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Exploring EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Self-Reported Feedback Provision on Learners' Writing in an EAP Context

Ruaa Hariri, University of Leeds

Abstract: This paper reports on one case study that was designed for piloting one data collection method, mainly individual interviews. It aimed at exploring the nature of formative and summative feedback held by teachers on their learners' Second Language (L2) writing. This was conducted through carrying out interviews with 6 teacher participants in a context of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), whilst observing sample documents of teachers' written feedback on students' writing assessments. Based on participants' self-reported practice, the semi-structured interview method served in gaining an initial understanding of teachers' beliefs about feedback. Testing the interview questions had contributed to the validity of the research tool in terms of adequately addressing the research questions. The pilot had a significant role in informing and developing the research study design.

Introduction

An increasing amount of attention has been drawn lately to English language teaching and assessment in Higher Education (HE) in Saudi Arabia. Concerns have been raised about Saudi students' language proficiency at tertiary level, as well as the need to understand the mechanisms of teaching, assessment and the type of support given to students (Alnassar & Dow, 2013). A shared partnership between individual teachers, department heads, college and institutional leaders and the national government itself through the Ministry of Education is one considerable proposition that has been brought to attention by the authors. In order to improve the instruction of the English language in the last decade, standards for quality assurance and accreditation of Saudi HE programmes such as the National Commission for Academic Accreditation and Assessment (NCAAA) have been revised (Almoossa, 2017). International and national accreditation commissions have been targeting Preparatory Year Programmes (PYP) since their introduction in Saudi HE in 2004. Since that time, the goal of PYP was to provide students with the necessary skills for their tertiary studies. However, there is evidence that the outcomes of the PYP are below expectations, and that students are not reaching the intended writing assessment goals by the end of most English language courses (Alhosani, 2008; Al-Seghayer, 2017). Additionally, it has been observed that students have critical problems during their writing course (Almoossa, 2017). Al-Seghayer (2017) argues that in the majority of Saudi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms teachers tend to focus primarily at a sentence level with an error free product that is enforced by the teacher. As a result, feedback tends to be lacking in terms of content, and learners' representation of their ideas tend to lack authenticity. This concern brings attention to English language instruction and teachers' feedback provision on learners' Second Language (L2) writing.

Review of Literature

1. Teacher Cognition: The Nature of Beliefs

Teacher cognition has been reviewed extensively by Borg (2003; 2006) who indicates that teachers have cognitions about all aspects of their work. It was understood that teachers have theoretical and practical knowledge of the subject matter that informs or is informed by their teaching. This notion of teacher cognition entails the process of how teachers acquire and transform knowledge, and then use it in the classroom, which is often referred to as beliefs. Defining an elusive concept such as beliefs can be quite challenging, yet many scholars have attempted to provide applicable descriptions. According to Borg (2006) beliefs generally refer to a proposition that is held consciously or subconsciously ; it guides an individual's views and actions and serves as a guide to thought and behaviour. From another perspective, Eisenhart et al (1988) define beliefs as an attitude that is regularly applied to an activity. This implies that our beliefs impact our thoughts and behaviour, and thus belief and attitude are interrelated. Pajares (1992, p. 319) explains that attitudes are: "clusters of beliefs around a particular object or situation form attitudes that become action agendas", suggesting that beliefs and attitudes are connected. This implies that beliefs are fundamental in forming and developing attitudes, and that the latter in turn guides one's behaviour. The different beliefs that individuals hold may vary in complexity, intensity, and according to their significance, observes Pajares.

It is important to discuss beliefs because they can affect teachers' ways of perceiving and interpreting knowledge, as they are thought to be influential on teachers' thinking and classroom practice (Pajares, 1992). Although beliefs and knowledge are frequently associated with one another, it was claimed by Woods (1996) that when enough knowledge was not available, teachers would rely on their beliefs as a guide, and that beliefs play a role in teachers' decisions, judgments and behaviour. Kagan (1992) argued that most of teachers' professional knowledge is regarded as beliefs. Furthermore, teachers' beliefs, knowledge, experiences and work conditions have been recognised as shaping their classroom practices (Borg, 2003). Consequently, having a better understanding of teachers' beliefs would contribute to improvements in teaching and learning (Chambers, 2018). Nevertheless, whether beliefs are conscious or subconscious, teachers might hold beliefs that are not reflected in their teaching. For example, a teacher might express positive beliefs about the value of peer feedback but fail to comply with this belief due to one or more factors.

