

The Effect of Formal Feedback on the Improvement of Writing Skills of O-Level Students in Selected Private Schools in Lahore

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the effect of teachers' feedback on O-Level students' English composition writing in private high schools in Lahore. A mixed-method approach was used to gather data through the use of survey questionnaires and essays. Research participants (n=75) were selected using the random sampling method. The ESL composition profile constructed by Jacobs et al (1981) was used to examine the quality of learners' first draft and second draft. The essays were rated before the feedback (first draft) and after the feedback (second draft). A paired sample T-test was run to understand whether there was a significant difference between the first draft and the second draft. Results of the paired sample T-Test showed that the scores increased significantly in the second draft as compared to the first draft. Teachers' comments had a constructive effect on the quality of writing. This study revealed that students get assistance even from marginal feedback.

KEYWORDS: teacher feedback, O-Level, multiple drafts, ESL composition writing, academic achievement

Introduction

Teaching the English language in Pakistan is very challenging for ESL instructors. Teachers are implementing various methods and teaching instruments in the best feasible manner to make learning English language stress-free for students. ESL learners' problem in studying the English language has remained a subject of debate for several years. In Pakistan, the environment does not offer native-like exposure to the students. Correspondingly ESL instructors and learners have to make effort to bridge this difference. Acquiring the English language is hardly an unconscious procedure for Pakistani ESL students. Pakistani students are unable to write in correct English language that is expected and required of them (Sultana & Zaki, 2015). Moreover, numerous studies have highlighted the writing problems faced by Pakistani students (Khan, Javaid & Farooq, 2015; Shahzadie, Mushtaq & Khan, 2014).

O-Level students need to employ different forms of writing to suit a range of purposes to show that they can understand the content and argument of given written texts. Learners need to be

familiar with exactly how good they are performing as they study. It is for this reason that the feedback which informs that they are performing well provides them a feeling of accomplishment that in turn encourages them to write better. Teachers' feedback on students' work is considered to have a bigger impact on their accomplishment than any other elements such as grading (Black & William, 1998). Many second language learners find it difficult to cope with the different forms of writing required for the Cambridge O Level. ESL learners find it difficult to progress their thoughts logically from the word level to the entire paragraph (Bilal et al., 2013; Khan, 2011; Haider, 2012).

Various ESL teachers believe that feedback with handwritten comments can assist students to enhance their second language composition writing (Brown, 2007; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Furthermore, ESL students would like, look forward to, and value teachers' feedback on their writing and prefer to receive written feedback rather than verbal feedback (Ferris, 1995; Leki, 1991; Satio, 1994). If teachers do not provide handwritten comments then it might be problematic for learners to determine whether a written assignment is completed accurately and what are the areas in which they require enhancements (Chastain, 1988). Specific handwritten feedback is important in the Pakistani setting, where usually generalized feedback is provided on learners' writing (Haider, 2012).

Feedback which is constructive, useful, as well as improves students' learning is a fundamental skill for teachers (Harmer, 2004; Peterson, 2010). According to Bruning and Horn (2000), two decades of cognitive studies have revealed that it is an extremely multifaceted linguistic and cognitive chore to learn to write which requires careful consideration of the circumstances for increasing enthusiasm and skillfulness. It has been revealed in many research studies that teachers' feedback is an effective tool in enhancing accomplishment in several settings (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Carless, 2006; Duijnhouwer et al., 2010; Duijnhouwer et al., 2012; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kellogg & Whiteford, 2009; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Shute, 2008). Students' learning has been widely researched from both the learner and teachers' perspective, however, there has been no in-depth study conducted for evaluating the impact of ESL teachers' handwritten comments in the high school setting in Pakistan. Hence, to fill this gap, there is a need to reveal the current implications of a teacher's written feedback. The paucity of research in this area calls for a study to address this gap. The current research used a mixed-method to examine instructors' views, procedures, and learner choices concerning the delivery of formal handwritten feedback comments and its impact on the enhancement of correctness and expression in ESL composition writing.

