

Role of ESL Teachers' Feedback in Improving Students' Writing Skills: A Case Study in City School Bahawalpur

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ABSTRACT

Feedback from English as Second Language (ESL) teachers is essential for improving students writing skills. Effective feedback provides students with specific, constructive insights into their writing, helping them to identify errors and correct them, improve their language use, and develop their overall writing competence. The current study addresses the evaluation and assessment of the changes in students' competence in writing skills at the upper primary level in the English language, focusing on the impact of ESL teachers' feedback on narrative and recount writing and giving recommendations for effective feedback to ESL teachers. The targeted population was the male and female students from City School Bahawalpur Campus. A sample of 20 students was taken using the convenient sampling method from the whole population of 120 students. A sample of the City School System, grade 5, was easily accessible, for which the study aimed at analyzing the impact of ESL teachers' feedback on students' narrative writing skills. An achievement test consisting of different creative writing tasks was developed to assess the students' competency and ability in creative writing skills, such as narrative writing and words count, by providing them the rubric to make them informed learners. Students were given the autonomy of planning their writing skills based on the provided rubric, which included originality of ideas, creativity, cohesion, coherence, syntax, content relevance, story structure, and word count. Experimental research was conducted by providing the students with a pretest. The content was timely checked and marked based on the provided rubric; constructive feedback was given to help students understand the areas for

improvement and to take ownership of their learning process in composing narrative. To assess the efficacy of the provided feedback, a post-test was conducted on the same sample of students after 15-days' gap. Data was analyzed by a simple statistical method by comparing the results of pretests and posttests. The findings indicate that constructive feedback from the ESL teacher had a significant positive impact on the students' narrative writing skills and word count. A majority of students demonstrated marked improvements in various aspects of their writing, including narrative and recount words. Feedback was particularly effective in enhancing the use of descriptive language.

Keywords: *English Instructions; Corrective Feedback; Assessment; Writing Proficiency*

INTRODUCTION

English is an international language; it is frequently utilized as the primary language. Speaking, writing, listening, and reading in English are the four categories of English language proficiency. Writing is one of the major language productive skills besides speaking. As everyone cannot easily express their ideas and experiences through speaking in a second language (English), not all the people can write to express due to many aspects of language sub skills. Writing is one of the English language skills that significantly affects people's everyday lives, as demonstrated by business and office activities, curriculum vitae, and personal letters. The act of putting thoughts, feelings, and ideas into words and expressing them in writing is called writing. Writing is essentially conveying information, a message, or an idea through grammatically correct sentences (Herman & Pardede, 2020).

Writing is a crucial component of students' academic success, so ESL teachers incorporate it into the curriculum. Writing helps students by reinforcing grammar, expanding their vocabulary, and supporting other language skills like speaking, listening, and reading (Kellogg, 2008). At the educational level, writing success serves a variety of functions. Important components of writing skill assessment include helping students both within and outside of the classroom, assigning grades, choosing students for suitable courses, and evaluating programs. To be transparent and relevant, the written literacy evaluation process needs to be well managed and structured (Elander, 2006). There are various text types used in writing, including narrative, report, recount, and descriptive texts. We discuss one of them, narrative text, in this paper. Writing in a narrative manner enables the author to tell a story. It may contain events that are recounted in a particular order, or it may contain fictional events that are recounted in a chronology that the author has constructed (Anderson et al., 2003). Our major focus is on the impact of assessment after a good explanation of writing criteria and the impact of corrective and timely feedback on the students' writing skills, specifically in two major genres: narrative and recount writings. Assessment and feedback mechanisms play a pivotal role in enhancing students' writing skills across educational settings. Through a comprehensive review of literature, this study examines the impact of feedback employed by ESL teachers to improve students' writing abilities and motivation towards learning.

The best approach to effectively assist second language learners in improving their writing abilities is to give them feedback (Chen, 2009). According to Shute (2008), receiving criticism is crucial for developing writing knowledge and abilities. Giving constructive criticism is therefore a crucial aspect of good instruction. Feedback mechanisms serve as valuable tools for scaffolding students' writing development. Effective feedback is timely, specific, and actionable, focusing on both content and language aspects of writing. Written comments, oral feedback, peer reviews, and teacher-student conferences are among the diverse feedback approaches employed to support students' writing growth. Moreover, technology-enhanced feedback tools offer innovative ways to provide personalized and interactive feedback among students (Leng, 2014).