2. Definition of Assessment Feedback

The function of assessment in education is identified as being either summative (i.e. aimed at measuring achievement) or formative (i.e. designed to provide students with feedback on progress and support their development) explains Brown (2004). The term 'assessment feedback' is used as a broader concept to include different types of feedback, with varied roles and functions. According to Evans (2013), this includes all feedback interactions that are created within assessment design, occurring within the immediate learning context, beyond, and collectively drawing

from a range of sources. Furthermore, Nelson and Schunn (2009) identified three comprehensive meanings of 'assessment feedback': (a) motivational: influencing beliefs and willingness to participate; (b) reinforcement: to reward or to punish specific behaviours; and (c) informational: to change performance in a particular direction.

3. Rationale for the Research

Feedback quality and timeliness are crucial in the process of students' English language learning in HE contexts, asserts Irons (2008). In order to support students' writing development, teachers' ability in providing feedback should be considered as an important part of the teaching practice (Parr & Timperley, 2010). However, there is a lack of work addressing feedback from the lecturer perspective (Evans, 2013). Also, little is known about assessment feedback in L2 writing, as opposed to students' and teachers' feedback preferences in Saudi HE contexts (Alkubaidi, 2014; Shukri, 2014; Jamoom, 2016; Hamouda, 2011; Grami, 2005; Rajab et al. 2016) and teachers' written feedback alone (Alkhatib, 2015). On a global scale, Black and McCormick (2010) argue that in HE contexts, there should be a greater focus on oral as opposed to written feedback, which emphasises the importance of incorporating dialogic features in the feedback process. Thus, greater explanation is needed of teachers' cognitions and practices of feedback provision, while managing congruence between both formative and summative writing assessment feedback practice. Kubanyiova and Feryok (2015) suggest that language teacher cognition research should embrace the complexity of teachers' inner lives within their educational context. Such assertion is based on the view that considers the diversity of teachers' distinctive learning and educational experiences, and the uniqueness of the contexts in which they work. This was an aspect worthy of consideration while conducting this pilot study, as the introduction of a new curriculum was a notable addition to the context. Thus, the central focus of this research is EFL teacher cognition and their feedback provision on students' writing assessments, with the introduction of the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curriculum.

The Method

1. Aims of the Pilot

The purpose of the pilot was to explore teachers' cognition of assessment feedback through answering the main research question: *What cognitions do English language teachers hold about corrective feedback for their learners' L2 writing assessments?* Answering this question would provide an initial understanding of participants' conceptualization of feedback, based on their self-reported feedback provision for the writing assessments. The instrumental tool that was piloted, was individual semi-structured interviews with teacher participants. This research tool served in gaining an understanding of teachers' cognition of feedback, specifically their beliefs on feedback. According to Locke et al (2000) the results of exploratory studies are intended to be used in supporting precise procedures that are proposed in a research project. Therefore, testing the interview questions served in informing the validity of the data collection method. Finally, observing teachers' written feedback on their students' writing assessments served in further validation of participants'

previously reported practice.

2. The Educational Context: Introduction of EAP

A single case was identified for this pilot study: an English language institute at a Saudi university, which had implemented an EAP curriculum in its Preparatory Year Programme. Since the inception of the academic year in September 2018, the EAP course was introduced to Preparatory Year Students, to serve students in the Sciences, who would use English as the medium of learning in their future academic studies. The EAP course was chosen for this study since it was being considered for full implementation in the near future. As a significant application in this educational context, selecting this EAP course for piloting had also served in gaining impressions from EFL teachers about the newly adapted writing component of the course. Thus, it was possible to capture teachers' cognitive response to this curricular change, in terms of describing their feedback provision on learners' writing.

As for describing the English language programme, its courses are delivered using a system of modules, with four teaching modules per academic year. Each module consists of six teaching weeks, with 18-hours of instructions per week, and the final examination is scheduled during the seventh week of each module. Students must be assessed as having successfully completed and passed one level in order to proceed to the next level, and likewise throughout the entire programme (ELI 2017). Learners' language proficiency is based on the Common European Framework Reference for Languages (CEFR). The CEFR is an international standard for describing language ability on a six-point scale, ranging from A1 (beginners), up to C2 (those who have mastered a language). In terms of learning, teaching, and assessment, the (CEFR), is used as a guideline to describe the achievement of learners of foreign languages. It should be noted that upon students' admission to the university, they are required to take a placement test to ensure being accurately assigned in the appropriate level of the programme, and according to learners' proficiency levels. The purpose of the English language programme is to ensure that students achieve a proficiency equivalent to the CEFR of B1+ (independent/threshold users of L2) within one academic year, to secure college entry.