The current research has opened up several pedagogic avenues to the researcher concerning the ESL writing classroom. The researcher learned that providing written feedback to learners is helpful in the development of their L2 composition writing. It also became conspicuous in the research process that teachers' written feedback has to accompany verbal feedback so that the teacher could find the difficulties that learners confront when revising their essays. Regular feedback that involves verbal discussion ceases to be the most important strategy to inspire quality revision of composition texts.

The current study contributes to research in terms of offering valuable insights into the most difficult aspects of writing faced by Pakistani students studying at O-Level and how those feedback comments might impact their writing. Moreover, most of the research studies on

feedback have been conducted at college or university level. There is a lack of research that addresses the secondary school setting. A focus on secondary school students is essential as students are exposed to L2 writing at a very early stage. An awareness of the impact of feedback at the secondary level can help us better understand how secondary school teachers can modify their feedback practice. This research contributes to the present work on teachers' comments by relating actual teacher feedback comments to its impact on students' writing skills. Research outcomes have constantly indicated that teachers' comments on single draft compositions do not benefit students much in enhancing their compositions as they do not get the chance to revise, rewrite, and resubmit their writing. Thus, the present study used multiple drafting pedagogical settings so that the impact of teacher feedback can be investigated on students' compositions in terms of content and form.

The following research hypotheses were tested:

H₁: Teachers' handwritten feedback has a positive effect on ESL learners' second draft of composition writing.

H₀: Teachers' handwritten feedback has no effect on ESL learners' second draft of composition writing.

Literature Review

The preliminary research and philosophies regarding teachers' handwritten comments are nearly 100 years old based on the practices developed by the cognitive perspective named behaviorism (Thorndike, 1913). Numerous debates by researchers in the past 15 years are about whether learners get assistance through written comments on the assigned composition or not (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1999, 2004; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Truscott, 1996, 1999, 2004, 2007). Teachers' comments have shown to have enhanced motivation which results in high scores among high school learners (Stake, 1982).

Pakistani high school learners need writing skills for educational reasons comprising writing activities assigned by the instructors and taking quizzes and final term examinations (Khan, 2011). Furthermore, prompt as well as critical handwritten feedback should be provided on their essays, to enhance their confidence (Haider, 2012). Another research carried out in colleges in Pakistan have discovered that the learners find it challenging to identify parts of speech (Imran et al., 2016). Panhwar et al. (2017) deduced that the outdated ESL teaching methods applied in Pakistan as well as the lack of teacher training make learning writing skills difficult.

Kluger and DeNisi (1996) conducted a study and analyzed 131 research articles on teachers' comments; the majority of the studies were from the classroom context. It was discovered that teachers' comments enhanced the accomplishment of the majority of the students, however above 33% of studies showed that teachers' comments reduced the performance of the learners. It is stated that teachers' very complex comments could direct the student's concentration away from the assignment. Furthermore, current research studies correspondingly provide support, presenting proof in favor of feedback (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener et al., 2005; Ellis et al., 2008). Based on the outcomes of their research studies, they uphold that teachers' feedback comments facilitate their students in developing grammatical accuracy in essay writing.

Feedback holds a psychological effect by improving students' self-confidence because feedback is a method to show that the tutor has read students' writing carefully (Glenn & Goldthwaite, 2014). Handwritten feedback on students' writing seems to be more serious as tutors assess students' essay writing, concentrating on ideas, composition, vocabulary as well as style. Many research studies have agreed that teachers' handwritten feedback on students' writing resulted in improvement in students' writing (Alvira, 2016; Baghzou, 2011).

Even though many research studies have been conducted to examine teachers' handwritten feedback (Farid & Adlina, 2012; Othman, 2009; Razali & Jupri, 2014), these research studies primarily were concentrated on college students. High school students, nonetheless, were hardly studied (Servilio, 2009). Referring to the significance of tutors' handwritten feedback, Peterson (2010) identified that feedback informs the students about the readers' response to their writing.

