THREE TYPES OF COMMENTS ON CONTENT: TEACHER VS. PEER FEEDBACK

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Abstract

This study was conducted to examine the effect of three types of comments, i.e. imperatives, questions, and statements, with different communicative purposes, i.e. giving information and making a request, given by an ELT teacher and peers on students' revision of their writings. Sixty-four female students, between 16 and 26 years old studying at high-intermediate level of English language proficiency in Iran Language Institute (ILI) participated in this quasi-experimental study. They constituted four intact classes, two of which received feedback on their writing from their teacher, and the other two received peer feedback. One hundred and twenty eight pairs of students' drafts including 672 instances of revisions of their writings based on teacher or peer comments were collected and analyzed based on the rubric designed by Ferris (1997). It was found that questions and statements provided by the teacher with the purpose of making a request, and statements given by the peers with either one of communicative functions all bring about the best results in students' writings. On the other hand, the analysis of the revisions made by the students showed that statements provided by the teacher for the purpose of giving information has the least positive effect on the students' modifications. Surprisingly, questions provided by the teacher and peers with the purpose of giving information were found to have negative effects on the students' writing.

1. Introduction

The cornerstone of any writing course is the type of assignment students are required to do and the feedback provided to help them improve their writing skill. Without providing this opportunity to students in the writing classroom, students would have little logic behind doing the task of writing (Kroll, 2001). Giving feedback can be regarded as the supporter of learning process (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). In fact, comments given to students help them gain control over what they write and develop a questioning mind which guides them to view what they write from the readers' point of view (Sommers, 1982).

In addition to the advantages of providing feedback in writing classrooms, the effectiveness of feedback type has been emphasized in the literature by many researchers. According to Ferris (1997, 2003) and Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1996), specific types of feedback are more influential in revisions students make in their writings. Therefore, as Sugita (2006) stated, teachers should be careful in providing different types of feedback. Among the researchers who studied feedback types, Ferris (1997) considered types of feedback in terms of certain communicative aims, i.e. requesting information, making a request, and giving information, and their different syntactic forms, i.e. question, statement, and imperative.

Besides the effect of types of feedback, the usefulness of feedback considerably depends on the sources and providers of feedback who are considered as significant contextual factors (Strijbos, Narciss & Dünnebier, 2010). One of the significant types of feedback providers is peer feedback; as a learning tool, it can lead to considerable improvement and revisions of texts (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & William, 2003; Paulus, 1999). Similarly, teacher feedback functions as a motivator and an instructional opportunity that can encourage students and guide them to modify texts by following what is asked for in the written commentaries (Ferris, 2007). Hence, one can say that either source of providing feedback can widely contribute to shaping and reshaping of a piece of writing (Arndt, 1993).

Notwithstanding the significance attributed to teacher feedback in recent documents, this type of feedback, for many years, has advanced arguments over the area of writing teacher comments should address.

Throughout the years, teachers considered themselves as language educators rather than writing teachers (Zamel, 1985), accordingly in the writing tasks they assigned for their students, they provided their comments on the grammatical accuracy of their students' writing at the expense of the content and meaning. Over the past fifty years, however, teachers' focus has moved towards the instruction of content (Hillocks, 2005). More recently, scholars have focused attention on the importance of considering both form and meaning by teachers in their revision of their students' writings (Hyland, 2003); now, teachers are encouraged to provide comments on content on the early drafts and on grammatical structures when students develop their idea completely (Raimes, 1983). In other words, responding to all features of a text is not necessary on every draft and in every stage of writing (Hyland, 2003).

Besides controversies over the area of writing comments should be made on, there have been disagreements on the influential role of different sources of feedback and the significance of various feedback types for many years. For both areas, there have been debates over the pros and cons of either source, teacher or peer, or either type of providing feedback, considering the communicative aims and syntactic forms. To contribute to the available literature on the significance of providing appropriate types of feedback, the present study was conducted to document the effect of different types of comment on content, i.e. statements, questions and imperatives, given by both teacher and peers with the communicative purposes of giving information and making a request on students' revision of their writing.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Peer feedback
As one of the sources of providing feedback, peer feedback has been considered as a key component of writing classrooms, bringing about many advantages (Azarnoosh, 2013; Doman, 2014; Kroll, 2001; Zarei & Sayar Mahdavi, 2014; Zhao, 2014). Among the benefits reviewed in the literature are encouraging pupils to express their ideas by enhancing their communicative abilities (Mendonca & Johnson, 1994), providing them with

the opportunity to face the interpretations of readers and discuss their writings with them (Hyland & Hyland, 2006), and helping them establish critical thinking skills that enable them to evaluate their own texts better. Therefore, by involving students in the practice of giving and revising peer feedback, they become both critical readers and self-editors of their writings (Rollinson, 2005). Moreover, in comparison with teacher feedback, students feel less threatened by peer feedback (Ferris, 2003).

