

THE EFFECT OF TEACHER-EDITING, PEER-EDITING, AND SELF-EDITING ON WRITING SKILL OF IRAQI EFL STUDENTS

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Abstract

The main thrust of the present study was to explore the effect of teacher, peer and self-editing on improving grammatical accuracy in writing. To this end, 90 EFL Iraqi students were selected as the participants of the study who took a writing test as the pretest (they were asked to write two paragraph essays). After taking the pretest, the participants went under a 30-hour form-focused instruction in which four grammatical structures (i.e. subject and verb agreement, causative clause, conditional sentences, and passives) were instructed. After the instruction, the participants were divided into three experimental groups (each included 30 people). The first group received teacher-editing, the second group peer-editing, and the third group self-editing. The whole project was conducted in ten 90-minute sessions. It should be noted that two well-written samples were presented to the students in each session in the form of PowerPoint presentation followed by summary writing by the students in an attempt to use the instructed grammatical points. Finally, the participants took the posttest (they wrote two paragraph essays). The scores of the two pretest and posttest were put into SPSS22 and analyzed in terms of the three types of editing using one-way ANOVA. The results of the study showed that teacher-editing was more effective and the participants who went under teacher-editing outperformed other groups.

Keywords: teacher-editing, peer-editing, self-editing, form-focused instruction

1. Introduction

There is no doubt regarding the role played writing especially in the academic settings. As an illustration university students need to make notes, to write summary or synthesis papers or even essays. The need for longer written works seems to influence the academic future of the learners.

The significance of writing essays may be justified due to the fact that it may provide professional opportunities for the students. Moreover, writing capability improves students' critical thinking abilities. Writing essay, according to *IELTS Writing band descriptors*, demands several criteria, namely, task achievement, coherence and cohesion, lexical resource, and finally grammatical range and accuracy.

Writing achievement in English is especially important for the university students for whom English is a foreign language. It is crucial for EFL students since there is little

exposure to English for them, if any. Furthermore, writing capability may provide them an opportunity in order to express their voice and have a contribution in the research.

Writing is a productive skill with its particular features which distinguish it from other skills such as writing accuracy, difficulties in linguistic organization and ideas sequencing due to the lack of audience (Hadfield & Hadfield, 2008).

A number of activities have been suggested by different researchers to improve writing abilities of the learners, among which general activities, genre activities, accuracy activities, guided writing, free writing, and process writing are worth mentioning. Lombana(2002) suggests several activities for improving general writing of the students. For instance, he suggests that teachers should stimulate the learners' imagination, they should also make writing enjoyable and encourage students to look critically at what they have written, and finally they teach sentence linking devices and also present some samples of writing to the students.

Beside the aforementioned issues, students need to learn how to write different writing genres. The students may also go through a number of accuracy activities in writing such as gap filling exercises, combining sentences with appropriate linking words, matching topic sentences and paragraphs, or rewriting texts. The main objectives of the accuracy activities are developing appropriate skills for linking different ideas and sentences, and also developing appropriate skills in using appropriate structure and vocabulary.

Hence, writing can be handled in different ways, namely guided writing through the support and help given by the teachers, process writing by dividing the processes of writing into several steps to facilitate it, or even free writing which is the most difficult type of writing in which no support or help are given to the students. Different researchers suggest different ideas for improving writing proficiency among the learners especially the learners for whom English is considered a foreign or second language (EFL/ESL).For instance, Hadfield and Hadfield (2008, p. 120) recommend that the teachers go through the following steps:

- brainstorm ideas about what to write;
- choose ideas and group them under headings;
- order the ideas and plan the structure, for example, introduction, arguments for, arguments against, conclusion;
- write rough notes to expand each idea;
- write a rough version or draft;
- pass it to another learner for feedback;
- edit – read through, rewrite, and correct;

Harmer (2006), on the other hand, considers the four stages of planning, drafting, editing, and final version to be presented to the students by the teachers. Scrivener (2005, p.194) suggests several steps to be followed by the teachers in teaching writing skill. The following shows the activities and strategies that can be done by the teachers:

- Introducing the topic;
- Introducing and summarizing the writing tasks;
- Brainstorming ideas;
- Fast-writing;
- Selecting and rejecting ideas;
- Sorting and ordering ideas;
- Deciding on specific requirements (style, information, layout);
- Focusing on useful models
- Planting the text (note-taking and thinking about a possible shape for the text);
- Getting feedback (helpful comments and suggestions about text provided by the teachers, by other students, or by the student himself);
- Preparing drafts;
- Editing;
- Preparing final text;

According to Harmer (2007), essay writing demands considering several criteria, namely, essay's content, organization, coherence, grammar, vocabulary and mechanics. The multiplicity of the criteria to be considered, EFL learners may experience some problems in the processes of essay writing including stopping, getting stuck, and becoming frustrated (Harmer, 2001). The observed problems may categorize into different categories: cohesion and coherence, grammar, and semantics.

