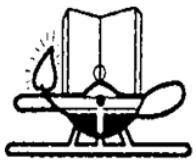

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Typology and Focus of EFL Teachers' Written Feedback on Egyptian Students Writing Proficiency

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Linguistics

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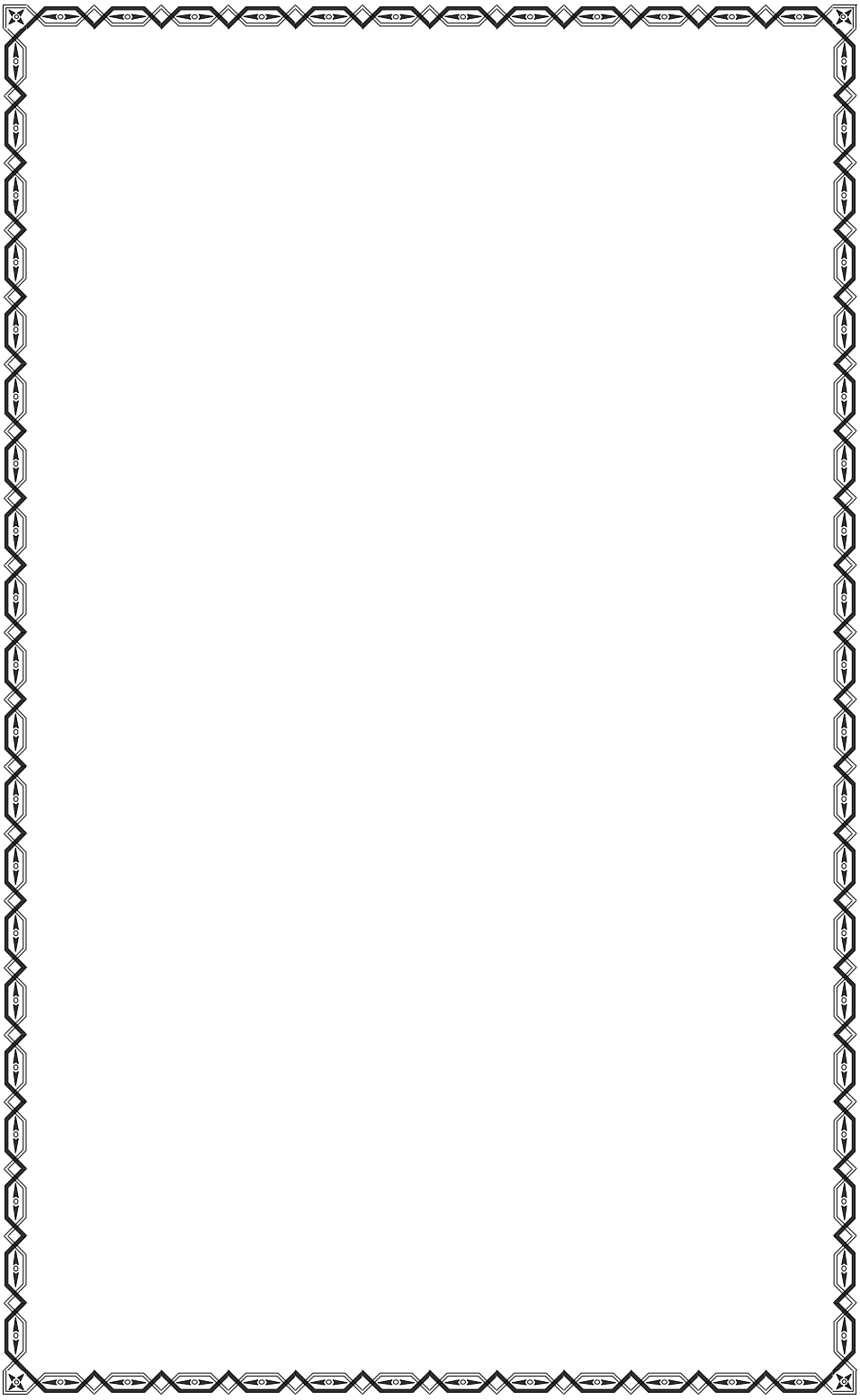