Statement of the Problem

In recent years, there has been a growing concern about the writing competence of upper primary students in the English language, particularly in the context of English as a Second Language (ESL) education. Despite the emphasis on developing writing skills in educational curricula, many students continue to struggle with narrative and recount writing, which are essential components of effective communication. One significant factor influencing students' writing development is the feedback provided by ESL teachers. However, there is limited research on how this feedback specifically influences students' writing skills and overall competence. This study aims to fill this gap by evaluating and assessing the changes in students' writing competence following the implementation of structured feedback from ESL teachers, thereby providing valuable insights into effective teaching practices and strategies for improving student outcomes. The current study attempted to examine the importance and role of feedback on students' work and consequently assess its effect upon developing writing proficiency skills among 5th grade students.

Research Objectives

1. To evaluate impact of feedback provided by ESL teachers on students writing skills of upper primary class, focusing on narrative and recount writing.
2. To recommend effective feedback strategies for ESL teachers on effective feedback to enhance students writing skills of upper primary students based on the evaluation of feedback impacts.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for various stakeholders in the educational landscape, particularly in the context of teaching English as a Second Language (ESL) at the upper primary level. By evaluating the impact of feedback provided by ESL teachers on students' writing skills, this study aims to contribute to the improvement of narrative and recount writing among upper primary students. Enhanced writing competence is crucial for students' overall academic success and effective communication in English. The findings from this study will offer valuable insights into how different types of feedback influence student performance. This information can guide ESL teachers in adopting more effective feedback practices, thereby improving their instructional strategies and ultimately benefiting their students. Additionally, the recommendations for effective feedback strategies will serve as a resource for professional development programs aimed at ESL teachers. By equipping teachers with practical tools and techniques for providing constructive feedback, the study can help enhance their teaching effectiveness and confidence. Furthermore, this research will add to the existing body of literature on ESL education, particularly in the area of writing skills development. It will provide empirical evidence on the role of teacher feedback in student writing, which can be referenced in future studies and educational policy discussions. The insights gained from this study can also inform curriculum developers about the importance of integrating effective feedback mechanisms into ESL writing programs. This can lead to the design of curricula that better support students' writing development and address specific challenges faced in narrative and recount writing. Lastly, by focusing on the feedback process and its effects, this study aims to empower students to take ownership of their writing skills. Understanding how feedback can enhance their learning will encourage students to engage more actively in the writing process and improve their self-efficacy in English language mastery. In summary, this study is significant as it seeks to bridge the gap between teacher feedback and student writing outcomes, fostering a more effective learning environment for upper primary ESL students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feedback and its Kinds

Feedback is a vital component of English as a Second Language (ESL) teaching, as it helps learners monitor their progress, correct errors, and develop linguistic competence. In ESL pedagogy, feedback takes multiple forms and serves different pedagogical purposes. Below is a comprehensive overview of the types of feedback used in ESL teaching, with authentic and scholarly references.

Corrective Feedback (CF)

Corrective feedback is a pedagogical intervention where the teacher addresses learner errors and guides them toward more accurate language use. It is particularly crucial in communicative settings, as it not only reinforces correct forms but also fosters metalinguistic awareness. The ultimate goal is not merely error correction but the development of learner autonomy in self-monitoring language use.