3. Recruitment of Teacher Participants

After having received ethical approval to carry out this pilot, recruitment of teacher participants was facilitated through an administrative manager at the English language institute in one Saudi university. Policy related issues in this governmental educational context had enforced gender segregation in its campuses, as male and female professionals had been allocated workspaces in separate campuses. Consequently, facilitation of teacher participants would be through separate administrative teams. It would have been considered interesting to include a mixed gender sample in this pilot, but time constraints during the piloting period had prevented such inclusion. The identified participants were six female English language teachers who had come from different national backgrounds including Egypt, India, UK, Sudan and Pakistan (see Table 1. The Participants). Information and consent forms had been received via email and returned after inserting e-signatures

from both sides. Samples of students' written work (with teacher feedback comments) were shared with the researcher as well. For practicality reasons, phone call interviews had substituted for face-to-face, and each interview had been previously arranged according to participant availability. The interviews were conducted in the English language, and each phone interview lasted 30 – 45 minutes. The semi-structured interview format was guided using separate sections and themes. Please see Interview Questions for Teachers in the Appendix.

Table 1: The Participants

Pseudonym	Nationality	Degree	Educational Specialization	EFL Teaching Experience	Learner Language Group
Faiza	Egypt	Master's	TESOL and Technology	17 years	101 CEFR A1
Sana	India	2 Master's	Sociology - English Literature	16 years	102 CEFR A2
Suma	UK/Sudan	Master's	Teacher Education and Reflection	24 years	101 CEFR A1
Farah	Pakistan	2 Master's	English Language and Literature – English Language Teaching and Learning	12 years	102 CEFR A2
Lina	India	Master's	English Language and Literature	14 years	102 CEFR A2
Dr Lara	Egypt	PhD	English Literature (Poetry)	26 years	102 CEFR A2

Data Analysis of the Pilot

This section presents the analysis based on data that had been collected through interviews with the six participants. After the audio recordings had been transcribed, data was located under the themes that had guided the interview scheme (please see appendix). The main themes were qualifications and training; teachers' previous learning experience; the context and EFL learners; teachers' cognition (knowledge and beliefs about feedback); teachers' self-reported feedback provision, and feedback focus. Further themes had emerged over exploration of patterns and differences amongst the sample. Data information was entered into Excel to help in identifying each participant's profile, their qualifications, and self-reported use of feedback sources (e.g. teacher, peer, self) and approaches (e.g. blackboard, face-to-face). The following headings are based on the interview themes, including emerging themes found in the literature.

1. Participants' Qualifications, Training, and Previous L2 Learning Experiences

When it comes to research on language teacher cognition, previous learning experiences of teachers is considered as a critical factor in terms of how it may influence their practice. Evidence shows that teachers' own experience as learners can inform cognitions about teaching and learning which continue to exert an influence on teachers throughout their career (Borg, 2003). Thus, it was essential to acquire an understanding of participants' previous learning experience, through inquiring about their educational background. The first two sections of the interview had sought out individual differences amongst EFL teachers in terms of their academic degrees, teacher training and EFL feedback experience. In terms of diversity and educational background, this sample could be considered a representation of the demographic population of teachers at the language institute, with the total population of 130 female teachers at that time. All six participants were bilingual, three of whom spoke English as their native language. They had been experienced EFL teachers within their current educational context, and their experience in EFL teaching had varied between 12 and 26 years across the sample. Their educational degrees had been subject specific within the domain of social sciences. Amongst the sample, there was one PhD holder, one PhD part-time student, and the rest had obtained Master's degrees. When asked about receiving feedback as learners, all participants mentioned that better feedback had been given in their tertiary level education, especially in terms of receiving detailed and structured feedback on content information. This was compared to feedback which had only focused on mechanics (e.g. spelling, punctuation, etc.) in their earlier education (i.e. school). Some reported receiving a mixture of positive and negative feedback from their supervisors in postgraduate studies. Others reported on receiving feedback during their teacher training, through peers and 1-1 coaching.