Contents

Abstract……..……..v

Acknowledgements……..……v

List of Abbreviations…….……...vii

List of Tables…….……...viii

List of Figures……..…….viii

Introduction……1

0.1 Rationale of the Study……..…...1

0.2 Statement of the Problem……...2

0.3 Context of the Study…….…...6

0.4 Purpose of the Study…….……..8

0.5 Significance of the Study…….....9

0.6 Research Questions…….…..10

0.7 Definition of Constructs…….....10

0.8 Delimitations……..15

0.9 Limitations of the Study……...16

Chapter One……...19

Literature Review……..19

1.0 Introduction:……..19

1.1 Historical Background of Research on the Efficacy of Feedback……20

1.2 The Truscott-Ferris Debate……..25

1.3 Perspectives of Research underlying the Study of Feedback……31

1.3.1 Feedback from the Perspectives of SLA and L2 Writing……...34

1.3.2 Feedback from the Perspective of Cognitive Linguistics...35

1.3.3 The Relationship between Feedback and Motivation (Educational Psychology)…….41

1.3.4 Feedback from the Perspective of the Sociocultural Theory……43

1.4 Empirical Studies on the effect of Feedback……..44

1.4.1 Studies on the Effect of Different Types of WCF on Students' Writing Accuracy…….44

1.4.2 Empirical Studies on the Role of Awareness in SLA…….63

1.4.3 Studies Examining Teachers' Perspectives of Feedback vs. their Practice……..69

1.4.4 Studies Examining Students' Perspectives about Feedback……76

1.4.5 Studies Examining Feedback Practices in the Arab Region and in the Middle East……..84

1.4.6 The Theoretical Background for the Current Study…...102

1.5 Summary……..103

107

Chapter Two……...108

Methodology……108

2.0 Introduction…….108

2.1 Research Questions…….108

2.2 Design of the study……..109

2.3 Method…….110

2.3.1 The Academic Writing Course……..110

2.3.2 A General Description of the Sample……112

2.3.3 Criteria for Sample Selection…….115

2.4 Description of the Analytical Tools……...115

2.5 Reliability and Validity of the Tools…….121

2.6 Data collection procedures…….123

2.7 Procedures of Data Analysis……...125

2.8 Summary……..125

Chapter Three…….128

Data Analysis and Results……..128

3.0 Introduction……..…128

3.1 Results of the Researcher-Devised Taxonomy Tool (R-DTT) 129

Focus and Type of Teachers' WCF……...129

3.1.1 Focus of Teachers' WCF……129

3.1.1.1 Focus of Teacher A WCF……..…….129

3.1.1.2 Focus of Teacher B WCF……136

3.1.2 Types of Teachers' WCF……145

3.1.2.1 Types of Teacher A WCF……...145

3.1.2.2 Types of Teacher B WCF……...147

3. 1.2.3 A Comparison between Teacher A and Teacher B in Type of Feedback…….149

3.2 Results of the Number of Feedback Tokens Tool (NFTT)…….152

3.2.1 Results of the Effects of Teacher A WCF on the Students Writing Accuracy……152

3.2.2 Results of the Effects of Teacher B WCF on Students' Writing Accuracy……154

3.2.3 A Comparison on the effect of WCF on students' writing accuracy between teacher A and teacher B……..155

3.3 Results of the Teacher Questionnaire Tool (TQT)……...156

3.3.1 Results of the Student Questionnaire Tool (SQT)……161

3.3.1.1 The Students' Reports on the Comprehensiveness of Teachers' Feedback……...161

3.3.1.2 The Students' Reports on their Teachers' Use of Codes.163

3.3.1.3 The Students' Reports about the Improvement of their Writing…….164

3.4 Conclusion……165

167

Chapter Four…….……..168

Discussion and Conclusion…….168

4.0 Introduction…….168

4.1 Findings of Research Question 1……169

4.2 Findings of Research Question 2……173

4.3 Results of Research Question 3……..185

4.4 Results of Research Question 4……..187

4.5 Conclusion……188

4.6 Implications of the Study……189

4.7 Directions for Future Research……..193

References……195

Appendices……...207

Appendix A……..208

Appendix B……..210

Appendix C……..218

Appendix D……..223

226

Appendix E……...226

231

Appendix F……...231

Summary……..236

Typology and Focus of EFL Teachers' Written Feedback on Egyptian Students Writing Proficiency

Abstract

This thesis ventures to explore teachers' comments on students' writing. Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is a reactive customized focus-on-form approach to direct learners' attention to form while performing a writing task, without breaking down the communicative mode. However, although there is a considerable amount of empirical research on the efficacy of WCF on Second Language (L2) students' writing accuracy, the results thereof are inconclusive, contradictory, and lacking theoretical base. Also there is limited research of WCF in the Arab region. The theoretical framework that informed the current study on the use of WCF in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing context is Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis. The sample consists of three types: 42 argumentative essays from an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course, two EFL Egyptian teachers of similar teaching experiences, and 21 EFL Egyptian intermediate students from the German University in Cairo (GUC) class 2011. The analysis investigates the foci and types of the teachers' WCF on students' argumentative essays, and the efficacy of such foci and types on the writing accuracy of the students using the Researcher-Devised Taxonomy Tool (R-DTT), and the Number of Feedback Tokens Tool (NFTT). The study further highlights the teachers' beliefs behind their WCF practices and any potential mismatches thereof using the Teacher Questionnaire Tool (TQT). Finally, the students' responses

