Feedback

Background

The summary below presents the research evidence on feedback in the Arab World context.

The Teaching & Learning Toolkit focuses on impact on outcomes for learners; it presents an estimate of the average impact of feedback on learning progress, based on the synthesis of a large number of quantitative studies from around the world.

This page offers a summary and analysis of individual studies on feedback in the Arab world. In contrast to the Toolkit it includes studies which do not estimate impact, but instead investigate the implementation of interventions and how they are perceived by school leaders, teachers and students using a range of research methods. This information is valuable for school leaders and teachers interested in finding out more about particular examples of feedback interventions that have been delivered in the Arab world.

Summary of the research in the Arab World

Research in the Arab world is mostly focused on written feedback as an intervention to correct student's English language mistakes at K-12 and university (Al Ajmi, 2015; Chebchoub, 2011; Seiffedin & El-Sakka, 2017).

Providing constructive and relevant feedback is a technique used by EFL teachers to motivate their learners and improve their performance (Sanat & Slimani, 2017). It is also identified as a teaching practice to enhance students' motivation to become better writers (Dajani, 2017). For example, Chebchoub (2011) discovered that over a four-month period, giving feedback to students helped them correct grammatical, lexical/semantic, mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraph format), and word order types of errors on their writing samples. Not only that but constructive feedback had a significant impact on student's text comprehension in an EFL classroom mainly because it helped them

identify their strengths and weaknesses (Boumediene & Hamazaoui-Elachachi, 2017).

Teachers' written feedback generally plays a significant role in improving students' writing skills. Data collected from 100 teachers and 200 students in Iraq showed that when teachers provide students with optimistic and constructive written feedback, they become more encouraged to write and the quality of their writing improved. These students showed high preference to specific written feedback to facilitate the correction of their mistakes on their daily assignments and paper tests (Cinkara & Galaly, 2018). However, providing meaningful feedback on students' essay writing is a demanding and time-consuming task for already overwhelmed teachers. That is why studies like Azmi et al. (2019) considered a computer-based grading system that could generate instantaneous feedback through the automatic evaluation of essays (AEE). As a result, students from grades 7 to 12 were able to better draft their Arabic essays and showed significant improvement for their language proficiency and structure of the essay.

In a quasi-experimental study, Al Ajmi (2015) examined the effect of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) on Omani students' accuracy in the use of English prepositions. Findings revealed that the experimental group (n=25) who received WCF on their writings outperformed the control group (n=25) who received general comments (such as "good organization of the story events") on the posttest. It is noteworthy to mention that the WCF strategy was mostly successful because students in the experimental group received immediate WCF on their tests and on their essays. Additionally, it is more effective when accompanied with further explanations and discussions about students' mistakes in order not to commit them again. For instance, "the teacher must not only indicate the position of the error, but also, she or he must give more explanation about that error and the rule of that error". In another study WCF was perceived by EFL teachers (n=156) who were teaching post-basic education grades (11-12) and EFL supervisors (n=62) as a valuable intervention to improve students' writing errors in Oman. Through using an online questionnaire, Al Kharusi and Al-Mekhlafi (2019) revealed that teachers and supervisors mainly focused on forms, particularly the grammatical errors. It was also found that teachers often used one-draft approach after providing WCF to students.

Corrective feedback offered a great opportunity while teaching writing skills to EFL students. Particularly, computer-mediated corrective feedback activities are efficient tools to improve students writing skills. They highly supported grade 10 EFL Jordanian students' writing in English and helped them notice their errors related to spelling, content, grammar, punctuation, organization, and vocabulary. These results were to happen only if the feedback included both the teacher and the student peer feedback (Al-Olimat, & AbuSeileek, 2015). This is mainly because students are provided with information about their errors from more than one source in contrast to the traditional teaching method of providing corrective feedback (written or oral) that students receive only from the teacher.