Feedback is a less investigated field, particularly about ESL learners' perceptions of teachers' comments (Ferguson, 2011; Pokorny & Pickford, 2010). Most ESL educators approve that teachers' written comments are very helpful if they are delivered at the starting stage of composition writing (Ferris, 2003). The current study contributes to the research in the field in terms of offering valuable insights into the most difficult aspects of writing faced by Pakistani students studying at O-Level and how those feedback comments might impact their writing tasks. There is a lack of research that addresses the secondary school setting. A focus on secondary school students is essential as students are exposed to ESL writing and they develop writing skills at this stage. An awareness of the impact of feedback at the secondary level can help us better understand how secondary school teachers can modify their feedback practice. This study contributes to the existing literature on feedback by relating actual teachers' feedback comments to its impact on students' writing skills. Research outcomes have constantly indicated the point that teachers' comments on single draft compositions do not benefit students much in enhancing their compositions as they do not get the chance to revise, rewrite, and resubmit their writing. Thus, the present study uses multiple draft pedagogical settings so that the impact of teachers' feedback can be investigated on students' compositions in terms of content and form. Thus, it is significant to find out how feedback impacts the students so that the teachers can further improve on their expertise in providing feedback comments and guide learners well in becoming better writers.

Research Methods

This research work employed a mixed-method approach to test the hypotheses. The mixed-method approach used here included collecting the views of the research participants through a questionnaire and analyzing multiple draft compositions. Essays were collected to show the effect of one variable on the other. In the present study, teachers' feedback is the independent variable whereas, the development of students' composition writing is the dependent variable.

The ESL composition profile constructed by Jacobs et al. (1981) was used to examine the quality of learners' first draft and second draft based on the scores on accuracy, content, expression, vocabulary, and mechanic features of essay writing. Students' essays were assessed earlier than the feedback (first draft) as well as later after receiving the feedback (second draft).

This rubric has been chosen for the current research because it has been used everywhere since 1981 (Al-Mudhi, 2019; Ghanbari, 2012; Klimova; 2011). Besides, this rubric is commonly employed by ELT teachers for marking learners' compositions (Meisuo, 2000). The mean scores of the first draft and second draft were compared to test the research hypotheses. The difference in marks was considered as an achievement or progress in composition essay value.

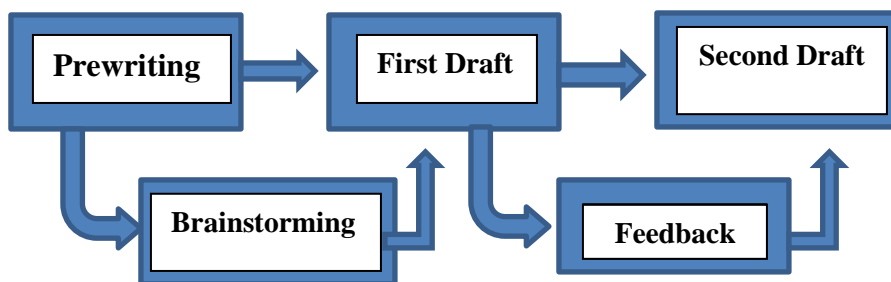
The target population of the current research was Pakistani students enrolled in the O-Level course. The random sampling technique was employed for collecting information from students enrolled in the O-Level course in three public high schools in Lahore. Out of the overall population of schools in Lahore, 75 students studying English and 3 experienced English language teachers were selected to participate in the study. The research sample comprised of 75 male participants. The age of research participants ranged from 14 to 17 years.

Data for the current research was gathered using a closed-ended questionnaire that explored the perceptions of the teachers and learners regarding the impact of teachers' comments on writing. The questionnaire was based on a five-point Likert scale. Closed-ended questionnaires were triangulated by analyzing real classroom documents. In the current research, documents had an essential role in analyzing handwritten feedback on multiple drafts. All three teachers were requested to provide a photocopy of their students' multiple draft essays with handwritten comments. The objective of collecting students' essays was to further examine the impact of tutors' feedback on writing skills.

Students' written essays with teacher's handwritten feedback comments were collected which indicated the teachers' inner thought processes and feedback. Furthermore, these multiple draft essays also indicated any improvement shown by the students after receiving the teachers' feedback. These documents provided evidence of the actual feedback practice. It is important to note that the feedback was provided initially on the collected essays. Figure 1 presents the writing stages followed in the public high schools which participated in the study.