Peer feedback provides students with other benefits as well. Although students might experience uncertainty in assessing the work of their peers and in exposing their own writing to them, by providing or receiving peer feedback, they have the opportunity to see the work of other students and learn from them and to develop an empathy with tutors in difficulty they experience in assessing students. (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001). Benefitting from such opportunities, students internalize the standards they are expected to reach and, by taking responsibility in their work, will be able to improve their assignments by removing the problematic areas before submitting their work to their teacher (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004).

Besides theoretical studies focusing attention on the significance of providing peer feedback, a growing number of practical research is confirming the benefits thereof. Analyzing the audiotaped transcriptions of peer reviews from 12 advanced non-native speakers of English who enrolled in a writing class, Mendonca and Johnson (1994) confirmed the benefits of peer responses. They supported the finding that peer reviews enhance students' communicative competence by encouraging them to express their ideas, and help them develop awareness of their readers' needs. Studying the impact of peer feedback on the final draft of 14 Spanish ESL college students, Villamil and De Guerrero (1998) found that 74% of peer revisions were incorporated in the final draft. They concluded that the process of peer revision provided students with the chance of developing self-regulatory behavior, acquiring strategic competence of revising texts, and discussing problems with the classmates in a non-threatening environment. The comfortable feeling of the students when receiving feedback from their friends has also been reported in a recent study by Zhao (2014) who reports on the usefulness of peer reviews from his Chinese students' perspective.

Besides the relaxed feeling they had when faced with their classmates' comments, the students favored peer responses for other reasons like the comprehensibility of the feedback for them due to similarity in the proficiency level of the feedback provider and receiver.

2.2 Teacher Feedback

Although peer feedback has attracted lots of attention in the literature, the significance of teacher feedback has not been ignored. In fact, providing teacher feedback has been viewed as one of the significant roles that teachers play in writing classrooms (Hyland, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006) and has been well received by the students participating in various studies. In a study on students' attitudes towards teacher feedback, Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) found that in spite of the mismatch between teachers' actual feedback and students' preferences, generally students had positive attitudes towards this type of feedback. Similarly, studying three ESL students' perspective towards teacher feedback on composition, Brice (1995) came to the conclusion that students invested heavily on reading and responding to teacher comments. In a different context, Ferris, (1995) investigated 155 ESL university students' reactions to teacher feedback in a multiple setting and concluded that although students paid more attention to teacher feedback in the preliminary drafts rather than final drafts, the majority of students (93%) found out teacher feedback useful in improving their work. Besides in the above cited studies, ESL students participating in Zhang's (1995), Srichanyachon's (2012) and Harris and Brown's (2013) studies revealed their priority of receiving feedback from their teachers instead of their classmates.

The positive attitude students in various studies were found to have towards teacher feedback has resulted in their making a higher number of revisions based on the feedback given by teachers compared with the ones provided by their partners. Connor and Asenavages's (1994), Paulus's (1999), Tsui and Ng (2000), Miao, Badger, and Zhen (2006), and Peterson and Portier (2014) were among the researches which found that students incorporate much more of the comments provided by teachers compared with the ones made by the other students.

As the above studies on the pros of providing peer and teacher feedback disclose, both types of feedback have been reported to offer benefits to the students. Notwithstanding the consensus over the merits of both types of feedback, the question of which type brings more advantages is still a point of controversy. As mentioned in the introduction, besides the arguments about the advantages of either type of providing feedback, there have been disagreements on the syntactic features of giving feedback, the pragmatic and communicative goals thereof as well as the aspects of writing feedback is provided on, i.e. form or content.

2.3 Type of Feedback

The syntactic form that feedback may take on writing has been investigated for about two decades. The question which has attracted the attention of the researchers is which one of the three types of feedback, i.e. imperatives, statements, or questions brings about the most number of revisions. To inspect the issue, Conrad and Goldstein (1999) studied how three students, fluent in English, from different language backgrounds including Vietnamese, Iranian, and Filipino incorporated feedback in different syntactic forms in their writings. The results pointed that comments in the form of statement lead to more successful revisions than those in the form of questions and imperatives.

