

Pre-Service EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Written Corrective Feedback in a Wiki-Based Environment

Mabel Ortiz, Claudio Díaz

Abstract—This paper explores Chilean pre-service teachers' perceptions about the provision of corrective feedback in a wiki environment during the collaborative writing of an argumentative essay. After conducting a semi-structured interview on 22 participants, the data were processed through the content analysis technique. The results show that students have positive perceptions about corrective feedback, provided through a wiki virtual environment, which in turn facilitates feedback provision and impacts language learning effectively. Some of the positive perceptions about virtual feedback refer to permanent access, efficiency, simultaneous revision and immediacy. It would then be advisable to integrate wiki-based feedback as a methodology for the language classroom and collaborative writing tasks.

Keywords—Argumentative essay, focused corrective feedback, perception, wiki environment.

I. INTRODUCTION

IN the context of language teaching, feedback is considered as a contribution to language learning, fostering learner motivation and ensuring linguistic accuracy [7]. Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) constitutes one type of feedback that takes the form of a response to a learner utterance that contains a linguistic error. Language teachers use this strategy in order to help students improve their writing skills. WCF plays a potential role in developing language proficiency, particularly when correcting grammatical errors, which are common in the writings of learners of English as a foreign language. Nowadays, with the integration of technology, feedback can also be delivered online. Different learning environments have emerged and allow different types of communication. One of these learning environments is the wiki, which is considered as very useful for online writing, as it provides a dynamic set of applications for task development [12] and, given its characteristics, can favor the provision of feedback. In this context, the focus of this study is to identify and analyze the perceptions of EFL preservice teachers towards the provision of feedback through a wiki.

M. O. is with Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Alonso de Ribera 2850, Concepción, CHILE. (e-mail: mortiz@uesc.cl).

C. D. is with Universidad de Concepción, Edmundo Larenas 64A, Concepción, CHILE (phone: 56412661333; fax: 56412204579; e-mail: claudiódiaz@udec.cl).

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II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Grammar Errors

In the process of L2 acquisition, one of the most frequent issues is how to deal with grammar errors. Research in the field of second language acquisition agrees on the difficulty that implies learning different grammatical morphemes. Such is the case of the final -s added at the end of the third person singular. In spite of the fact that this morpheme has been considered as a basic form for English learners [2] [4], [11], [19], it has been observed that, regardless of students' level of communicative competence; they usually omit the final -s in a verb in the third person singular form.

The morphemic expression of third person singular is considered as one of the easiest forms to acquire in English as an L2 [7], [10], [11], [24]; however, despite the fact that some structures can be considered as linguistically easy, they are not easy to internalize for non-native speakers. This shows that there is no direct relationship between linguistic complexity and learning [16]. This might explain why some students show progress in their communicative competence, but not in their grammatical competence.

A lot has been theorized about how errors should be corrected during the process of learning a L2 and how teachers should correct students' errors [20]. Thus, the decisions about the "how and when errors should be corrected, and who should do it" [6] can have a significant impact on the teaching and learning process of an L2.

B. Corrective Feedback

In the context of error correction, the strategies of feedback play an important role. One of the most studied strategies is corrective feedback, which has been a focus of interest for different researchers (CF) [8], [13], [21], [25], among others. At the level of teaching a L2, CF acquires a big importance, as it is fundamental in the development of grammatical competence in the English language.

CF is defined as an indication when the use of the target language is incorrect [9], [21] and it is usually provided by the teacher, who invites the student to deal with a grammatical error [21]. Its function is to provide the students with important information in order to modify their errors. In the context of teaching writing, it has the objective of supporting the production of texts for concrete purposes for a real audience where the learning context is considered as a social practice. Given these characteristics, the structure of a collaborative wiki offers advantages for the practice of written production and feedback provision [22], [23].

There are several studies related to feedback at individual

level; however, collaborative feedback has been barely explored [28], [29]. There have not been too many studies on feedback in collaborative environments, in spite of the fact that this methodology presents characteristics that can enhance teacher-provided feedback, since this type of feedback is imbedded in a social context where students work to solve linguistic problems collaboratively. In other words, the effect of this feedback may be much more significant, because students can enhance their linguistic abilities by making group decisions when correcting mistakes [30], [31].