Figure 1

Essay Writing and Feedback Stages



Data Analysis and Discussion

A paired sample T-test was run for understanding if there was a noteworthy variance among the first draft as well as the second draft. It was discovered that a noteworthy change was present among the initial draft in addition to the next draft ($t = -2.32, p = <0.05$). Outcomes regarding the paired sample T-Test showed that the marks awarded by the teachers increased significantly in the second draft as compared to the first draft.

Table 1
Paired Sample T-Test

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval				
				Lower	Upper			
Pre Marks – Post Marks	-1.24	4.04	.53	-2.31	-.17	-2.32	56	.02

The null hypothesis was rejected by these results ($P \leq \text{sig level } 0.05$, reject H_0). Having rejected the null hypothesis, the alternative hypothesis was consequentially accepted. The results show that students made progress in the second draft and improved their written performance. It also indicates that the students were able to respond successfully to teachers’ handwritten feedback on their first draft and as a result their essays improved in the second draft. Therefore, significant improvement was observed between the first draft and the second draft after receiving teachers’ handwritten feedback comments.

Impact of Feedback on Writing Skills

Data collected through questionnaires were analyzed in terms of frequency and percentage of responses. The SPSS was used to analyze the data collected from the questionnaire which facilitated in getting the precise percentages of responses.

Table 2
Error Correction Frequency Table
Q: I do not make the same error once the teacher corrects it

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Strongly Agree	8	10.7	10.7
	Agree	25	33.3	44.0
	Neutral	22	29.3	73.3
	Disagree	13	17.3	90.7
	Strongly Disagree	7	9.3	100.0
Total	75	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that 44% (n= 33) respondents agreed that they did not make the same error once their teacher corrected it. On the contrary, 27% (n= 20) of participants disagreed with the above

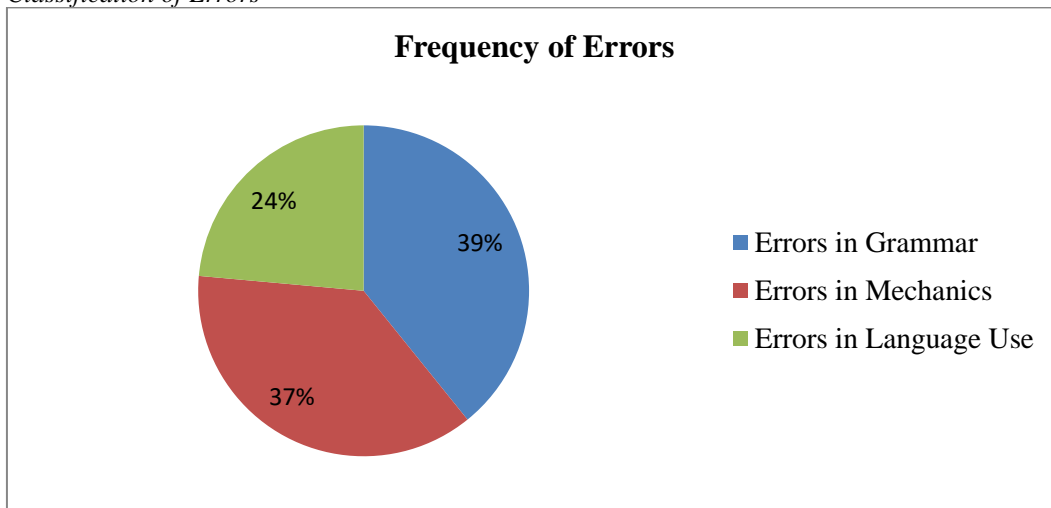
statement. Whereas, 29% (n= 22) students gave a neutral answer. This shows that majority of the students did not make the same mistake once their teacher corrected it. When the teachers were asked to respond to the above statement, 67% (n=2) respondents disagreed that their students made the same error once corrected. Whereas, 33% (n=1) respondent remained neutral.

Error Analysis

Primary data analysis included the classification of errors made by the research participants. Participants' essays were analyzed to see how many errors they had made based on the three selected aspects. The errors found in the data were classified into three major categories; namely, 'Errors in Grammar' which included errors in verb, tense, and prepositions, 'Errors in Mechanics' which comprised errors in punctuation, spelling, and capitalization, and 'Errors in Language Use' which contained wrong word choice and errors in word order/function. Figure 2 illustrates the frequency of errors made by the research participants in their essays.