One of the main steps in writing even for the experts is editing. Editing, in effect, permits individuals to make necessary changes on their writing. Such a step lets the writer to deliberately reread their writing to be sure whether their work makes sense to the readers. Editing may produce a draft more conventional in terms of genre, mechanical rules, grammatical and lexical norms and format.

Richards and Renandya (2002, p. 316-319), in a similar way, consider several steps for writing skill, i.e. planning (pre-writing), drafting (writing), responding, revising (redrafting), editing, evaluating, and post writing. Pre-writing, in effect, is a guided and supportive writing stage in which the learners are being supported by the teachers to generate their ideas using a number of techniques and strategies, namely, brainstorming, clustering, rapid free writing, and WH-questions. Drafting stage deals with fluency of

writing, and responding stage with the feedback given to the students by the teacher which leads to revising stage in which content and structures of the drafts are being edited and also semantic and grammatical problems are corrected. Finally, the written essays are being evaluated by the students themselves, by other students or even by the teachers and the students go through post-writing stage in order to publish, share, or present their writings.

Having considered the aforementioned issues, we attempted to see whether three types of editing—teacher-editing, peer-editing, and self-editing—affects students' writing performances. To this end, the following questions were raised:

1. Is the presented instruction improved the writing performances of Iraqi EFL students significantly?
2. Is the type of editing—teacher-editing, peer-editing, and self-editing—an influential factor?
3. Is there any significant difference between the three experimental groups which go under three types of editing—teacher-editing, peer-editing, and self-editing?
4. Does gender make any difference in the results of the study?

2. Method

Following a causal-comparative quantitative design, 90 EFL Iraqi students were selected as the participants of the study. The participants were, in effect, Iraqi EFL students who were studying English translation, literature or teaching English as a foreign language (ET, EL, TEFL) at universities of Iraq. The native language of all the participants were either Arabic or Kurdish. In addition, all participants know Arabic as either their first language or second language and were between 19 and 32. They include 53 male and 37 female students.

All the participants took a writing test as the pretest (they were asked to write two paragraph essays). After taking the pretest, the participants went under a 30-hour form-focused instruction in which four grammatical structures (i.e. subject and verb agreement, causative clause, conditional sentences, and passives) were instructed. After the instruction, the participants were divided into three experimental groups (each included 30 people). The first group received teacher-editing, the second group peer-editing, and the third group self-editing. The whole project was conducted in ten 90-minute sessions. It should be noted that two well-written samples were presented to the students in each session in the form of PowerPoint presentation followed by summary writing by the students in an attempt to use the instructed grammatical points. Finally, the participants took the posttest (they wrote two paragraph essays). The scores of the two pretest and posttest were put into SPSS22 and analyzed in terms of the three types of editing using one-way ANOVA.

3. Results of the Study

Including 90 EFL Iraqi students, the researcher explored the effect of editing type on writing performances of the students. Having grouped the students into three groups—teacher-

editing, peer-editing and self-editing, the researcher ended with the following descriptive statistics in terms of group and time (pretest & posttest).

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics in terms of Time*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
=pretest	90	2.7278	1.06042	.11178	2.5057	2.9499	1.00	5.00
=posttest	90	4.5389	.55195	.05818	4.4233	4.6545	3.50	6.00
Total	180	3.6333	1.23903	.09235	3.4511	3.8156	1.00	6.00

According to table 1, 90 EFL Iraqi students took both pretest and posttest. The mean of the pretest is about 2.75 and of the posttest it is around 4.50. Moreover, the students in the pretest showed the minimum of 1 and maximum of 5. Meanwhile, the posttest had the minimum of 3.50 and maximum of 6.