Table 1. Types of Feedback in ESL Teaching

Type of Feedback	Definition	Example	Purpose	Authentic Reference
Corrective Feedback (CF)	Teacher responds to errors to guide learner correction.	S: He go school. T: He goes to school.	Improve grammatical accuracy and fluency	Lyster & Ranta (1997)
Recast	Reformulation of the error without direct correction.	He go school. → He goes to school.	Implicit correction	Lyster & Ranta (1997)
Explicit Correction	Direct correction with clear indication of error.	He go school. → You should say 'He goes to school.'	Promote accuracy via clarity	Lyster & Ranta (1997)
Elicitation	Prompting learners to self-correct.	He go school. → He...?	Encourage learner autonomy	Lyster & Ranta (1997)
Metalinguistic Feedback	Comments or questions about the form of the error.	He go school. → Remember subject-verb agreement?	Raise grammatical awareness	Lyster & Ranta (1997)
Clarification Request	Asking for clarification to indicate a problem.	He go school. → Pardon?	Signal error without correction	Lyster & Ranta (1997)
Repetition	Repeating error with questioning intonation.	He go school?	Indirect error indication	Lyster & Ranta (1997)
Formative Feedback	Ongoing, constructive input during learning process.	Great use of connectors! Try using more academic verbs.	Enhance learning progression	Black & Wiliam (1998)
Summative Feedback	Feedback at the end of an instructional period.	End-of-term test result with comments.	Evaluate final performance	Harlen & James (1997)

Peer Feedback	Feedback given by learners to each other.	Your essay has a strong thesis, but check your verb tenses.	Build autonomy and critical skills	Rollinson (2005)
Written Corrective Feedback	Error correction in written form.	I have went. → Teacher circles error and writes: 'went → gone'	Improve writing accuracy	Ellis (2009)
Direct CF	Correction is provided.	Teacher rewrites the incorrect sentence.	Provide explicit model	Ellis (2009)
Indirect CF	Error is indicated without the correct form.	Underlining or marginal marks.	Encourage self-correction	Ellis (2009)
Metalinguistic CF	Uses codes or comments about the error.	VT (verb tense) error	Raise language awareness	Ellis (2009)
Focused vs Unfocused CF	Focused: only certain errors; Unfocused: all errors.	Focused: only tenses; Unfocused: all mistakes.	Tailor attention to learner needs	Ellis (2009)
Oral Feedback	Spoken feedback during classroom interaction.	Nice fluency! But try to pronounce 'vegetables'	Encourage communication and accuracy	Wajnryb (1992)
Immediate Feedback	Given right after the learner's response.	He go school. → He goes to school. (immediately)	Reinforce correct usage quickly	Li (2010)
Delayed Feedback	Given after activity or task is completed.	Notes taken during speaking, discussed later.	Avoid interruption; promote reflection	Li (2010)
Positive Feedback	Encouraging and affirming correct use.	Excellent use of modal verbs!	Boost motivation and confidence	Dörnyei (2001)
Technology-Mediated Feedback	Digital feedback via tools or apps.	Grammarly underlines error: 'He go' → 'He goes.'	Instant, individualized feedback	Shintani & Aubrey (2016)

Recast

A recast subtly reformulates a learner's erroneous utterance without explicitly pointing out the mistake. This method is pedagogically significant for its unobtrusive nature, allowing learners to remain engaged in communicative flow. However, its effectiveness depends on the learner's ability to notice the discrepancy between their output and the corrected model.

Explicit Correction

This strategy involves direct indication of an error along with the provision of the correct form. While it may appear less communicative, explicit correction plays a critical role in clarifying linguistic rules and

preventing the fossilization of errors. It is particularly useful for beginners who benefit from overt instructional support.

Elicitation

Elicitation encourages learners to reflect on their linguistic output by withholding correction and instead prompting them to self-correct. This feedback strategy promotes cognitive engagement and responsibility in learning, positioning students as active participants in their linguistic development.

Metalinguistic Feedback

Rather than offering the correct form, metalinguistic feedback provides information about the nature of the error, such as comments or grammatical clues. This method is intellectually demanding, as it requires learners to interpret the feedback and deduce the correct form. It is highly effective for fostering long-term grammatical competence.

Clarification Request

This type of feedback prompts learners to reconsider their utterance by expressing non-understanding, often through interrogative cues. Although indirect, it disrupts the communicative exchange enough to signal an issue without overt correction, allowing learners to initiate self-repair.

Repetition

According to *Lyster & Ranta (1997)*, the teacher repeats the learner's error with a questioning intonation, drawing attention to the mistake without correcting it. This feedback subtly pushes learners to analyze their output and make appropriate corrections. It balances communicative continuity with pedagogical intent.