Besides the syntactic form feedback may take, some studies have attended to the pragmatic or communicative goals of providing feedback. In an influential study, Ferris (1997) studied providing feedback in terms of its syntactic features and its pragmatic goals, i.e. requesting information, making a request, and giving information. She examined 110 drafts of 47 ESL students and concluded that comments in questions and statement format were taken more seriously by the students. Although imperatives occurred rarely, students took them seriously as well, even if they were only marginal feedback. As to the goals of providing feedback, it was found that feedback that requested for information, regardless of its syntactic, would lead to substantial changes in students' writings. Comments which gave information, on the other hand, were less influential.

Replicating Ferris's (1997) study, Gascoigne (2004) studied 114 first

drafts of papers of 25 beginning French language students and concluded that comments in the form of statement and question that provided information to students were less influential, and those which requested for information had the most influential impact. Later, Sugita (2006), conducted a similar research on the effects of comments in three syntactic forms with three functions of providing, describing, and adding information on 25 intermediate and pre-intermediate Japanese students' revision of the content of their writings. Contrary to Ferris and Gascoigne who employed the same framework, he found that imperatives result in more substantive revisions compared with the questions and statements; among the three, questions lead to minimal changes.

Another point of controversy in the literature on providing feedback has been concerned with the aspect of feedback, i.e. form or content. As mentioned above, it was until 1990 that the majority of related research was influenced by teachers' strong bias to providing feedback on grammar and ignoring the content of texts (Ferris, 2003). Zamel (1985) and Sommers (1982) were among the many researchers who studied the commenting styles of a number of teachers on students' compositions to see what constituted their feedback. They both found that, in giving comments, teachers focus on form and language specific points rather than content. Accordingly, they came to the conclusion that teacher training programs had prepared teachers for evaluating students' writings on the basis of formal features at the expense of reading meaning. The problems with this type of commenting and the vagueness of the contents of the students' compositions resulted in a great shift in the focus from language towards meaning in writing at the beginning of the 1990s. The studies reported above, all, have been conducted within the context of feedback on content.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

Sixty-four female students, between 16 and 26 years old studying at high-intermediate level of English language proficiency at ILI participated in this quasi-experimental study; they constituted four intact classes, two of which

received feedback on the content of their compositions from their teacher, and the other two received peer feedback.

3.2 Data Collection

To collect data on students' compositions and different types of feedback, one of the researchers who already taught high-intermediate classes at ILI accepted to teach four classes for the purpose of the present study. The classes were held twice a week for 24 sessions. To make sure all students know how to write coherently and consistently, in the first two sessions, the teacher provided all 4 classes with information about how to write well-developed paragraphs; in other words, they learnt how to make appropriate topic, concluding, and supporting sentences and how to keep consistency of ideas. Along with the focus on the content, the researcher told them how to use punctuation marks appropriately.

The next two sessions of the course were devoted to teaching students how to provide three types of feedback on their classmates' compositions. To make students familiar with different commenting types, the teacher asked students to choose one of the topics 'cultural misunderstandings', and 'stress in the modern world' and to write their compositions on the topic they favored. Having composed their paragraphs, the students were taught how to provide comments on the others' writing pieces. It needs to be mentioned that in order to remove any probable effect this type of instruction might have on the students' performance, the teacher familiarized all four classes with both teacher and peer feedback.

Making sure the participants had learnt how to write coherent paragraphs, how to give appropriate feedback and how to make revisions accordingly, the teacher began collecting relevant data from the third week. Every week students in all classes were assigned the same topic of the teacher's choice and were required to write a paragraph; among the topics assigned were 'self-confidence', 'creativity', and 'technology in language learning'. It should be noted that 4 writing drafts from each student were collected on each topic; that came to 128 pairs of drafts which included 64 pairs from the students receiving teacher feedback and 64 from the ones who

received peer feedback. The drafts which did not receive all three types of feedback on content, i.e. five drafts, were excluded from later analysis.

