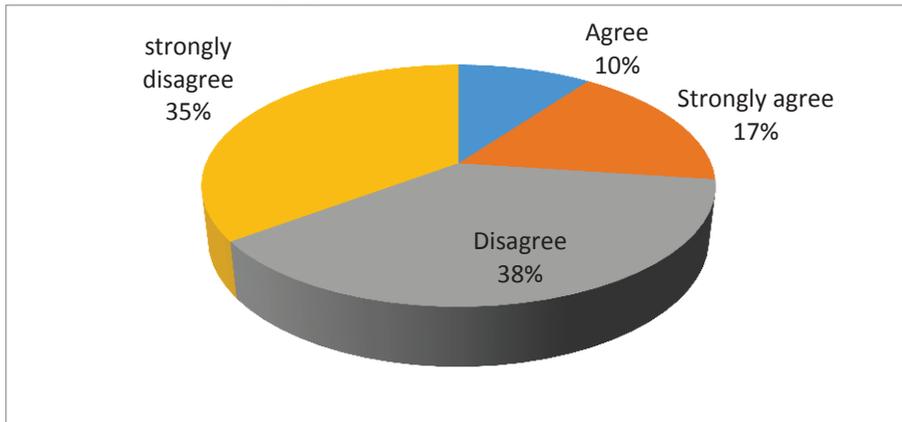
The results shown on figure 14 indicate that 87% of the participants tend to carefully read written comments. Only 13% of them admit that they do not pay attention to these comments

Figure 15 - Feedback helps me to improve areas in next drafts.



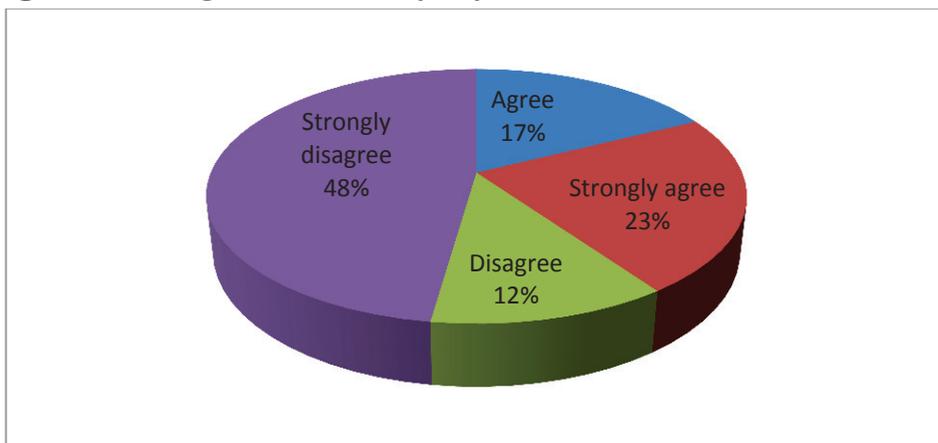
The results shown on figure 15 indicate that 92% of the participants learn from the feedback what areas to improve in next drafts, while 8% of them disagree .

Figure 16- I do not pay attention to feedback.



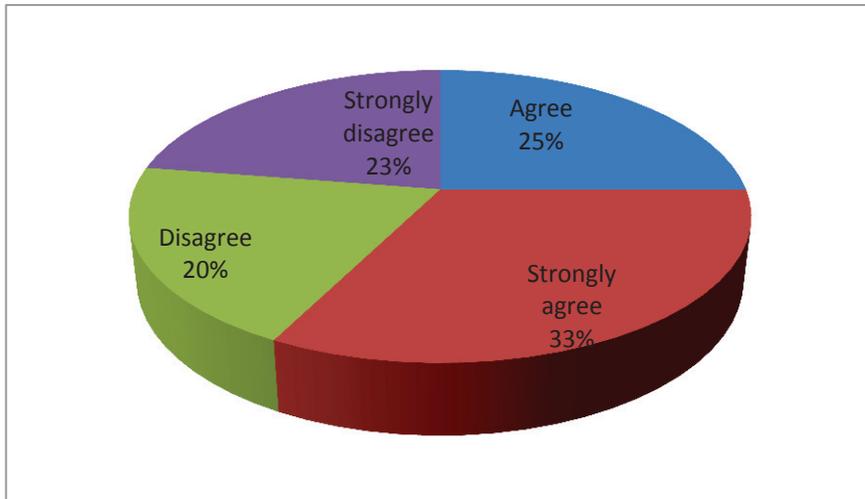
It is shown on the above figure that 73% of the participants do not pay attention to the feedback they receive . On the other hand 27% of them pay attention to this feedback.

Figure 17- I get confused by my teacher's feedback.



The figure 17 shows that 60% of the participants did not get confused by the feedback whereas 40% of them find this feedback confusing.