Peer feedback is another strategy that was used to improve students writing quality in an EFL context in the UAE. However, students must be trained on how to review essays and provide effective feedback on formal (related to English language structure) and global errors (related to the content and organization of writing) (Hojeij & Baroudi, 2018). These training were provided by the teacher for 10 weeks through both face to face and mobile learning tools. Once trained, students were more motivated and engaged in this activity. Furthermore, students were able to provide their peers with specific feedback towards improving their English writing.

Furthermore, the use of multimedia tools such as Wikis (i.e, PBwiki platform) that are aimed to develop EFL students' linguistic, allowed them to be engaged in open discussion forum and providing constructive feedback to each other. Through the feedback given to each other, students were able to give language related feedback and correcting another existing text as well as expanding on another's existing idea, and adding new ideas. These platforms were also successful because they constitute activities that were designed by teachers and based on students' textbooks to enhance their English writing (Alghasab, & Handley, 2017). On another note, evidence from a quasi-experimental study conducted over 57 participants from grade six in Oman showed that feedback assisted students to monitor their learning. Students in the experimental group were able to focus on what they have learnt and determine whether their learning has occurred (Al-Harthy, 2016). In other terms, students' metacognition increased. Students capacity in reflecting about and having control for their learning improved.

Teachers use feedback as a notion of a formative assessment for students learning but also to adjust their teaching strategies to improve students' performance. After training Saudi science teachers in primary classrooms on formative assessment for a total of 60 hours, teachers began to understand the importance of feedback as a tool to improve their own instruction rather than giving students marks (Alanzi, 2017). These teachers became more confident to ask students open-ended questions, target their higher order thinking skills, and create a more active and engaged learning environment. However, these benefits were to happen in a small size classroom where teachers can follow students' progress and give suitable feedback (Alanzi, 2017).

To date, students and teachers have different perceptions about feedback. This controversy in views is mostly found in a challenging educational and social context like Lebanon. While most teachers considered their feedback to be unnoticed and most of the time inefficient, it is viewed by their students as a very important component of teacher's practice when it encompassed calm talk (Hashash e al., 2018). Teachers' feedback was mostly tailored to correcting student's social behavior rather than their academic. Teachers of students with overwhelming social problems cared mostly to develop the student-teacher interaction. That is why, they provided supportive feedback to encourage students perform according to expectations (Hashash e al., 2018).

Despite the acknowledged benefits of feedback on students' learning and particularly on writing skills, research in the Arab world highlighted the lack of teacher trainings on how to give constructive feedback to students (Hussein & Ali, 2014). It is also important to highlight the class size and existence of learning tools for teachers to ensure good quality of teaching where feedback is provided for every learner (Alanzi, 2017; Hussein & Ali, 2014). Finally, encouraging pair/group work is recommended because it will provide opportunities for student-student and teacher-student feedback.

Summary paragraph:
Evidence of feedback in the Arab world showed the powerful impact of teachers' written feedback on students' writing skills. Studies in Iraq, Jordan, Oman, and Saudi Arabia reported that whenever teachers provide students with optimistic and constructive written feedback, they become more encouraged to write and

the quality of their writing improved. Peer feedback in UAE and Kuwait significantly improved students writing skills in English but also increased student's interaction and collaborative learning.

However, researchers have highlighted some potential barriers for teachers to use feedback as a teaching approach to correct students' errors. Examples include lack of teacher training on constructive feedback and large classroom size which delay teachers from following students' progress and providing suitable feedback for each leaner.

To date, research in computer-mediated corrective feedback is limited in this region despite the few reported benefits. More research is needed in this area, including using different methods and software packages, and examining different writing aspects.

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Search Terms

Feedback (response); progress monitoring; formative evaluation; teacher feedback; student feedback; verbal feedback, written feedback; corrective feedback.

Databases searched

Academic search complete

ERIC (EBSCO)

Education Source

Google scholar

ProQuest Central

ProQuest Dissertations

Web of Science