In the actual writing classes, students received feedback in different syntactic forms and with different communicative functions based on the rubric designed by Ferris (1997). More specifically, the comments took one of the three syntactic forms, i.e. statement, question, and imperative. Feedback provided in question and statement forms had two main communicative purposes of giving information and making a request; imperative comments, on the other hand, were given with the only purpose of making a request. Hence, the whole number of feedback could be categorized into five types:

Feedback TypeExamples

Make request   *Can you support this sentence with reasons?*
Question

Give information   *This sentence is in contrast with the previous sentence.
Can you*

Question   *elaborate on it more?*

Make a request   *This sentence needs supportive examples.*
Statement

Give information   *Self-confidence is the perception you have of yourself,
not other*

Statement   *people's attitude towards you.*

Make a request   *Support your sentence with one or two examples to make
it more*

Imperative   *clear.*

In half of the classes different types of feedback were provided by the teacher and in the other half, comments were given by peers. The students in all classes were supposed to revise their different drafts of writing based on the comments they received. The revisions made were checked by the teacher in two classes and by peers in the other classes.

3.3 Data analysis

In order to analyze students' revisions of the problems in their compositions, the rating rubric developed by Ferris (1997) was employed with minor modifications. Besides proposing the syntactic features and communicative functions of providing feedback as mentioned above, in his rubric, Ferris (1997) classified how students responded to the comments based on the positive, negative or mixed effect revisions had into seven categories which were rated from 0 to 6 as follows:

0 No discernible change made by student in response to comment;

1 Minimal attempt to address comment, effect generally negative or negligible;

2 Substantive change in response to comment, effect generally negative or negligible;

3 Minimal attempt in response to comment, effect mixed;

4 Minimal attempt to address comment, effect generally positive;

5 Substantive change in response to comment, effect mixed;

6 Substantive change in response to comment, effect generally positive.

Overall, in their analysis of the data collected, researchers first categorized the feedback given by both teacher and the peers based on the syntactic features and the communicative functions they had. Later, they scrutinized the way students responded to different types of comments. In cases changes had been made, the researchers identified if the change was of minimal or substantial type and whether the modifications made by the students had positive, negative or mixed effects. It should be pointed out that no cases of mixed effect revisions were recorded in the students' revisions.

Following Sugita (2006) who replicated Ferris (2003), the researchers defined minimal changes as those partial revisions made by students in the meaning of the sentences such as adding or omitting a point or an example; substantive changes, on the other hand, were revisions which made changes in the meaning of the sentences. Cases in which a feedback had been given but no revisions were made by the students were labeled as no changes according to the rubric. Moreover, following adaptations Sugita (2006) made in Ferris's (1997) criterion for conducting his research, in this study, changes with positive effects were considered as revisions that improved the

meaning of the sentences and paragraphs, while changes with negative effects were regarded as the revisions which not only did not improve the meaning, but also made the meaning of sentences vague.

4. Results

The results of the study are presented in two separate sections. In the first section, the influence of three types of feedback, i.e. statement, question and imperative, provided by both teacher and peers on the type of revisions students made in their writing will be presented and in the next section the effect of the communicative purposes of each comment type as intended by the feedback provider on the various types of revisions made by the students will be summarized.

4.1 The influence of three types of feedback on content, i.e. statement, question, and imperative, on students' revisions of their writings in terms of feedback provider, i.e. teacher vs. peer

Table 1 below, Shows frequencies and percentages of different comment types provided by both the teacher and peers, in addition to the revisions made by the students. As the table indicates, in the majority of revisions students made when they received feedback in statement format, they employed substantial changes with positive effects. This pattern was the same for both teacher feedback (77.8%) and peer feedback (74.7%). The second most frequent response to both teacher and peer feedback in statement form was minimal change with positive effect. Peer feedback, however, yielded a higher number of this type of response on the part of the students (18.4% vs. 12%). The next most frequent response type for both types of feedback providers was the absence of any change based on the comments received (4.3% and 4.8% for the teacher and peer feedback, respectively). Unexpectedly, the cases in which students made minimal changes with negative effect as a response to teachers' statements were found to be about twice the number of similar cases when feedback was provided by the peers (4.3% vs. 1.9%). Finally, the least frequent category for both teacher and peer feedback was identified to be substantial changes with negative effect (1.7% vs. 0 for teacher and peer feedback).