2. The Context and EFL Learners

Following individual differences amongst the participants, section three of the interview scheme had discussed the newly introduced course books, and learners' language proficiency. Since the pilot took place towards the end of the module, this was advantageous for the research, as the participants had become familiar with the new curriculum, and with their students. The assessment plan for writing offers many opportunities for teachers to provide feedback, and across many forms of assessment. In less than 7 weeks, teachers reported that they had implemented numerous assessments in writing, both formative (during instruction) and summative (at the end of instruction). It was reported that the formative assessment on the writing component of the EAP course had included classroom-based writing tasks, allowing students to produce written drafts and receive feedback on their writing. Teachers noted that they were required to give feedback on classroom writing tasks and online forum posts on Blackboard (an online educational platform). Students were required to complete these tasks to progress in the course. Four participants had been teaching CEFR A2 courses, and the remaining two had taught CEFR A1 courses (A1/A2 are basic English language credited courses). Though the participants had expressed their satisfaction with the new course books, when asked about their learners' ability in writing in the target language, they unanimously

noted that their learners had struggled to understand the rules in English writing, with regards to structure and form. Furthermore, it was noted by three participants that their learners' speaking ability in English had exceeded their writing ability in English.

3. Teachers' Cognition: Knowledge and Beliefs about Feedback

Section four of the interview sought teachers' cognition of feedback, through exploring teachers' conceptualisation, beliefs on feedback, and what they mainly knew about feedback. Borg (2006) explained that teachers have theoretical and practical knowledge of the subject matter that informs or is informed by their teaching. This notion of teacher cognition entails the process of how teachers acquire and transform knowledge, and eventually use it in the classroom. It was observed that teachers' conceptualization of feedback was a puzzling inquiry for the majority of participants. For example, when they were asked about their knowledge and understanding, the answers had not been as clear as one would expect. This could be due to the nature of the question, which required drawing on a definition of an abstract term. The majority of the participants asked for further clarification of what was requested, and then went into discussing the purpose of feedback, its' value, based on their experience in receiving and giving feedback. Only one participant was able to provide a descriptive definition of feedback, Lara, who said, "feedback is the reinforcement of knowledge... the removing of misconceptions and providing correct conceptions." In the literature, Keh (1990) describes feedback in writing as, 'a fundamental element' of a process approach which can also be defined as input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision. Through feedback, the writer learns where they have confused the reader by not supplying enough information, illogical organization, lack of development of ideas, or inappropriate word-choice or tense. Lara's conceptualization of feedback, as a notion, resembles Keh's description in some way. Farah, however, said that feedback did not have an appealing meaning to her and preferred to use the word "counselling" instead, which she described as "...professional guidance". She had reported the use of classroom time to discuss with her learners their errors and how they should develop their writing. The remaining participants had discussed their conceptualization of feedback in terms of why it is important to them, but it was difficult to elicit from the majority, a well-defined statement of their conceptualisation of feedback.

When discussing teachers' beliefs about feedback, this proved to be less problematic for the participants to provide answers to questions such as, "*Why do you provide feedback for in-class writing? What is the purpose behind it?*" Such questions facilitated responses from teachers about beliefs on feedback. Regardless of their educational qualification, participants' responses revealed similar beliefs about feedback across the sample. While teachers had different feedback approaches, they were guided by their strong belief in the goodness that feedback serves. This resonated immensely with the literature, especially with the rising emphasis on dialogic feedback as discussed in numerous studies (Evans, 2013; Carless et al., 2011; Carless & Boud, 2018), and the importance of allowing clarification of teachers' written feedback through follow up with verbal commentaries.

Other benefits of feedback were mentioned by two participants which included supporting the learning process and preparing students for summative exams. Bearing in mind the context and culture, the participants had reported students' fixation on their need for practice prior to the exam. Since the courses were high stakes by nature, this could, however, be considered as a source of motivation for learners, as reported by 2 participants. They had emphasised how careful and attentive their learners were, and though they relied on their teachers as the main source of feedback, they were keen to understand their errors. It must be noted however, within any form of feedback, learners' cognitive interpretation ability and metacognitive awareness must be considered by teachers, in order for the feedback strategy to be effective (Kim, 2009, cited in Evans, 2013).