Table 2: *Descriptive Statistics in terms of Groups & Time*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
posttest	=group 1	30	4.3333	.51417	.09387	4.1413	4.5253	3.50	5.50
	=group 2	30	4.7333	.48660	.08884	4.5516	4.9150	4.00	6.00
	=group 3	30	4.5500	.59234	.10815	4.3288	4.7712	3.50	6.00
	Total	90	4.5389	.55195	.05818	4.4233	4.6545	3.50	6.00
pretest	=group 1	30	2.7333	1.06458	.19437	2.3358	3.1309	1.00	5.00
	=group 2	30	2.4500	.89395	.16321	2.1162	2.7838	1.00	4.50
	=group 3	30	3.0000	1.16708	.21308	2.5642	3.4358	1.00	5.00
	Total	90	2.7278	1.06042	.11178	2.5057	2.9499	1.00	5.00

Table 2 illustrates the descriptive statistics of both pretest and posttest in terms of group. As the table shows 90 Iraqi EFL students participated in the project. Here, the mean of the first group is about 2.75 in the pretest and 4.30 in the posttest. The second group have the mean about 2.50 in the pretest and 4.75 in the posttest. The third group, on the other hand, have the mean about 3 in the pretest and 4.50 in the posttest. The standard deviation of all groups are around 1 in the pretest and .5 in the posttest which shows the participants of the study closely homogenous.

Table 3: Comparing the Means of Pretest & Posttest in terms of Groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	147.606	1	147.606	206.564	.000
Within Groups	127.194	178	.715		
Total	274.800	179			

Table 3 make a comparison between the pretest and posttest in order to explore whether the observed differences between the two tests are significantly meaningful or not. To this end, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of editing types on writing performances of the students in teacher-editing, peer-editing and self-editing conditions. There was a significant effect of editing types on writing performances of the students at the $p < .05$ level for the three conditions [$F(1, 178) = 206.564$, $p = .000$].

Table 4: One-Way ANOVA in terms of Time before and after Instruction

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
posttest	Between Groups	2.406	2	1.203	4.235	.018
	Within Groups	24.708	87	.284		
	Total	27.114	89			
pretest	Between Groups	4.539	2	2.269	2.067	.133
	Within Groups	95.542	87	1.098		
	Total	100.081	89			

In the next step, the performances of the three groups were compared in both pretest and posttest (Table 4). Hence, a one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of editing on writing performances for teacher-editing, peer-editing and self-editing conditions. In the posttest, there was a significant effect of editing types on writing performances of the students at the $p < .05$ level for the three conditions [$F(2, 87) =$

4.235, $p = 0.018$]. In the pretest, on the other hand, there were no statistically significant differences between group means as determined by one-way ANOVA ($F(2,87) = 2.067$, $p = 0.133$).

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the peer-editing ($M = 4.73$, $SD = 0.88$) was significantly different than the self-editing ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 0.59$) and teacher-editing condition ($M = 4.33$, $SD = 0.93$). Taken together, these results suggest that editing types have a significant effect on the writing performances of the students. Specifically, our results suggest that when EFL students experience peer-editing, their writing performances are improved significantly comparing teacher-editing type

Table 5: One-Way ANOVA in terms of Time & Gender

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
posttest	Between Groups	.582	1	.582	1.930	.168
	Within Groups	26.532	88	.301		
	Total	27.114	89			
pretest	Between Groups	2.991	1	2.991	2.711	.103
	Within Groups	97.090	88	1.103		
	Total	100.081	89			

Furthermore, the roles of gender were investigated. The participants of the study were 53 male and 37 female Iraqi EFL students. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of gender on writing performances for teacher-editing, peer-editing and self-editing conditions. In both pretest and posttest, there were no statistically significant differences between group means as determined by one-way ANOVA either in pretest ($F(1,88) = 2.991$, $p = 0.103$) or posttest ($F(1,88) = 1.930$, $p = 0.168$).

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics in terms of Gender & Time

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
posttest	=male	53	4.4717	.51343	.07052	4.3302	4.6132	3.50	5.50
	=female	37	4.6351	.59685	.09812	4.4361	4.8341	3.50	6.00
	Total	90	4.5389	.55195	.05818	4.4233	4.6545	3.50	6.00
pretest	=male	53	2.5755	1.00669	.13828	2.2980	2.8529	1.00	5.00
	=female	37	2.9459	1.11045	.18256	2.5757	3.3162	1.00	5.00
	Total	90	2.7278	1.06042	.11178	2.5057	2.9499	1.00	5.00

Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that in the pretest the mean score for male students ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 1.00$) was non-significantly different from the female students ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.11$). In the posttest, on the other hand, gender was not a determining factor where male students showed the mean around 4.50 and SD about 0.50 and the females students had the mean about 4.70 and SD around 0.60. These results suggest that gender is not an effective factor on the writing performances of the students.