and preferences towards their teachers' WCF practices are also examined as potential factors affecting the aforementioned relationships using the Student Questionnaire Tool (SQT). Results show that the teachers use a comprehensive mixture of direct and indirect WCF. One teacher tends to use direct uncoded feedback, while the other tends to use indirect coded feedback. In relation to the foci of the teachers' WCF, the participating teachers provided feedback on all aspects of their students writing namely form, rhetoric and content. In relation to the efficacy of WCF, the results show the guardedly positive effect of direct comprehensive uncoded WCF on the students' writing accuracy and the inefficacy of the indirect comprehensive coded WCF on the students' writing accuracy. Direct uncoded WCF proved to be more accessible and easily assimilated by the cognitive processing of the Egyptian EFL students because they can notice their errors and correct them in the subsequent essays. In relation to teachers' beliefs, several mismatches appeared between their beliefs and their actual practices. In relation to students' responses, the students' preference of comprehensive direct feedback matched their teachers' practice, although the students are not always aware of their teachers' actual practices. The findings of the study have pedagogical implications for WCF practice, especially for EFL contexts.

Search terms used: 'cognitive linguistics'; 'second language acquisition'; 'feedback'; and 'writing'.

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List of Abbreviations

Agr: Agreement

CF: Corrective Feedback

EAP: English for Academic Purposes

EF: Error Feedback

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ESL: English as a Second Language

IDs: individual differences

IL: Interlanguage

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

MCQs: Multiple Choice Questions

NFTT: Number of Feedback Tokens Tool

R-DTT: Researcher-Devised Taxonomy Tool

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

SQT: Student Questionnaire Tool

Teaching English as a Foreign Language: TEFL

TL: Target Language

TQT: Teacher Questionnaire Tool

UG: Universal Grammar

WCF: Written Corrective Feedback

WW: wrong word

WWF: Wrong Word Form

ZDP: Zone of Proximal Development

List of Tables

Table 1: A Summary of the Theoretical Perspectives of the Research of Feedback (table mine, A. S.)..... 33

Table 2: Illustration of the Original Sample Intended for the Study and the Actual Sample.....112

Table 3: Essay Topics for Teacher A and Teacher B.....113

Table 4: Matching the Analytical Tools with their Corresponding Research Questions.....115

Table 5: Description of the Analytical Tools.....116

Table 6: Components of Student Questionnaire Tool (SQT) and Teacher Questionnaire Tool (TQT).....121

Table 7: The Percentages of Error categories Targeted by Teacher A WCF in Essays 1 and 2.....131

Table 8: The ranking of the Error Categories Targeted by Teacher A WCF in Essay1.)..... 132

Table 9: The ranking of Error Categories Targeted by Teacher A WCF in Essay 2.)..... 133

Table 10: Concrete Examples of Teacher A WCF Tokens on Students' Errors.)..... 136

Table 11: The Distribution of the Percentages of Error categories Targeted by Teacher B WCF in Essays 1 and 2.)..... 138

Table 12: The Ranking of Error Categories Targeted by Teacher B WCF in Essay 1.)..... 140

Table 13: The Ranking of Error Categories Targeted by Teacher B WCF in Essay 2.)..... 141

Table 14: Concrete Examples of Teacher A WCF Tokens on Students' Errors.)..... 143

Table 15: The Difference between Teacher A and Teacher B in their Type of WCF.)..... 150

Table 16: Comparison between Teacher A Students' Grades in Essays 1 and 2.)..... 153

Table 17: Comparison between Teacher B Students' Grades in Essays 1 and 2.)..... 154

Table 18: Results of Q 10.)..... 161

List of Figures

Figure 1: The Context of the study: Feedback as the intersection between Second Language Acquisition (SLA) and Second Language Writing (L2) (diagram mine, A.S.).....6

Figure 2: Examples of Direct WCF (adopted from Al-Shahrani, 2013).....13

Figure 3: Examples of Indirect WCF (adopted from Al-Shahrani, 2013) 13

Figure 4: Illustration of the Difference Between Product-oriented Approach and Process-oriented Approach (diagram mine, A.S.) 24

Figure 5: Types of Input in SLA (adapted from El Tataway, 2002) 40

Figure 6: Summary of Possible WCF Variables Affecting L2 Students' Writing Accuracy that needs further research (adopted from Evans et al., 2010).....100

Figure 7: Distribution of Students' Demographics.....114

Figure 8: The Linguistic Features Targeted in the Form-related Errors (diagram mine, A.S.).....119

Figure 9: Comparison between Teacher A's Feedback Focus in Essays 1 and 2.....130

Figure 10: Comparison between the Error Categories Targeted by Teacher A WCF in Essays 1 and 2.....134

Figure 11: Comparison between Teacher B's Feedback Focus in Essays 1 and 2.....137

Figure 12: Comparison between Error Categories Targeted by Teacher B WCF in Essays 1 and 2.....141

Figure 13: Comparison between the Foci of Teacher A WCF and Teacher B WCF in Essays 1 and 2.....145

Figure 14: The Type of Teacher A WCF in Essays 1 and 2….....147