Figure 2

Classification of Errors



As shown in Figure 2, the students faced problems in language use, mechanics, and more specifically in grammar. It can be easily seen that ESL students mostly encounter problems in Grammar and Mechanics. It can be observed, with an approximate calculation, the highest number regarding mistakes made by learners within the essay is that of grammar, whereas the lowest is language use. Mechanics was in the second position in writing errors among the three categories. According to the errors found in data 39% errors were of 'Grammar', 37% of 'Mechanics' while only 24% of the total errors were that of 'Language use'.

A paired sample t-test was used to evaluate the contrast in participants' writing errors between the first and the second drafts. Data analysis was conducted for different types of errors in grammar, mechanics, and language use. The outcome of the paired sample t-test illustrated the followings:

Impact on Grammar

Table 3 represents the means, standard deviations and standard error means of total grammatical errors made by participants in the first draft and the second draft. As illustrated in the table, this could be clearly observed that the average concerning total grammatical mistakes dropped from 73 to 35. This shows that students corrected their grammatical errors in the second draft and made fewer grammatical mistakes as compared to the first draft. It also indicates that participants were able to respond successfully to teachers’ feedback on their first draft which resulted in an enhanced second draft with fewer grammatical errors.

Table 3

Means of grammatical errors between the first and second drafts

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	First draft	73.00	31.43	18.14
	Second draft	35.00	18.24	10.53

Furthermore, a paired sample T-Test was performed on the total grammatical errors concerning the sample to understand whether there was a significant difference in grammatical errors between the first draft and the second draft.

Table 4

Paired Sample T-Test on Grammatical Errors

		Paired Differences					T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	First draft – second draft	38.00	13.22	7.63	5.13	70.86	4.97	2	.03

As shown in Table 4, there was a noteworthy change concerning grammatical mistakes between the first draft as well as the second draft ($t= 4.9, p= <0.05$). The outcome showed that the students improved their second draft and the total number of grammatical errors dropped in the second draft.

To answer the research question, the researcher examined ESL learners’ essays to observe the incorporation of teachers’ feedback. It was observed that the learners corrected their grammatical mistakes after getting the teacher’s handwritten feedback on their first draft.

Table 5*Samples of Grammatical Errors*

Type of Error	Examples
Grammatical Errors	The whispers had now <i>becoming</i> screams of animosity.
	Then one day, the people who I <i>said seen</i> on the streets, not too many years ago looking upset and hopeless, were now full of anger and scorn.
	The days spent <i>playing their arms</i> can never be forgotten.
	Arthur and Lionel knew somehow Glove got the passcode and <i>reseted</i> it.
	The other pool that was made for swimming <i>practicing</i> .
	That was the best moment <i>I ever saw</i> in my life.

Impact on Mechanics

Table 6 depicts the means, standard deviations and standard error means of total errors in mechanics made by participants in the first draft and the second draft. As illustrated in the table, it could be clearly perceived that the mean concerning total mistakes within mechanics dropped from 74 to 39. This showed that students corrected their errors in mechanics in the second draft and made fewer errors in mechanics as compared to the first draft. It also indicated that participants were able to respond successfully to teachers' feedback on their first draft which resulted in an enhanced second draft with fewer errors in mechanics.

Table 6*Means of Errors in Mechanics*

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	First draft	74.33	30.61	17.67
	Second draft	39.33	18.82	10.86

Furthermore, a paired sample T-Test had been carried out on the total errors within mechanics made by participants in the first draft and the second draft. This test was carried out to understand if there was any noteworthy variance of errors in the first draft and the second draft.

Table 7*Paired Sample T-Test on Errors in Mechanics*

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	First draft – Second draft	35.00	12.12	7.00	4.88	65.11	5.00	2	.03

As shown in Table 7, the result of the paired sample T-test showed that errors in mechanics made by the research participants decreased significantly from the first draft to the second draft ($t= 5, p= <0.05$). The result demonstrated that students improved in the revised draft and made fewer errors in mechanics. It also showed that teachers' feedback had a positive impact on students which resulted in an improved revised draft with fewer errors in punctuation, spellings, and capitalization.