In a further step, the four types of errors—subject-verb agreement, causative clauses, conditional structures and passives—were examined before and after treatment as table 7 shows. According to the table, all types of errors were improved meaningfully.

Table 7: *Inferential Statistics of Error Types*

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
agreement	Equal variances assumed	64.788	.000	-8.109	176	.000	-9.75379	1.20278	-12.12751	-7.38006
	Equal variances not assumed			-8.168	127.338	.000	-9.75379	1.19416	-12.11676	-7.39082
causative	Equal variances assumed	1.2976	.256	17.232	175	.000	19.77528	1.14757	22.04013	17.51043
	Equal variances not assumed									

	Equal variances not assumed	-	172.63	.000	-	1.14673	-	-
		17.24	6		19.7752		22.038	17.511
		5			8		70	86
conditional	Equal variances assumed	22.63	.00	-	176	.000	-	.85499
		8	0	42.97		36.7399		38.427
		1			0		25	55
	Equal variances not assumed	-	144.64	.000	-	.85930	-	-
		42.75	9		36.7399		38.438	35.041
		5			0		31	49
passives	Equal variances assumed	40.17	.00	-	174	.000	-	.52486
		6	0	47.17		24.7613		25.797
		7			6		27	46
	Equal variances not assumed	-	141.11	.000	-	.52486	-	-
		47.17	3		24.7613		25.798	23.723
		7			6		96	76

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics in terms of Types and Percentages of Errors

Error Types		N	Mean (%)
Agreement	pretest	90	49.833
	posttest	90	40.0795
	Total	180	45.0112
Causative	pretest	90	51.7753
	posttest	90	32.0000
	Total	180	41.9435
Conditional	pretest	90	51.2000
	posttest	90	35.4000

	Total	180	43.3000
Passives	1.00	90	71.4318
	2.00	90	46.6705
	Total	180	59.0511

The descriptive statistics (table 8) indicated that the mean percentage for noun-verb agreement error is $M = 49.833\%$ in the pretest and $M = 40.0795\%$ in the posttest. The mean percentage for causative clauses error is $M = 51.7753\%$ in the pretest and $M = 32.0000\%$ in the posttest. The mean percentage for conditional structure error is $M = 51.2000\%$ in the pretest and $M = 35.4000\%$ in the posttest. The mean percentage for passives error is $M = 71.4318\%$ in the pretest and $M = 59.511\%$ in the posttest.

Taken together, these results suggest that editing types have decreased the percentages of the four types of error among which the passives seem to be the most critical for the Iraqi EFL students and the causative structures the least structures to be used in essays.

4. Discussion & Conclusions

With respect to the results achieved of question 1, the targeted structures were improved significantly. In other words, the three experimental groups made fewer errors in the posttest comparing the pretest. Hence, the quality of the essays written by the participants was improved in terms of subject and verb agreement, causative clause, conditional sentences, and passives.

The participants' ability to reduce the targeted errors seems to be the result of teacher-interaction, peer-interaction or self-interaction when editing their essays. It should be noted that directing the students' attention to the targeted structures have raised students' awareness of those structures. Such conditions have resulted that the students consider other possible alternatives in order to use the targeted correct structures. We can conclude that awareness-raising resulted into knowledge construction and error-reduction of the targeted grammatical structures.

Considering the results of the study, we see that the type of editing is influential and the participants who went under peer-editing outperformed in terms of the targeted structures. Comparing the results of the three experimental groups shows that peer-editing has allowed the participants to resolve the observed errors by which they are able to construct knowledge and reduce errors.

The results of the study seem to corroborate the related review of literature (e.g. Diab, 2010; Ohta, 2000, 2001; de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Donato, 1994). Hence, peer-editing may help the students to enhance their awareness (Berg, 1999), to explain their points of view (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996), to experience less writing anxiety (Stanley,

1992), to get confidence and language skills (Byrd, 2003; Min, 2006), and to develop a more supportive context for each other (Mangelsdorf & Schlumberger, 1992; Schmid, 1999).