Formative Feedback

Black & Wiliam (1998) explained formative feedback is ongoing and process-oriented. It is grounded in assessment-for-learning paradigms and supports learners in real time. Its strength lies in shaping future performance rather than evaluating past errors. Teachers provide targeted suggestions that inform learning strategies and elevate learner confidence.

Summative Feedback

Contrasting with formative feedback, summative feedback is judgmental and is delivered at the end of a course or unit. However less interactive, it serves critical institutional functions such as certification and curriculum evaluation. In language classrooms, it must be supplemented with descriptive comments to retain educational value (*Harlen & James, 1997*).

Peer Feedback

When learners assess each other's work, it cultivates collaborative learning and mutual responsibility. Peer feedback encourages the development of evaluative language and metacognitive awareness. It must be scaffolded carefully to ensure that learners provide constructive and linguistically accurate input (*Rollinson, 2005*).

Written Corrective Feedback

Ellis (2009) mentioned that written feedback is particularly pertinent in ESL writing instruction. It addresses the textual dimension of learner output and allows time for reflection. Different types of written corrective feedback vary in explicitness and scope, each affecting accuracy differently. The teacher must match the method to the learner's proficiency level and error type.

Direct Corrective Feedback

This approach involves providing the correct form for the learner's error. It is teacher-centered but offers a clear and immediate model. While effective for surface-level accuracy, it may not encourage deeper processing unless paired with opportunities for learner revision (*Ellis, 2009*).

Indirect Corrective Feedback

Rather than supplying corrections, teachers indicate that an error exists, often by underlining or marking the margin. Indirect feedback compels learners to diagnose and resolve errors themselves, thus supporting long-term retention and critical thinking (*Ellis, 2009*).

Metalinguistic Corrective Feedback

This variant offers grammatical codes or concise explanations regarding the error, allowing learners to revise based on explicit rule awareness. It integrates form-focused instruction with self-regulated learning and is effective in advanced language instruction contexts.

Focused vs. Unfocused Corrective Feedback

Focused feedback targets specific grammatical structures, whereas unfocused feedback addresses all detectable errors. Focused feedback promotes mastery over targeted forms, while unfocused feedback offers a holistic approach to accuracy. The pedagogical choice depends on instructional goals and learner needs (*Ellis, 2009*).

Oral Feedback

Oral feedback, delivered during live interactions, provides immediate and contextualized input. It enhances spoken fluency and grammatical precision when delivered judiciously. Teachers must balance the need for corrective input with the natural flow of communication (*Wajnryb, 1992*).

Immediate Feedback

Delivered instantly following learner output, immediate feedback reinforces correct forms and interrupts the internalization of errors. It is particularly effective in controlled practice activities where accuracy takes precedence over fluency (*Li, 2010*).

Delayed Feedback

Rather than interrupting learners' mid-task, delayed feedback is provided afterward, allowing learners to maintain communicative fluency. This method fosters retrospective analysis and is often used in fluency-oriented activities. It is suited for intermediate and advanced learners (*Li, 2010*).

Positive Feedback

Affirming correct usage, positive feedback boosts learners' self-efficacy and motivation. While it does not directly address errors, it strengthens desirable language behavior and encourages risk-taking in language production. It is an essential complement to corrective strategies.