Table 1. Frequencies and percentages of comment types and revision types

Comment types	Statement				Question				Imperative			
	Teacher		Peer		Teacher		Peer		Teacher		Peer	
Revisions	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No change	5	4.3	5	4.8	35	25.4	23	20.9	15	14.4	20	20.4
Minimal change/ negative effect	5	4.3	2	1.9	4	2.9	3	2.7	7	6.6	4	4
Minimal change/ positive effect	14	12	19	18.4	28	20.3	32	29	29	27.3	27	27.5
Substantial change/ negative effect	2	1.7	0	0	0	0	2	1.8	3	2.8	2	2
Substantial change/ positive	91	77.8	77	74.7	71	51.4	50	45.4	52	49	45	45.9
Total	117	17.4	103	15.3	138	20.5	110	16.3	106	15.8	98	14.5

Besides the way students responded to the statements, Table 1 clarifies how they revised their writings based on the question and imperative types of feedback they received from both teacher and peers. In contrast to their almost similar patterns of responses to the statements they received from teacher and peers, students exhibited more disparities when responding to the comments of the question type. Here again, the most frequent type of response was recorded to be substantial change with positive effect for both teacher and peer feedback (51.4% and 45.4%). The next recurrent response type was not the same for both groups, however. For the teacher-given feedback, students did not answer the comments in 25.4 percent of cases. The second most frequent category for the peer-provided feedback was found to be minimal change with positive effect (29%). This type of response was recorded in 20.3% of the cases when pupils received feedback from their teachers. For the peer feedback in question form, no change was the third most frequent response type on the part of the students (20.9%). The next category for both teacher and peer made comments was found to be minimal change with negative effect (2.9% vs. 2.7%). And finally, though no cases of substantial changes with negative effect was observed in

students' revisions of the comments they received from their teachers, they used this type of response in 1.8% of cases when they received comments from their classmates.

Interestingly, as the Table 1 shows, substantial change with positive effect, minimal change with positive effect, no change, minimal change with negative effect, substantial change with negative effect were found to be the most to the least frequent types of responses students in all groups had to the imperative type of comments they received from both teacher and peers.

A deeper analysis of the table reveals that the type of comment given by the teacher slightly affects the way students give different types of responses. For instance, students do not make equal or similar number of substantial changes with positive or negative effects when they receive feedback in statement, question or imperative formats (77.8% vs. 51.4% vs. 49% for positive effect and 1.7% vs. 0 vs. 3% for the negative effect). They use the most number of this type of change with positive effect when they receive feedback in statement format and with negative effect when receiving comments in imperative form.

Besides resulting in a higher number of substantial changes with negative effects, the imperative format of providing feedback has brought about the highest number of minimal changes with both the positive and negative effects on the part of the students (6.6% minimal changes with negative effects vs. 2.9% for questions and 4.3% for statements, and 27.3% minimal changes with positive effects vs. 20.3% for questions and 12% for statements).

Among the three, the question type of feedback has resulted in the highest number of no changes; in 25.4% of cases when students received feedback in question format from their teachers, they left it unanswered. This is while their not responding to teachers' comments when they receive it in statement and imperative format (4.3% vs. 14.4%) is about one sixth and half the number of cases when teacher gives them comments in question format.

The way students responded to varied types of feedback received from their peers is very similar to how they answered teacher feedback. Here again, they used the most number of substantial changes with positive effect

when they received feedback in statement format (74.7% vs. 45.4% for questions and 45.9% for imperatives). Imperatives, also, brought about the highest number of substantial changes with negative effect (2% vs. 0 for statements and 1.7% for questions).

Just like teacher feedback, peer feedback provided in imperative format resulted in the most number of minimal changes with negative effect (4% vs. 1.9% for statements and 2.8 % for questions). For minimal changes with positive effect, however, the question type of comments resulted in a slightly higher number of responses compared with the imperatives (29% vs. 27.5%). Statements resulted in the least number of this type of response (1.9%).

Another interesting finding was that the highest number of no changes (20.9%) was in cases that the participants received comments in question form, like the way they did in teacher feedback. The number of no changes in imperative comments was also much higher than its number in statement form (20.4% vs. 4.9%).

4.2. The influence of the communicative purposes of different types of comment provided by the peers and teacher on the students' revision of their writing

Table 2. Frequencies and percentages of comment types with different communicative purposes and Revisions in response to peer feedback

Peer feedback	No change		Minimal change/ negative effect		Minimal change/ positive effect		Substantial change/ negative effect		Substantial change/ positive effect	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Make request/ question	3	3.29	1	1.9	30	33.3	0	0	57	62
Give information/ question	11	57	2	10.5	2	10.5	2	10.5	2	10.5
Make request/ statement	2	2.6	1	1.3	5	6.5	0	0	69	89.6
Give information/ statement	3	11.5	1	3.8	4	15.4	0	0	18	69.2
Make request/ imperative	20	20.4	4	4.08	27	27.5	2	2.04	45	45.9