In fact, the results of the present study demonstrate that the learners who experienced peer-editing outperformed the other two groups and could reduce the targeted language errors in the posttest. The findings, in effect, underscore collaborative dialogue as mediation for writing enhancement. It is worth mentioning that the errors' feedback provided by the peers raise the learners' awareness by which they are able to distinguish the errors and by which construct their knowledge of the targeted structures. Such a phenomenon is explicable cognitively where peers' feedback enables the learners to distinguish erroneous and correct forms from each other by which they are able to go a step further and reconstruct their knowledge of the targeted language (Swain & Lapkin, 2002).

In respect to the fourth question, gender was explored. Gender is a factor considered differently by different researchers. It may be considered as a sociocultural factor (Kamiar, Gorjian, & Pazhakh, 2012). The importance of gender in writing ability is rooted in identity construction. However, investigating gender in terms of reduced targeted errors and the quality of the written essays resulted into non-significant differences.

The influence of error correction on students writing ability can be classified into three groups of teacher-editing, peer-editing and self-editing. A crucial point is that teacher's correction is ineffective unless the instructional sequence of grammatical learning is being considered—what is called Teach ability Hypothesis by Pienemann (1989). As an illustration, Kepner (1991) showed that the students to whom context-related feedback is presented write better than those to whom surface-error feedback is given. It means that teacher's feedback on content or grammar is beneficial.

As an illustration, Kepner (1991) tried to explore the effect of teacher's comments on students' writing performances. He showed that feedback provided on the content or grammatical errors are beneficial for the students. Meanwhile, Leki (1991) is one of the researchers who rejects form-focused feedback. Leki argues that "under controlled conditions, in which a variety of correction techniques has been used consistently and systematically, evidence suggests no difference in degree of student improvement regardless of what types of responses to written errors (including ignoring errors) are employed (p. 204).

Contrary to Leki, some other researchers such as Fathman and Whalley (1990), or Ferris (1999) consider teacher's feedback as influential for students' writing performances. They add that grammar feedback improves learners' grammatical accuracy. Besides that, as it is illustrated by Ferris (1999), summary comments on grammar is effective for improving

writing performance. It should be noted that systematic, selective and clear writing error is beneficial (Ferris, 1999).

Several researchers endeavored to investigate the impact of teacher's feedback on reducing some particular errors in the edited version of writing (e.g. Ferris, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ellis et al., 2008). For instance, Ferris and Roberts (2001) acknowledge that corrective feedback on verbs, noun endings and articles are more effective than word choice and sentence structures. For example, Ferris (2006) asserts that third writing drafts of the students were improved about 80% regarding the errors addressed by the teachers in the second draft.

In a study done by Ellis et al. (2008), the efficacy of focused and unfocused corrective feedback on writing was explored. To this end, two experimental and one control group were included. The results of the study showed that both experimental groups outperformed the control group—which received no error correction—in terms of reducing article errors.

Regarding peer editing, there are also mixed and contradictory findings. In other words, some studies suggest that peer-editing is ineffective due to inability and weakness of the peers in detecting their peers writing as well as the lack of trust in which they do not accept the authority and knowledge of their peers (Allaei & Connor, 1990; Carson & Nelson, 1996; Zhang, 2000). Meanwhile, some other researchers regard peer-editing beneficial due to critical reading and writing engagement (Berg, 1999), audience awareness raising, and viewpoint explanation provided by the peers (Villamil & de Guerrero, 1996), less writing anxiety experience (Stanley, 1992), confidence gaining and language skills improvement (Byrd, 2003; Min, 2006), and finally more supportive situation of learning (Mangelsdorf and Schlumberger, 1992; Schmid, 1999).

Having conducted the present study, the researcher found that any types of editing—peer-editing, teacher-editing, and self-editing—is effective. The results of the study also demonstrate that peer-editing is the most effective type of feedback can be given to the students' writings and self-editing is the least effective one.

The results of the study also showed that gender is a non-significant factor in writing quality in relation to the types of feedback. It should be noted that the present study tried to trace writing development resulting from teacher and peer interaction as well as self-critical thinking. The main differences between the present study and the similar ones are due to the fact that the present study is quantitative by participating a relatively large number of students in which the roles of peers, teachers and critical-thinking have been considered.

Hence, the results of the study are in line with the qualitative and descriptive studies (e.g. de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Donato, 1994; Ohta, 2000, 2001).

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