To answer the research question, the researcher examined ESL learners' essays to observe the incorporation of their teacher's feedback. It was observed that the learners corrected their errors in mechanics after getting the teachers' handwritten feedback on their first draft.

Table 8

Samples of Errors in Mechanics

Type of Error	Examples
Errors in Mechanics (Capitalization, punctuation and spelling)	<u>e</u> very time that I went outside the glorious gates of the palace. I could see that people were not happy.
	We use to work in Las Vegas in America <u>together</u>
	Glove also <u>didnt</u> know that by <u>reseting</u> the password would trigger the intruder alert.
	Lionel was <u>continously</u> asking the passcode.
	I will set up special glasses and <u>brail</u> cards for blind people
I got bored then I got it that PI has been <u>compromised</u> .	

Impact on Language Use

Table 9 represents the means, standard deviations and standard error means of total errors in language use made by participants in the first draft and the second draft. As illustrated in the table, it was clearly observed that the mean concerning total mistakes within language use dropped from 44 to 25. This showed that students corrected their errors in language use in the second draft and made fewer errors in mechanics as compared to the first draft.

Table 9

Means of Errors in Language Use

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	First draft	43.67	21.73	12.54
	Second draft	24.67	14.29	8.25

It also indicated that participants were able to respond successfully to teachers' feedback on their first draft which resulted in an enhanced second draft with fewer errors in mechanics. To answer the research question, the researcher examined ESL learners' essays to observe the incorporation of their teachers' feedback. It was observed that the learners corrected their errors in language use after getting the teachers' handwritten feedback on their first draft.

Table 10*Samples of Errors in Language Use*

Type of Error	Examples
Errors in Language use (wrong word choice, errors in sentence construction and agreement)	I had a very extraordinary childhood.
	Nothing can make me forget the hateful looks they all threw at me
	I knew something was going to happen but I had no idea that it would be so huge and so savage.
	My father and mother had sent me across the border into England to safety
	I imagine him to have died as noble as Sydney Carton, and I hope he lived a life as noble.

Based on illustrative examples from different essays it was evident that the teachers' handwritten feedback helped the learners to correct their errors in grammar, mechanics, and language use. Errors such as incorrect verbs, spellings, articles, capitalization, and punctuation were identified and corrected. Analyses of students' written compositions revealed that the majority of students did not make the same mistake once their teachers corrected it. It also indicated that the students were able to respond successfully to teachers' handwritten feedback on their first draft and as a result their essays improved in the second draft.

Comparison of total errors

The data on the total errors made by all the research participants in both the first draft and the second draft was obtained. The data on the total number of errors was entered into SPSS and a paired sample T-Test was conducted. The test had been conducted for matching the total figure concerning mistakes in the first draft and the second draft.

As presented in Table 11, the mean number concerning mistakes dropped considerably from 191 (First draft, pre-feedback stage) to 98 (Second draft, post-feedback stage). This could be clearly observed that the mean number concerning mistakes dropped significantly in the second draft.

Table 11*Mean of Errors in Both Drafts*

		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	First draft	191.00	76.29	44.04
	Second draft	98.33	43.40	25.06

As shown in Table 12, the total number concerning mistakes significantly dropped within the second draft as compared to the first draft ($t = 4.87, p = < 0.05$). It showed that the students made progress in the second draft and improved their writing performance.

Table 12*Paired Sample T-Test*

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
First draft – second draft	92.67	32.95	19.02	10.79	174.54	4.87	2	.04

Discussion

Learners between the age range of 14-16 were chosen because the researchers had easy access to students of this age group as an English language teacher. Besides, through personal experience, the researchers were aware of the fact that this range is possibly the perfect age for second language acquisition. In line with Yule (1985), kids between the ages of ten to sixteen are the most effective learners of a second language in school.