4. Teachers' Self-Reported Feedback Provision

The participants had provided narrative reports of their feedback provision, particularly within formative assessment. Writing tasks on Blackboard was another exploratory analysis in this study. Participants reported that students responded well to this task when they received e-feedback from their teachers. It was noted that this was a favourable task for their learners, due to their 'tech-savvy' nature in using technology for educational purposes. They reported that their learners were keen to complete all 6 discussion tasks, which they were in fact graded on. However, plagiarism cases were noted by two participants. A question of whether teachers' e-feedback was understood by learners, could not be determined through the pilot. One participant noted that her students would ask for an explanation of her e-feedback on Blackboard. Other participants mentioned that they needed to identify students' errors in the classroom, as a follow-up method for their feedback provision. Ensuring feedback that is timely may serve in the level of effectiveness as noted in the literature (e.g. Evans, 2013). Thus, it is important that learners receive immediate feedback on writing tasks, whether it is electronic feedback or face-to-face.

The literature on teacher cognition was used in analysing teachers' reported feedback practice. Participants in the study were requested to clarify their practice by answering to questions that included, "*why have you chosen such practice...(or) what was the purpose of applying such method?*" This had served in understanding teachers' beliefs and the value they gave for using different forms of feedback with their learners. Ghandeel (2016) supports the sense in which understanding the complex nature of beliefs can help in explaining the relationship between beliefs and practice, as some beliefs seem to be more influential on practices than others. Teachers' responses confirmed that their beliefs were indeed related to their pedagogy and practical knowledge. To support this argument, evidence from the literature (e.g. Kagan, 1992) says that most of teachers' professional knowledge is regarded as beliefs. Additionally, Woods (1996) argued that teachers' beliefs, assumptions, and knowledge develop through teacher experience, especially when they are faced with challenges. According to Borg (2006) this definition of beliefs entails an emotional obligation and serves as a guide to thought and behaviour. Therefore, it is important to discuss beliefs when considering teachers' practice, as

beliefs can affect their ways of perceiving and interpreting knowledge and are thought to be influential on teachers' thinking and classroom practice (Kagan 1992; Pajares 1992).

A significant observation this pilot study had identified, was that some teachers valued feedback more than others. This was based on the reported application of different feedback sources. The literature on teaching and assessment of writing reveals three major areas of feedback, according to Hyland & Hyland (2006): peer feedback (i.e. learner-learner); teacher-learner conferencing as feedback (i.e. group/individual verbal commentaries); and teachers' written comments as feedback evaluation and error correction. Teachers' self-reported feedback approaches had resonated with the literature in terms of feedback aims. For example, Hattie and Timperley (2007) discussed self-regulation (as a feedback aim), which is the ability to regulate one's behaviour and actions in order to achieve learning goals in the process of becoming autonomous (i.e. independent). Two participants had identified the role of feedback in developing learner autonomy, which is synonymous with self-regulation. Through using metacognitive elements such as monitoring, evaluating, and taking control of their learning, learners can self-regulate their learning. Another participant identified motivation, which resonated with Nelson and Schunn's (2009) description of 'assessment feedback'. Feedback could be motivational in terms of influencing beliefs and learners' willingness to participate. Sana, for example, believed that her feedback had motivated her learners to do their writing tasks. She also added that this practice had encouraged other learners to complete the writing tasks that they had ignored, which had served in reinforcement of the learning objectives.

Based on participants' description of their feedback provision, the classroom may have been a space for collaboration and engagement. For example, participants reported displaying samples of students' written work on the screen to discuss errors and provide feedback within a whole class discussion. This was reported as being useful in allowing interactive feedback, as learners are engaged in the process, permitting learners to make judgements about their own learning (Black et al., 2003). This unique process of internalization was described by Vygotsky and entails developmental processes in learning. Vygotsky did not limit mediation within the zone of proximal development to teachers but made peer mediation an important means for internalization (1978, cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2006, pp. 24-25). This zone of proximal development, results in differences between what a learner can do without help and what he or she can do with the help that is provided. This was a noteworthy finding, which indicated the importance of considering peer feedback in the EFL classroom, and not specifically teacher-led feedback.

5. Teachers' Feedback Focus

The final section of the interview had discussed teachers' feedback focus with reference to the assessment rubric, and how it had influenced their feedback provision in the classroom. All three forms of writing assessment were explored, to identify how teachers' feedback had emerged. Participants were asked about giving feedback on students' writing tasks on Blackboard, course book writing tasks, and

the writing exam. On a weekly basis, writing tasks in the course included the course book writing tasks and Blackboard writing tasks, on which learners were formatively assessed by their teachers. There were two writing exams included in the course, one taking place mid-way through the course, and the other at the very end. The first writing exam allowed time for classroom feedback as a follow-up method following teachers' written commentaries. According to the participants, this gave students the opportunity to develop their writing following the feedback. When it came to preparing learners for their writing test, learners' understanding of the writing test prompt was a concern. This was considered essential for the participating teachers, as they noted that their learners did not understand what they had been asked to write, since the instructions were in the target language. When it was time to take their first writing exam during the course, one participant described that experience by saying, "I watched my students as they took their exam and they knew exactly what to do, because they had been thoroughly trained for this". Another participant noted, I just told them one thing before they began writing, "Read the question carefully... and they did."