Technology-Mediated Feedback

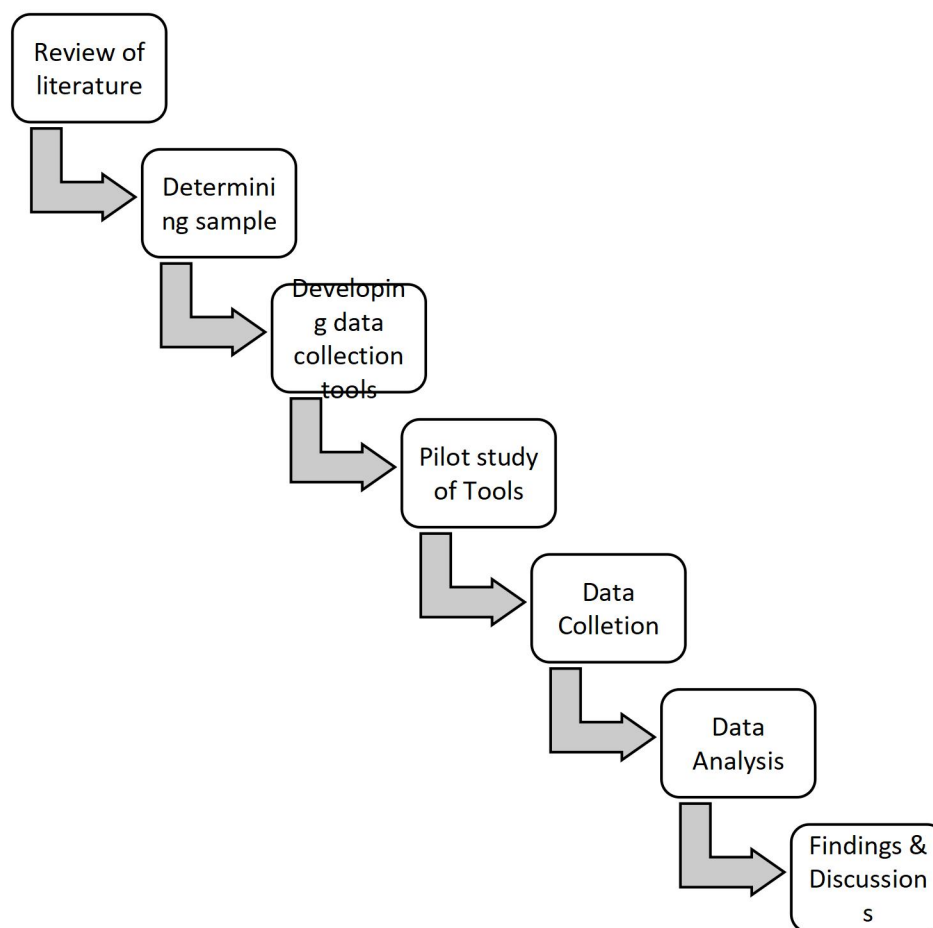
With the rise of digital learning environments, feedback is increasingly delivered via AI tools, writing software, and language learning apps. Such tools offer immediacy and consistency, particularly in writing tasks, though their effectiveness depends on the quality of their linguistic models and their integration into pedagogical frameworks.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

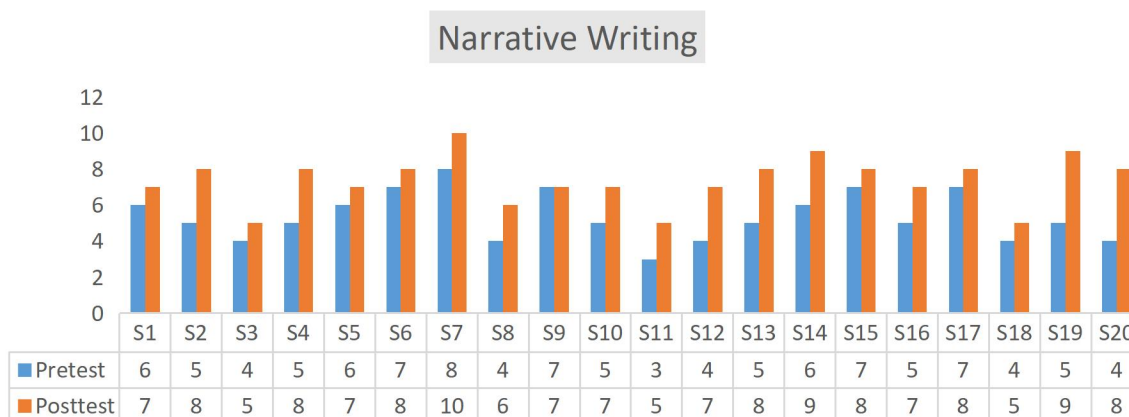
This research was designed to identify the role of ESL teachers' feedback in improving students' writing skills. Specifically, narrative writings and word count were in focus. The basic aim of the study is to analyze students' real knowledge of English writings by sudden assessment as a pre-test taken by an ESL teacher without delivering any lecture and analyze their improvement by analyzing the impact of feedback through a post-test. The nature of the present study was experimental, quantitative research, and an achievement test was used as a data collection tool. "A standardized test that gauges a person's knowledge and proficiency in a particular area of study, reflecting the learning objectives and subject matter of a particular program, is called an achievement test (Gronlund, 2009). According to Popham (2008), achievement tests are tools used to assess the extent to which students have learned specific content, allowing educators to gather data on student performance, diagnose learning needs, and evaluate the effectiveness of instructional programs. The population of the study consisted of all the male and female students of City School Bahawalpur Campus, which is 120. A sample of the study consisted of 20 students who were selected by convenient sampling, as it was our research requirement. Data was collected by conducting a pretest of grade 5, and then after fifteen days' a posttest was conducted for collecting data. Data was analyzed by using simple statistical methods such as the marks percentage in pre- and posttests.