Figure 18- The mark I get is more important than my teacher's corrections and comments



It is shown on the figure above that 58% of the participants consider the comments and corrections they receive from their teachers as more important than the marks they achieve. However, the other 42% of them over estimate the marks than the comments.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings of the study: teachers' written feedback and students' attitudes towards this feedback. And it also presents the limitation of the study, recommendations and the conclusion.

The main aim of the present study was to investigate how do Libyan EFL university students at the Faculty of Education in Ajelat react to their teachers' written feedback on their written texts. The discussion is based on reflecting on the participants' responses to 17 statements about their teachers' written feedback.

4.1 Teachers' Written Feedback

The questionnaire analysis shed the light on some results regarding the teachers' written feedback. 72% of the participants claimed that the feedback they received was "too negative" while only 28% did not agree on this point. Another issue should be taken into account is that different teachers have different techniques for writing feedback. The participants reported different views regarding the correction of their error. 60% of them believe that errors should be corrected whereas 40% of them did not believe in the usefulness of this correction. This shows that some students prefer teachers presenting hints or signals to help them to correct their errors. As Makino(1993) stressed that sometimes students can correct some of their errors when other people such as teacher gave them cues about them. Feedback can also be presented with some verbal comments and only 16% of the participants preferred this over receiving codes or symbols.

Some teachers choose to give general comments rather than correcting or even pointing errors only 37% of the students prefer this strategy while the other 63% did not. This represents an evidence for students' preference of direct and specific types of feedback. According to Elis(2009) direct feedback provides the learner with explicit information and guidance about how to correct errors. Ignoring what the students did well while giving feedback is a mistake that some teachers make. The majority of the participants(70%) did not like this while the other 30% thought it was acceptable for the teacher to correct errors only. Strong and complicated language can also be a factor which limits students' understanding and interpreting the feedback. This

leads to no improvements in students' writing. This issue faced 40% of the participants. Detailed feedback can be seen as a generous gift which teachers can provide as 67% of the students believed that these detailed comments were always enough for guiding and showing them what to do next.

4.2 Attitudes towards Written Feedback

Students' preferences of feedback and the way it is presented can change a lot . If the way which the students were corrected does not match their preferences , the teacher would surly notice some negative attitudes among the students . Those parts regarding students' preferences had taken a big share in the previous chapters and this sub-section is mainly discussing the results obtained regarding the attitude of students towards written feedback. Receiving feedback can be such a satisfying process to some students and 62% of the participant confirmed this fact. A highly percentage of 77% of the participating students tend to appreciate correcting all errors while 63% agree with Touchie's (1986) claims that support teachers correcting errors which interfere with the understanding of the message and affect communication .Also stating that concentration should be on giving feedback regarding the serious errors .

It is known that feedback's main function is to enhance and improve students' writing skills every time they receive , as in Hyland's (2003) suggests, feedback plays an essential role in writing lessons since it is considered as vital in improving and consolidating learning it and this job had been perfectly accomplished as the majority of students presented in 92% of the participants confirmed that their writing witnessed serious improvements after being exposed to feedback regularly this also

matches some previous studies which proved that students receiving feedback on errors over a period of time can improve their language accuracy (Fathman&Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 2002; Ferris &Helt, 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Many teachers would think that rewriting can bother the majority of students but surprisingly , rewriting papers is a process that got the respect of 70% of the participants while the other 30% claimed that it is not a necessary step to take. Feedback can be graded as a successful thing or not on the basis of how students actually handled it . 87%admitted that they carefully read each and every comment given by the teacher and this can consequently leads to them recognizing what to avoid in their next draft which had the support of 92% of the participants.

In some cases and as Truscott (1996) pointed out that some students' unwillingness to change their intuitions and adopt their teacher's correction as they can be erupted by feedback so they simply choose not to pay it attention . A percentage of 27% of students admitted doing this behavior. 40% of the participants claimed that feedback leads to them being confused and not knowing what to do next . Finally, marks can be seen as an important method of evaluation by most of the students. This has been emphasized by 58% of the participants who declared that the mark they get is actually more important than the comments and feedback they receive from teachers.

4.3 Recommendation

It may be suggested that teachers comprise short discussions on error correction in everyday lessons to enhance students' awareness about the aim of feedback and the different types and methodologies available for providing this feedback. It is also

important to identify students' preferences for error correction and feedback and trying as much as possible to account for these preferences. Providing feedback in a supportive way will lead to students' development of positive attitudes towards their teachers' feedback.

4.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study investigated the attitudes of the English Department students in Agelat College of Education towards the impact of the written feedback on developing their writing. It discussed the four types of written feedback: meaning focused feedback, form focused feedback, direct and indirect written feedback. Students' attitudes play an important role in shaping their reactions to this feedback. These attitudes are affected by the way of giving the feedback and therefore teachers' understanding of and responding to the preferred ways of their students can lead to promoting their positive attitudes. Teachers' lack of attention towards this issue may result in making this process fails in achieving its aims. Giving the appropriate feedback through the most effective strategy can significantly enhance EFL students' motivation to write and can develop the quality of their writing.

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