The primary aim of the current research was to discover whether teachers' written feedback helped students enhance their writing quality after reviewing and revising their first draft. With reference to some previous studies on the topic (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Ferris, 1997; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Sachs & Polio, 2007), it was discovered that thorough feedback was directed to develop accuracy in grammar, mechanics, and language use in the revised draft. It was discovered that students made fewer errors in their revised draft after implementing their teachers' handwritten feedback on their essays. This result that teachers' written feedback resulted in better accuracy in the revised draft is also in agreement with the outcomes from two current research studies, i.e., Beuningen et al. (2008) and De Jong and Kuiken (2012). Beuningen et al. (2008) explored the revised composition drafts and conducted post-analysis research. In their research, it was discovered that written feedback on students' writing resulted in enhanced accuracy in the revised draft. This study explored the effect of teachers' feedback on a larger sample (N= 268) of Dutch learners. Furthermore, he discovered that teachers' feedback helped in treating written errors. The study concluded that only direct teachers' feedback has the ability to produce grammatical accuracy (De Jong & Kuiken, 2012). In both of these research studies, only the use of teachers' feedback and metalinguistic descriptions were apparent in the post-test. These research studies employed a quantitative research methodology whereas; the current research used a mixed methodology to explore the effectiveness of teachers' feedback. The research discovered that even teachers' marginal feedback provided to O-Level students was useful and delivered a platform and a successful life-time learning experience. As a result, this practice trained learners for further composition writing.

It is clear from the findings that teachers' written comments facilitated the learners in improving their composition skills. Teachers' comments had a constructive impact on the writing quality of the learners and a significant improvement was noticed in their piece of writing in their post-

test stage compared to their pre-test stage. Comparing the learners' essay scores in the 1st and 2nd draft also exhibited a general improvement in writing tasks in the Pakistani ESL context. This outcome has been examined by many scholars (Ferris, 1995; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Truscott, 1999). However, the results of the current research study contradicts the claim made by Truscott (2007) that teachers' feedback is ineffective and it discourages complex sentence structure which results in simplified writing. The current research discovered that the students were able to successfully implement teachers' feedback in their revised draft and wrote more accurate and complex sentences in their second draft as compared to the sentences they wrote in the first draft.

The null hypothesis H_0 was rejected at $P < 0.05$ which showed that educators were 95% assured that the relationship between the dependent variable (essay writing score) and the independent variable (teachers' feedback) did not occur by chance. It was due to the role of handwritten feedback which helped in improving students' essay writing skills.

Largely, the participants showed more improvement in their grammar skills than in content in their second drafts. It means the majority of the students dealt better in correcting their grammar errors than content. The result demonstrated that there was a noteworthy change concerning grammatical mistakes between the first draft as well as the second draft ($t = 4.9$, $p < 0.05$). The outcome showed that the students improved their second draft and the total number of grammatical errors dropped in the second draft. , it was observed that the average concerning total grammatical mistakes dropped from 73 to 35. The mean concerning total mistakes within language use dropped from 44 to 25. This showed that students corrected their errors in grammar in the second draft more as compared to the errors in content.

Moreover, they did better in organization and development in content. This outcome is in agreement with the research by Ravichandran (2003) that is based on feedback comments on essays that lead to the learners' writing extensive essays with substantial improvement in organization of content. The outcome of this research supports the earlier research outcomes in ESL composition writing settings (Ferris, 2002; Kepner, 1991). The results provide sufficient evidence that the majority of ESL composition writing students not only acknowledge the significance of feedback, they also trust that they get assistance from feedback comments.

Teachers in this study had to cope with students trying to compose a single whole sentence and producing coherent composition throughout the writing class. Subsequently, there were visible levels of learning among high and low achievers in one class. Overall, the results of this research offer strong evidence in favor of teachers' written comments as proposed by numerous former scholars in the area of ESL writing like Bitchener (2008), Chandler (2003), Ellis et al. (2008), Ferris (1999, 2004), Hyland and Hyland (2001). All learners in the research expressed their gratitude for their teachers' feedback, irrespective of what kind it was. This has been witnessed in many different contexts by many scholars (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1995; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales 1988; Truscott, 1999). It can be concluded that the outcome of this research is in line with earlier research studies with regard to the effectiveness of teachers' feedback irrespective of type.