Table 2 reveals differences in the students' revisions of their writing when they received different types of feedback with varied communicative functions from their classmates. As the table shows, the purpose of giving comments affects the way students respond to them. For instance, when feedback in question format are given with the purpose of making request, they yield a much higher number of substantial and minimal changes with positive effect compared with the times they are given with the goal of giving information (62% vs. 10.5% for substantial and 33.3% vs. 10.5% for minimal changes). On the contrary, when questions are posed with the aim of giving information, they result in more number of substantial and minimal changes with negative effects (10.5% vs. o for substantial and 10.5% vs. 1.9 % for minimal changes). The purpose of this type of feedback, also, influenced the students' willingness or ability to respond; in 57% of cases when the function of the comments was to give information, the pupils refused to revise the highlighted points in their writing. This is in contrast with 3.2% of the times when they received comments for the purpose of making a request.

Again, for the statements, differences were recorded between the students' willingness and ability to make changes in their writing when they received feedback with different purposes (11.5% vs. 2.6% no changes for comments giving information and making request respectively). Like questions, statements which made a request resulted in a higher number of substantial changes with positive effect and minimal changes with negative effect (89.6% vs. 69.2% for substantial changes and 3.8% vs. 1.3% for minimal changes). However, unlike questions, in the case of statements, there was a higher tendency on the part of the students to make more minimal changes with positive effect when they received feedback which gave information (15.4% vs. 6.5% for giving information and making request). The communicative function of the comments did not affect substantial changes with negative effect.

As mentioned above, imperative comments were given with the only purpose of making request and they were not intended for giving information. With this in mind, the same purpose of imperative feedback resulted in different types of responses on the part of the students. In the

majority of cases, the pupils revised the problems substantially with positive effects (46%). They, also, employed minimal changes with positive effects in 27% of the cases. It was interesting to see that in 20% of the cases, they refused to revise the identified problems. In a much lower number of cases, they used minimal and substantial changes with negative effects when they received feedback in imperative format (4% and 2% respectively).

Another surprising observation was that, like the way they did with imperatives, students exhibited higher inclination to revise their writings with substantial changes having positive effects when they received question and statement feedback which made a request. Minimal changes with positive effects followed in all cases when the purpose of the comment was making a request. What was found to be strongly different was the number of no changes when pupils were given varied commenting types with different purposes; though they seemed not to respond to one fifth of the cases when the feedback where in imperative format, they refused to revise their writing when provided with statements and questions which made a request in 2.6% and 3.29% of the cases.

In contrast with comments which made requests, those which gave information, in statement and question forms, resulted in different patterns of student responses. In the majority of cases when pupils were given question type feedback which gave information, they refused to revise their texts. No differences were found between the number of substantial and minimal changes they made with both positive and negative effects. On the other hand, students were much more oriented towards making substantial and minimal changes with positive effect when they received statement type of comments giving information.

Table 3. Frequencies and percentages of comment types with different communicative purposes and revisions in response to Teacher Feedback

Teacher feedback	No change		Minimal change/ negative effect		Minimal change/ positive effect		Substantial change/ negative effect		Substantial change/ positive effect	
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%
Make request/ question	29	23.7	0	0	21	17.2	0	0	72	59
Give information/ question	6	33.3	2	11	7	39	2	1.6	1	0.81
Make request/ statement	2	2	2	2	9	9.3	2	2	82	84.5
Give information/ statement	3	15	3	15	5	25	0	0	9	45
Make request/ imperative	15	14.15	7	6.60	29	27.3	3	2.83	52	49

Table 3 reveals differences in the students' revisions of their writing when they received different types of feedback with varied communicative functions from their teachers. As Table 3 indicates, the goals teachers had in giving comments affects the way pupils respond to them. For instance, when feedback in question format was given with the purpose of making request, they yielded a much higher number of substantial changes with positive effect compared with the times they were given with the goal of giving information (59% vs. 0.8%). On the contrary, in cases where the questions intended to give information, they resulted in a higher percentage of substantial and minimal changes with negative effects and minimal changes with positive effect. The communicative function of this type of feedback, also, affected the students' willingness and ability to respond; in 33.3% of cases when the function of the comments was to give information, the pupils refused to revise the highlighted points in their writing. This is in contrast with 23.7% of the times when they received comments for the purpose of making a request.