Research Procedure

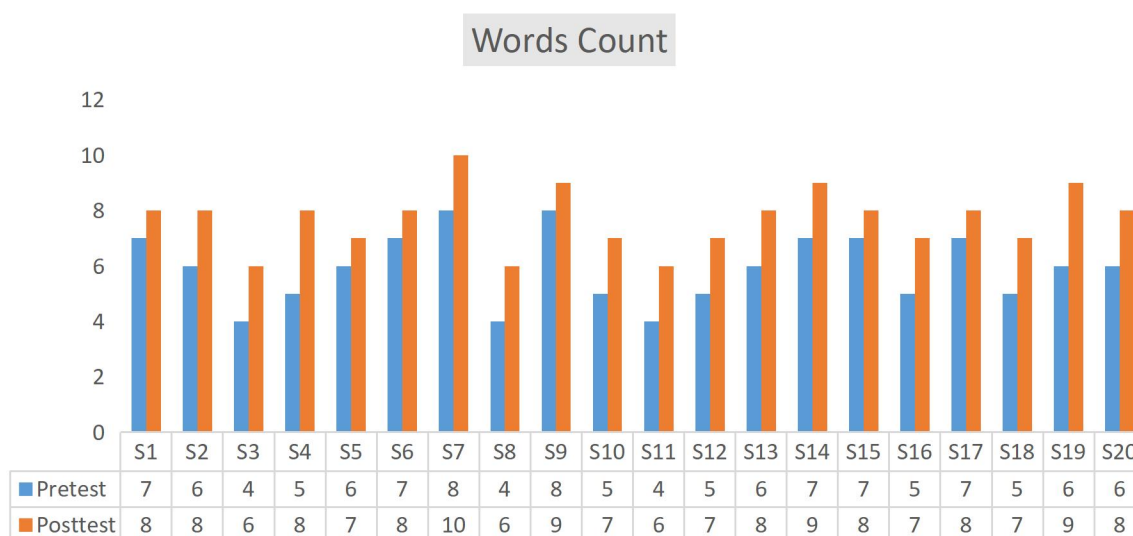
The procedure for conducting experimental research involves several structured steps to ensure the validity and reliability of the findings. Below is a comprehensive outline of the researcher procedure:



ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSIONS



The table indicates that the majority (95%) of the student's marks improved in posttests in the sense of narrative writing as compared to pretests. Only 1 student (5%) remains neutral after feedback.



The table indicates that the majority (100%) of the student's marks improved in posttests in the sense of words count as compared to pretests.

The presented findings demonstrate a significant positive impact of teacher feedback on upper-primary ESL students' writing skills, particularly in narrative writing and word count. The data provides compelling evidence for the effectiveness of the implemented feedback strategies. The dramatic improvement in marks for narrative writing directly addresses the first objective. This aligns robustly with a substantial body of research. Studies consistently show that focused, formative feedback leads to gains in specific writing aspects like organization, coherence, and linguistic accuracy within genres like narrative writing, as a study conducted by Hyland (2003) indicated. The feedback likely helped students understand narrative structure (beginning, middle, and end), temporal sequencing, character development, and descriptive language, key elements reflected in the improved marks. The finding that only one student (5%) remained neutral strongly suggests the feedback was generally comprehensible and actionable for this age group. The universal improvement in word count is a striking finding. While word count alone is not a direct measure of quality, it often correlates with increased fluency, confidence, and willingness to elaborate, as described by Storch (2005). For upper-primary ESL learners, generating more text is a significant step towards proficiency. This result suggests the feedback successfully encouraged students to expand their ideas and write more extensively, potentially by reducing anxiety, providing concrete suggestions for elaboration, or building confidence in their ability to produce text in English. This aligns with studies showing feedback can lower affective filters and motivate output.