Conclusion

Composition writing is a creative skill. It is the most challenging subject to teach in an ESL classroom. It is particularly hard for ESL learners because learners are supposed to produce written compositions that show their skills in the organization and exhibit their language ability. Teachers' feedback plays a significant role in teaching ESL writing. This research explored the impact of teachers' handwritten comments on O-Level students' English composition writing in private high schools in Lahore. The qualitative and quantitative data gathered through essays and survey questionnaires showed that the learners were keen to receive feedback on their first draft of their essay which facilitated them in revising and enhancing their writing.

In conclusion, teachers' feedback develops students' learning and improves teachers' teaching if the learners are responsive and the feedback is relevant, clear, focused, and objective. The results of the pre-test and post-test were compared. The comparison showed that the students' writing in the second draft highly improved and their mistakes decreased because of feedback. The null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis that the teachers' handwritten feedback has a positive effect on the ESL learners' second draft of writing was clearly proven.

The research discovered that even teachers' marginal feedback provided to O-Level students was useful and delivered a direction for revision and a successful life-time learning experience. As a result, this practice trained learners for further composition writing. The research revealed that teacher feedback is essential to aid ESL learners to write well in the second language. The majority of students are keen to have teachers' feedback on their essays to make their writing clear and interesting to the teachers who are the critical readers of their essays. It can be inferred that learners reacted positively to teachers' feedback for the reason that they were aware that the enhanced revised draft would get them better scores.

Limitations faced during the research

Even though the research achieved its aims, certain inescapable limitations were realized in the process. The researchers encountered numerous challenges throughout the research. The main challenge was gaining access to research participants. O-Level students were busy preparing for their Cambridge examination when data collection began. In the majority of schools, O-Level students were not free or were having mock examinations. Many high schools denied participating in the research study as the O-Level students were not available. It was challenging to meet most of the school heads, and in many cases even to make contact with them. The coordinators reported that they were very busy or not interested. Thus, one of the major limitations of this study was the reduced sample size than the initially intended sample size. The schools that agreed to participate in the research were unable to provide the required photocopies of students' essays because of their non-availability.

The major limitation of this research is that it was conducted in three private high schools in Lahore. The results cannot be generalized to other settings such as government high schools where O-Level is not offered and multiple draft strategy is not implemented. Moreover, another limitation of the research, which might have affected the result, is that the student participants were limited to male learners only hence; the results cannot be generalized to female students.

The reason for excluding female learners was their availability. The results from female students could have demonstrated different trends and behavior towards the reception of feedback. This could have led to a gender-based study on feedback and its impact. Considering the gender limitation, further research should investigate the impact of feedback on female students and the results can be compared and contrasted with the results of the present study. This future research will be able to fill these knowledge gaps.

The current study focused exclusively on teachers' handwritten feedback comments on students' essays. Therefore, other forms of feedback like peer feedback, oral feedback, group feedback were beyond the scope of the research. The current research analyzed handwritten feedback only. Furthermore, another limitation of this study is the selection of the genre of composition writing. The present research analyzed narrative and descriptive essays only. It will be fascinating to reproduce the current study using other types of writing tasks to test the generalizability of the current findings and assess their impact on different features involved in the writing process.

Recommendations for future research

There are many opportunities for future research that have emerged as a result of the present study. Taking into consideration the present situation of feedback in high schools in Pakistan, this section suggests several recommendations to improve students' writing skills. The current research investigated a small population in urban public schools. This research did not explore government high schools and rural locations with distinct learners with different levels of proficiency. Future research must be carried out in diverse settings to compare outcomes.

The present study used only a multiple-draft writing approach of teachers' written feedback. Future research should look at various other feedback strategies that can be used by teachers in enhancing ESL learners' writing quality such as post-it notes, traffic lights strategy, navigation notes, and voice notes. Further research should be carried out to decide the number of revisions or the total number of reviews that could best help ESL composition students.

Finally, the current research used feedback comments on the use of English articles, prepositions, past tense verbs, language use, and mechanics. Further research should be conducted in relation to the range of teachers' feedback on the modal auxiliary verbs, infinitives, and other syntactic rules or morphological structures of ESL learners' composition text.

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