Likewise, for the statements, differences were recorded between how the students revised their writings based on the purpose the teacher had in giving comments. Here again, the comments which functioned as making a

request resulted in a much higher number of substantial changes with positive effects on the part of the students. Like questions, statements which gave information to the students brought about more minimal changes with both positive and negative effects. Students were also more willing not to respond to a number of comments they received in statement form with the purpose of giving information compared with the ones that made a request. It was interesting to see that none of the pupils made substantial changes with negative effect when they received feedback in statement from the giving information.

Imperative feedback with the only purpose of making a request resulted in different patterns of responses on the part of the students. In most cases, the pupils revised the problematic areas substantially and minimally with positive effects (49% and 27.3%). It was intriguing to see that in 14.1% of the cases, they refused to revise the identified problems. In a much lower number of instances, they used minimal and substantial changes with negative effects when they received comments in imperative format (6.6% and 3% respectively).

Another interesting observation was that, like the way they did with imperatives, students were found to be more willing to revise their writings with substantial changes having positive effects when they received two other types of feedback which made a request, i.e. question and statement,. Substantial changes with negative effects were found in response to imperatives slightly more than statements. No cases of this type of change was observed in students' revision of their compositions based on question type of commenting. Again, minimal changes with both positive and negative effects were recorded to happen more as a result of receiving imperative type of comments.

Compared with the statement type of feedback, the question type brought about a higher and lower number of minimal changes with positive and negative effects respectively (17.2 % vs. 9.3% for the positive and 0 vs. 2 % for negative effects). Also interesting was differences in the number of no changes when pupils were given varied commenting types with different purposes; though they did not answer only 2% of the problematic points in their writing based on the statement comments, they were found to be much

more hesitant in responding to the other types of feedback. As the table shows in 23.7% and 14.1% of the cases, they refused to revise their writing when provided with questions and imperatives when they made a request.

A different pattern of response was also revealed when students considered comments in question and statement from which gave information. The analysis showed that the pupils were more willing to employ substantial changes with negative effect, minimal changes with positive effect, and no changes in their writing when the feedback were in question form. On the contrary, they made much more number of substantial changes with positive effect and a slightly more number of minimal changes with negative effects in their texts when they had feedback in statement format.

Overall, the results summarized in Table 3 and Table 4 show that there are differences in the effectiveness of comments with different communicative goals, i.e. making a request and giving information, while the same pattern is observed for both teacher and peer feedback.

5. Discussion

The analysis of Table 1 showed that comments provided by the teacher in question and statement format can result in the highest number of positive changes, substantive and minimal, made by the students. Similarly, as to the comments given by peers, those provided in statement, question and imperative resulted in the most to the least number of positive changes in the students' writings.

Since all three types of comments provided by the teacher and peers brought about some revisions with negative effects and also students' incapability or unwillingness to respond in some cases, in writing about the efficiency of different types of feedback, one needs to focus attention on these two aspects as well. Considering the positive, negative and no change effects of various commenting types provided by the teacher and peers, one can conclude that comments provided by the teacher and peers in statement format are the best and most appropriate type of feedback to provide on students' writing. Next comes the question type of comment given by the teacher. Finally, the imperative comments given by teacher and the question

and imperative type of comments provided by the classmates have the least, but still acceptable, effect on the pupils' revision of their writing.

The findings of this study are in line with Conrad and Goldstein (1999) who studied the relationship between written feedback and students' subsequent revision of their work and came to the conclusion that statements lead to more successful revisions, i.e. 15.5% of cases, than questions (4.5%) and imperatives (1.5%). However, the results of this research are in contrast to Sugita's (2006); his students were found to be much more in favor of imperatives than statements and questions. He considered the authoritative and direct nature of imperatives as helpful in students' revisions of their texts.

More specifically, regarding question comments in the present research, we found that many of the questions remained unanswered. When inspected in more detail, the majority of unanswered questions were those written in one word. Sugita (2006), Ferris (1997, 1995) and Conrad and Goldstein (1999) had already stated that teachers' comments in question format might confuse students in revising their drafts since they do not know how to revise their writings on the basis of them. To add to the efficiency of question comments, Ferris (1997) suggests that teachers clarify the purpose of questions and explain to the students how to make use of them. Similarly, Zhang (1995) believes that, to remove confusion on the part of the students, teachers should try to be explicit and clear in their question comments.