These findings reinforce established knowledge, as the results strongly support the core principle that targeted teacher feedback is a powerful tool for improving specific writing skills in ESL contexts (Ferris, 2003; Goldstein, 2006). The success in narrative writing improvement supports research indicating feedback is most effective when tied to specific genre features and tasks (Hyland, 2003). The word count finding resonates with studies linking feedback to increased student engagement and text production, as stated in a study conducted by Ashwell (2000).

CONCLUSION

The study conclusively demonstrates a significant positive impact of ESL teacher feedback on the writing skills of upper-primary students, specifically evidenced by improved marks in narrative writing skills. Feedback led to substantial gains in assessed narrative writing quality for 95% of students, indicating effectiveness in improving key elements like structure, coherence, and language use within this genre. Feedback resulted in a universal (100%) increase in word count, strongly suggesting it enhanced students' confidence, willingness to elaborate, and overall written output fluency. The near-universal improvement (only 5% neutral) indicates the feedback provided was generally comprehensible and actionable for the target age group. Second, objective recommendations for effective strategies are based directly on the evaluation of feedback impacts. The study recommends the following effective feedback strategies for ESL teachers: Explicitly target genre-specific features (e.g., narrative structure, sequencing, description). Use scaffolding prompts and models to encourage elaboration and detail. Employ actionable, specific, and level-appropriate language in feedback comments. Balance correction with praise to build confidence and reduce anxiety. Implement differentiated feedback approaches to address individual student needs and responses, particularly for students not showing initial improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

The high success rates, particularly the universal word count increase, point towards highly effective strategies used in this study. Recommendations can be formulated based on what likely contributed to these positive outcomes:

- The significant improvement suggests feedback explicitly targeting narrative structure (plot sequencing, setting description, character actions/dialogue), cohesion (linking words, pronouns), and descriptive language was effective. It is recommended that explicitly teach and provide feedback on these specific narrative elements during writing tasks.
- The 100% word count increase implies feedback successfully prompted students to add details, descriptions, or explanations. Use feedback prompts/questions like "Can you tell me more about how the character felt here?" or "What did the place look/sound/smell like?" directly on drafts. Provide models of elaborated sentences.
- The high uptake (95% improvement) suggests feedback was likely clear, specific, and manageable for upper-primary students (e.g., "Add a time word like 'Suddenly' or 'Later that day' here "or" Try using a describing word before 'house' - like 'old', 'creaky', or 'mysterious'"). It is recommended that prioritize specific, concrete suggestions over vague comments like "Develop more" or "Needs improvement." Use simple language appropriate to the learners' level.
- The willingness to write more (word count) strongly suggests the feedback environment fostered confidence. Balancing corrective feedback with praise for effort, good ideas, or specific successes ("Great describing word 'gigantic'!" and "I really understand how the character felt here") is recommended. Ensure feedback is framed as helpful guidance, not criticism.

The single neutral student in narrative writing highlights individual variation. Investigate why this student did not improve (e.g., feedback not understood, specific learning need, motivational issue). Implement differentiated feedback strategies: more modeling, one-on-one conferencing, or peer feedback for such students. While the overall results are very positive, the 5% neutral student in narrative writing is crucial for nuanced recommendations. This aligns with research showing feedback effectiveness varies based on individual learner factors like proficiency, learning styles, motivation, and ability to understand/apply feedback (Goldstein, 2006). Emphasize the need for teachers to monitor individual student responses to feedback and be prepared to adapt strategies, offer additional support, or use alternative methods (e.g., oral feedback, peer review) for students who do not respond initially.

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