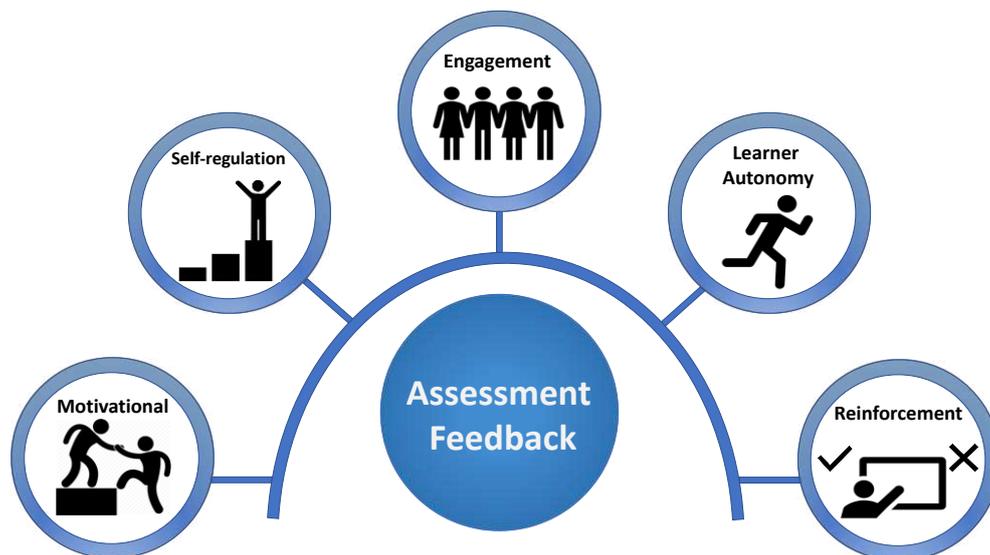
The research question related to the rubric, *what is the focus of EFL instructors' feedback on students' academic writing?* had sought to identify teachers' feedback in terms of rubric focus. Although the rubric is associated with error correction feedback, it was mentioned by Suma as being a guide in helping teachers identify students' errors. The majority of participants reported positive comments about the rubric, on being detailed and covering both form and content, with the written feedback on the exam as an indication of major error(s). Institutional documents in relation to the writing assessments grading rubrics were observed, for the purpose of validating teachers' reported information. In providing feedback on students' writing exams, teachers had been instructed to provide written comment on students' global errors. In support of their statements, participants had been requested to deliver samples of their students' writing tasks with written feedback provided (including both formative e-texts and summative paper-based texts). It was observed that there was no particular focus on specific rubric items, as both form and content were mentioned in teachers' written feedback. Examining samples of students' writing exams with teachers' written comments, signified that the feedback was concise and served in informing each students' achievement. Unlike summative assessment, formative assessment might have allowed the teachers to believe that their feedback was effective, while being both classroom-based and timely. Written feedback on learners' exam was not necessarily supportive of how learners would develop their writing, as reported by the participants. When followed by dialogic (i.e. conversational) feedback, however, such method could be more supportive of their learning (Evans, 2013). Only one of the six participants had reported this practice of dialogic feedback following written feedback on students' exams. The remaining participants said that they had provided written feedback only.