An aspect that is important to note in collaborative contexts is the possibility of activating metalinguistic thinking during the process of writing. Linguistic representations are built in the context of social interaction, since it is through this type of interaction that linguistic learning and knowledge building are activated. Through collaborative writing, students become aware of their mental processes, which help them to better understand their learning style and how to acquire knowledge.

Theorists such as [32], [33] support the use of collaborative work as an activity that facilitates the identification of linguistic errors in the dialogic phase. This instance allows students to talk about the language and discuss about the linguistic errors. Collaborative written assignments are used to draw students' attention to the grammatical structure, even though these assignments are mainly focused on meaning [34] [35]. All in all, the social function of written production, the activation of the thinking processes and the negotiation of meaning, can ease the process of correcting errors [36].

C. A Wiki Environment

A wiki is a virtual space that may favor not only the development of writing, but also the student's awareness of the teacher's feedback. In this respect, some researchers declare that virtual feedback increases the number of revisions [2], [3], [17]. In the case of a wiki, this tool contains a banner, which allows the provision of online feedback and facilitates the teacher's job during the revision of a written work [5]. Thus, feedback can be delivered in different stages of the writing process through synchronized or asynchronized communication.

Research about wiki on collaborative environments is still scarce. To date, not many studies have been undertaken in the context of computer-mediated communication from a sociocultural point of view. The studies carried out so far [37] have shown that this virtual environment has many advantages. One of them is the collective production of a written text. From a psychological point of view, students are more confident and less pressured in an environment where they can work at their own pace. A relevant aspect is the asynchronous characteristic of a wiki. This characteristic allows students to work inside or outside the classroom, reflecting on what they are writing, improving their writing and finally producing a quality text.

The collaborative characteristics of a wiki allows to make a relevant use of computers and brings teaching and learning from a written production to a context, focused mainly on the student rather than on the teacher. An important fact provided

by [37] is that the collaboration through wiki, fosters students' reflective thinking. Preliminary studies on the use of wikis show certain benefits in collaborative written assignments in L2 acquisition [35]. In fact, research highlights [31] that, students' progress in terms of writing, develop confidence in their writings and find these tasks more motivational. It is important to take into consideration that a wiki, on its own, would not promote collaborative writing. To encourage the participation of students is essential to undertake a clear and thorough methodological procedure, in order to obtain significant benefits from the computer mediated collaboration.

The writing of a text in a wiki allows students to create a new subject-matter through conversation and interaction. Thus, in a virtual environment, interaction is understood as the communicative exchange between teachers and students, and between students [37], [38]. A wiki grants favorable conditions to support reflection processes in meaning as in structure. While there can exist an absence of direct contact between students, this aspect is replaced for other aspects that the virtual environment delivers, for example, the opportunity to work at the students' own pace and the display of the text whenever necessary [39], [40]. These factors would promote noticing and self-correction. In other words, unlike the classroom context, the virtual environment promotes the active participation of students, an aspect that eases the attention of the linguistic errors that students make in their writings [36], [37].

The feedback and the changes to a written text remain in a wiki environment, so students can check their progress whenever they consider it as appropriate. The characteristics of the wiki facilitate the provision of feedback and the process of writing. On the other hand, the groups can share their wikis with their peers, which facilitates feedback not only from the teacher, but also from their peers.

Up to date, few investigations have focused on feedback provided through a virtual environment [1]. Among the studies found, a positive attitude can be observed regarding online feedback. For example, [24] states that online feedback provision would stimulate the frequent reflection and revision of written texts. Furthermore, in a study based on online writing development, [15] reached the conclusion that students were more receptive with feedback received in an online manner rather than feedback provided in a traditional way with pen and paper. In the same line, [18] also determined that online feedback, mainly from the recast and metalinguistic type, was favored by students.

Finally, [14] and [26] mention that students demonstrate a better disposition towards feedback provided through a virtual environment. Although these results are not conclusive, there may still be detractors towards feedback and the use of ICTs. Diverse advantages can be found when providing online CF, especially for students who interact with technology in their daily life.

III. METHOD

The present is a case study and the non-probabilistic sample made up of 22 subjects (65% female and 35% male). Their

age ranged from 19 to 22 years old. Most of the subjects graduated from secondary education from public schools.

In order to identify students' perceptions regarding the provision of feedback through a wiki, a semi-structured interview was used. Each interview was registered in audio format and subsequently the data were transcribed in Word documents. Afterwards, the program Nvivo10 was used for content analysis.