Another main point observed in this study is that although feedback provided by the teacher resulted in more positive changes in the students' writings, peers can be regarded as a powerful source of giving feedback to their classmates considering the observation that this source of giving comment results in many positive modifications in students' writing and the fact that peer feedback brings about many advantages like raising students' autonomy (Miao, Badger & Zhen, 2006) which results from the absence of teacher as the expert and authority knowledge (Gielen, Peeters, Dochy, Onghena & Struyven, 2010). In providing feedback by the classmates, however, the type of feedback which brings about the highest number of positive changes should be kept in mind. Earlier, many scholars like Miao et al. (2006), Kasanga (2004), Villamil and De Guerrero (1998), Topping

(1998), Mendonca and Johnson (1994) and Chaudron (1983) had asserted that both teacher and peer comments lead to the improvement of students' writings and their qualities and that they can be regarded as complementary sources in students' revisions of their writings.

The analysis of Table 3 and 4 provided us with intriguing findings about how the purpose of the feedback provider in giving comments affects the merits of that type of comment. Here, considering the positive, negative and no changes that each type of comment with a particular purpose had, the researchers found that questions and statements provided by the teacher with the purpose of making a request, and statements given by the peers with either one of communicative functions all bring about the best results in students' writings. Imperatives given by both teachers and peers, and questions given by the peers for the purpose of making a request were found to be less influential than the other types mentioned.

The interesting point, here, is that considering all different effects that a particular type of feedback could exert on the students' writing, the researchers found that statements provided by the teacher for the purpose of giving information has the least positive effect on the students' modifications. More surprisingly, questions provided by the teacher and peers with the purpose of giving information were found to have negative effects on the students' writing and, consequently, are suggested not to be employed, when giving comments, or to be employed with caution. This findings is supported by Ferris (1997) whose students favored comments which requested information regardless of their syntactic form. She found that questions and statements which made requests for information led to 55% and 26% positive effects. As to the inefficiency of the feedback which gave information, she reasoned that they were not telling students clearly what they should do.

6. Conclusion

This study is a further proof of the observation that the effect different types of feedback may have on the content of the students' writing is worth a closer examination. In order to contribute to the growing body of research on the value of providing appropriate feedback to the L2 writers, the present

study investigated the extent to which different types of feedback with varied communicative purposes helped L2 writers improve their pieces of writing. It found that questions and statements provided by the teacher with the purpose of making a request, and statements given by the peers with either one of communicative functions all bring about the best results in students' writings. On the other hand, the analysis of the revisions made by the students showed that statements provided by the teacher with the purpose of giving information has the least positive effect on the students' modifications. Surprisingly, questions provided by the teacher and peers with the purpose of giving information were found to have negative effects on students' writing.

Consequently, we would suggest that L2 teachers provide their learners with both teacher and peer feedback on their writings on a regular basis. So that learners would benefit more from this learning process, teachers should employ the types of feedback which have been proven in the majority of the available literature to yield the best results in the students' writings. Overall, providing feedback on writing is a challenging responsibility a teacher faces, and like any other kind of work they can either be successful in overcoming it, or they may fail. Teachers should keep this point in their mind that experience alone would not guide them reach their goal, and in order to be able to make this daunting task easier and more creative, they need to use certain helpful guidelines and strategies in their classrooms (Ferris, 2007).

Because current research indicates that comments given by the teacher with the purpose of making a request have a greater effect on students' performance than those giving information, further research would do well to compare the effects of various commenting styles with different communicative purposes to see if the same differential effects are observed between varied types of feedback given for different purposes. As the current study does not take into account the effect of three types of comments on other aspects of writing such as grammar, and mechanics, with respect to the type of feedback provider, further research should be exploring these features. Furthermore, as the topic of writing might affect the results of the study, it is suggested that future research study the impact of the topic of writings on students' revision of their texts in terms of the

three types of feedback. In addition, as comments given by multiple peer group in comparison to single peer group can influence the quality of students' revisions (Cho & MacArthur, 2010), future studies can explore the impact of feedback provider from this perspective. Finally, since the findings of this study have demonstrated patterns of improvement of upper intermediate female L2 writers based on different types of feedback, we believe that further research would need to be undertaken to see if this finding also applies to L2 writers at other proficiency levels and whether it is also true for male students as well. Overall, the fact that this study somehow overlap and at the same time differ from similar studies will mean that more research is needed in this area. Finally, more extensive data collection over a period of time will undoubtedly result in more valid interpretations of patterns of the students' development in writing based on various commenting types.

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