6. Pilot Data Summary

Although this study had initially begun by looking into teacher-led feedback, it was discovered that teachers had conceptualised feedback to be effective when it had

been conveyed in class. Participants had reported their use of peer, group, and individual feedback, modelling of exemplars, use of First Language (L1), and integration of electronic and dialogic feedback. While the majority reported the importance of teacher feedback, others highlighted collaborative feedback through enhancing student involvement. Faiza for example, expressed the benefit of peer feedback on her learners. She thought it was effective due to it being carried out in an informal manner amongst the learners, and for being less intimidating when it came from their friends. Faiza added, “They happily accepted criticism from each other”, which agrees with Topping (2010) who found that non-directive peer feedback was more effective due to greater psychological safety. Therefore, it was noted that teachers’ conceptualization of feedback may include the varied roles, types, meanings, and functions of feedback along with the conceptual frameworks underpinning feedback principles. Figure 1. Teacher’s Conceptualization of Assessment Feedback builds on Nelson and Schunn’s (2009) comprehensive meanings of ‘assessment feedback’. Based on the analysis, learner associated terms such as *engagement*, *self-regulation*, developing *learner-autonomy* have been used to build this model. This also supports Evans (2013) description of assessment feedback which includes all feedback exchanges that are produced within assessment design, occurring within and beyond the learning context, and drawing from different sources.

Figure 1. Teachers’ Conceptualization of Assessment Feedback



Conclusion

This pilot study has been carried out to analyse the appropriateness of the interview questions in order to seek information on the context this study aims to explore. Through reflection upon the pilot and the literature, it is worthy to further explore assessment feedback in this Saudi EAP context. The pilot study sought to explore both formative and summative feedback on learners’ L2 writing through testing the

interview questions. It has served in forming an understanding of how teachers value their feedback provision. The semi-structured interview approach served in gaining an understanding of teachers' feedback provision, while allowing space for flexibility between each set of questions and amongst the sample. Testing the interview questions had served in informing the validity of the research tool in terms of adequately addressing the research questions, while keeping in mind the importance of wording in questions that inquire about abstract terms. Further considerations had surfaced, such as suggestions for conducting classroom observations in order to analyse teachers' behaviour within context. Thus, exploring other dimensions of teachers' beliefs with regards to assessment feedback could be complemented with additional methods. Based on the responses that the participants had reported, their feedback provision was believed to be active, engaging, formative, supportive of learning, and encouraging of learners' self-regulation. Thus, it is worthy to consider a richer exploration of teachers' feedback provision through the employment of classroom observations and stimulated recall interviews, as sequential methods in the research design. This could allow witnessing assessment feedback in the classroom, in order to gain a better understanding of language teacher cognition. Indeed, the pilot has served in informing the overall design of the main study, as additional research tools have been proposed for exploring further aspects of feedback on learners' writing.

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Author: Ruaa Hariri is a PhD candidate at the University of Leeds (UoL), researching English language teachers' cognitions and practices of feedback provision at a Saudi University. She is also the representative for Post Graduate Researchers in the School of Education, and one of the organizers for the Education and Policy Discussion Group. She is a Lecturer at King Abdulaziz University, where she began her teaching career as an English language teacher in 2008.

Email: edrh@leeds.ac.uk

Appendix: Interview Questions for Teachers

Section 1: Teachers' Profiles – Qualifications and Training

1. What is your educational qualification(s)? In which major(s)?
2. Do you have any TESOL or ASSESSMENT related certificates, diplomas or a teacher license?
3. How many years have you been teaching English?

Section 2: Teachers' Previous Learning Experience

4. What is your native language?
5. Tell me about your experience in learning writing:
 - As a student in school, how was it?
 - As a student in university, how was it?

Section 3: The Context and EFL Learners

6. Which course level are you teaching?
7. Could you describe your learners' writing ability with-in the following?
 - in-class writing tasks
 - Blackboard
 - Writing exam
8. What do your students need to learn to improve their writing skills?

Section 4: Teachers' Cognition: Knowledge and Beliefs about Teacher Feedback

9. Could you describe the concept of teacher feedback?
10. What is your understanding of teacher feedback?
11. What is your experience in giving feedback? What do you think works and what doesn't?
12. Why do you provide feedback for in-class writing?
13. Why do you provide feedback on Blackboard?
14. Why do you provide feedback on the writing exam?
15. Does your feedback describe to your learners what they need to do to move forward?
16. Does feedback help in achieving the learning objectives?
17. What is the role of feedback? What do you think it serves?
(Does it support learning, judgment of students' work, etc.?)
18. What do you think your students do with feedback?

Section 5: Teachers' Practice: Feedback Focus

19. In terms of the rubric items, which have received your attention while you provide feedback in the classroom? and why?
20. What other forms of feedback do you use? and why?
21. Could you show me a sample of your feedback on the following:
 - students' in-class written work
 - students' responses on Blackboard

Section 6: Concluding Remarks

22. Do you have any other comments, suggestions, concerns about teacher feedback in L2 writing?
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