IV. RESULTS

In the dimension 'provision of corrective feedback through a wiki', three categories were identified: 'feedback disposition', 'feedback delivery', and 'effects of feedback'.

In the first category, 'feedback disposition', two subcategories emerged: 'permanent access' and 'simultaneous revision'. Table I illustrates each subcategory and its respective evidence.

TABLE I
FEEDBACK DISPOSITION CATEGORY AND RESPECTIVE SUBCATEGORIES

Subcategory	Fragment
Permanent Access	"...maybe the difference between one thing and another thing, is that the virtual environment is easier to reach, as it is technological, while if it is a paper, you may not review it and even lose it. This is why a virtual environment is safer." (Participant 16)
Simultaneous Revision	"... as I was saying, the teacher keeps sending feedback and we can make the changes on the spot. It is more simultaneous. Besides, the online tool notifies you through an email when feedback has been sent..." (Participant 15)

The second category corresponds to 'feedback delivery'. The subcategories derived from it are 'immediacy' and 'efficiency'. Table II shows each subcategory with examples of students' fragments.

TABLE II
FEEDBACK DELIVERY AND ITS SUBCATEGORIES

Subcategory	Fragment
Immediacy	"...It is more immediate, so we corrected our paper right after feedback was provided..." (Participant 1)
Efficiency	"...Yes, because a piece of paper may get lost, and when we get feedback in a piece of paper, we never rewrite the text, and sometimes we do not understand the teacher's comments. Besides, it is easier to work online, because now we have everything backed up in our computers, files and wherever" (Participant 13)

The third category identified is called 'effect of feedback'. The subcategory that emerged is: 'facilitate learning'. Table III illustrates this subcategory with an example of students' fragments.

TABLE III
EFFECT OF FEEDBACK CATEGORY AND ITS SUBCATEGORIES

Subcategory	Fragment
Facilitates Learning	"...it facilitates learning due to the fact that it allows more interaction, the feedback remains online and we can see our progress in writing." (Participant 7)

V. DISCUSSION

Participants' responses show that, in general, there is a positive perception towards the virtual tool for feedback

provision. In this way, students value that the wiki is accessible and is always available. In relation to error correction, the wiki accessibility is a relevant characteristic as it can encourage active participation and it can facilitate students' attention to linguistic errors in writing. Besides, compared to the classroom setting, the accessibility in the wiki can allow a more frequent teacher-student interaction, thus, as a consequence, this may favor a more immediate and efficient feedback. In this respect, one of the most common problem in writing is the lack of frequent feedback due to the fact that teachers in Chile face a heavy workload and big class size.

Students' perception towards a virtual environment coincides with other studies. In this respect, [14] and [27] declare that students usually demonstrate a better disposition towards feedback delivered in a virtual environment.

Students show a greater willingness towards online feedback. Even though results are inconclusive, because there may be a lot of opposition to feedback and the use of technology in the learning process, there are many advantages of giving CF to students that interact with technology through a virtual environment on a daily basis. A tool that eases the writing process, making it visible and available, motivates students to frequently review their writings, which may result in an improved written text. This is the case of the wiki as a tool that helps and makes a feasible revision of the text [39] [40].

Students' views of the wiki as a learning facilitator show that this tool can make a difference in writing development and error correction. In fact, this tool allows students to make modifications to a text in any moment, from any place and as many times as the student desires. Nowadays, technology is an important part of students' daily life, so this type of experience makes the learning process more meaningful.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

The semi structured interview allowed the students to reflect about the importance of error correction in English and the impact that context may have for online feedback provision. Due to this, one of the conclusions that can be withdrawn from students' opinions is that they show a positive perception toward feedback delivered through a wiki. In this context, the categories and subcategories identified, such as "direct access", "simultaneous revision", "immediacy", and "efficiency", evidence that the wiki is an online tool whose characteristics may favor feedback provision and its impact on learning. Furthermore, the aforementioned are not common qualities in conventional feedback (paper and pencil). Furthermore, given the positive perception from most of the interviewed students towards virtually delivered feedback; it would be advisable to integrate this methodology in the language-teaching classroom in order to favor feedback provision.

Finally, it is important to point out that although some students prefer oral feedback from the teacher, it would be a good idea to combine different types of feedback in different moments, considering that when it comes to teaching, there are several options that can be used [7]. The use of online

feedback along with the provision of oral feedback can be an effective combination in the classroom in order to attend errors and to satisfy each individual needs.

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