The Impact of Explicit Feedback on EFL High School Students Engaged in Writing Tasks

El impacto de la retroalimentación explícita en tareas de escritura en lengua inglesa de estudiantes de secundaria

Roxanna Correa Pérez*
Mariela Martínez Fuentealba**
María Molina De La Barra***
Jessica Silva Rojas****
Mirta Torres Cisternas*****
Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Chile

The aim of this article is to examine the impact of feedback on content and organization in writing tasks developed by learners of English as a foreign language. The type of study is qualitative and the research design is a case study. One study involved three students and a female teacher, and the second consisted of three students and a male teacher. Research instruments involved were a structured interview, a writing task in class and document analysis. The findings show that students feel motivated to re-write a writing task when the teacher provides feedback on content and organization. Moreover, there was evidence of improvement in the students' writing when they incorporated the teacher's comments.

Key words: Feedback, motivation, writing, writing tasks.

El objetivo de este estudio es examinar el impacto de la retroalimentación, orientada a contenidos y organización, en escritos desarrollados por aprendices de inglés como lengua extranjera. El tipo de investigación es cualitativa y el diseño un estudio de casos. Un caso se conformó con tres estudiantes y una profesora, el segundo quedó compuesto por tres estudiantes y un profesor. En relación con los instrumentos, se utilizaron una entrevista estructurada, una tarea de escritura y el análisis documental. Los resultados muestran que los estudiantes se sienten motivados a reescribir una tarea de escritura cuando el profesor comenta las ideas y la organización de esta. Además se evidenció una mejora en los escritos de los estudiantes al incluir las sugerencias del profesor.

Palabras clave: escritura, motivación, retroalimentación, tareas escritas.

* E-mail: rcorrea@ucsc.cl
** E-mail: mariela.martfuent@gmail.com
*** E-mail: natymolina9@gmail.com
**** E-mail: jessica.silva.r@gmail.com
***** E-mail: gabriela.azulado@gmail.com

Introduction

Many issues may happen with the teacher and learner interaction during the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching and learning process. Thus, teachers are always concerned about what is occurring with their learners during lessons. They want students to learn from their mistakes; in this case, language teachers expect students to learn a new language by being aware of the aspects they need to improve. That is why they provide comments to learners when correcting. Some of the teachers do respond (in written or oral form) to their students' tasks without noticing the effect it may produce on the students. The researchers of this study, during their pre-service experience, have noticed that language teachers provide these comments in different ways: some of them mark the text with ticks or crosses, while others provide the correct answer or just refer to an aspect that needs to be improved (vocabulary, grammar, or other).

The last five years spent at different schools and in educational contexts have helped us to notice that learners are not conscious that receiving feedback gives them the opportunity to be led down the right path, hence, the potential to learn and improve their writing competence. Therefore, if students are not involved in understanding the feedback provided, they will not improve their language competence, regardless of the amount of time they spent trying to learn it. This reality implies that improving is a matter of personal commitment and not a matter of time. Learners need to apply those comments given by their teachers to their learning process in order to avoid committing the same mistakes over and over. Hence, in order to better understand the impact of informing the students about their weaknesses or strengths during the process of learning a foreign language, the researchers consider it relevant to carry out an in-depth research project. For this reason, in this study we examined in detail the impact of explicit feedback provided on content and organization in

writing tasks, and whether this response motivates EFL learners to improve.

In the first part of this article, the reader will find a review of the principal concepts of this research such as feedback, writing, feedback on writing and motivation. In the second part, methodological aspects are described. In the third part, all the data collected are revealed and then analysed. In the last part, a summary of the conclusions is presented.

Concept Framework

In order to define feedback in second language acquisition, the concept of acquisition will be clarified. Acquisition is considered as the use and understanding of a language in terms of conveying messages instead of learning (Krashen, 1981). The concept of feedback on second language acquisition will be revised.

Feedback

According to Ur (2006), "feedback, in the context of teaching in general, is the information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of a learning task, usually with the objective of improving this performance" (p. 242). The author states that feedback is the information that explains how well or poorly learners performed. The main objective is to identify the potential areas where some improvements could be *made* as well as to foster students' autonomy.

In the same context, Aparicio (2007) adds that feedback is the information given by the teacher to students about their performance. The author suggests that feedback is the information an instructor gives to his learners about their performance so they are able to check themselves and be more successful in fulfilling the goals of a course.

Gattegno (as cited in Nunan, 1995) suggests that feedback is a fundamental element during the teaching and learning process of each individual learner since it allows not only the correction of errors during a written assignment, but also the establishment of

rapport and a consistent relationship between the learners and the teacher. Students react to feedback looking for teachers' approval.

However, Ur (2006) emphasises the idea that when giving feedback it cannot be possible to avoid the idea of giving judgement. Ur explains that teachers have feelings and different point of views, and it is difficult not to get involved when they assess. For this reason Ur states that "Teachers are sometimes urged to be 'non-judgmental' when giving feedback; in my opinion this is unrealistic. Any meaningful feedback is going to involve some kind of judgment" (p. 242).

Furthermore, Ur (2006) identifies as one component of feedback correction the student's own explanation about his/her performance in a particular task. As a second component the author identifies assessment, which allows students to know how good or bad their performance was.

Sometimes teachers and learners think that correction is just related to mistakes instead of giving positive comments to the students. Indeed, according to the researchers of this study, it might be said that some teachers tend to relate correction with error-correction instead of providing positive comments.

Types of Feedback

Nunan (1995), Brown (2000), and Ur (2006) agree that, at least, there are two levels of feedback: positive feedback and negative feedback. Furthermore, feedback can be classified into two types: explicit feedback and implicit feedback. Explicit feedback is that which is extremely clear and evident and is perceived by the students. Conversely, implicit feedback is not evident; the student has to notice it and know how to use it to foster his/her learning.

Sheen (2004) has brought to light an inclusive concept, which is corrective feedback (CF). According to this author, "the term 'corrective feedback' is used as an umbrella term to cover implicit and explicit negative feedback occurring in both natural conversational and instructional settings" (p. 264).

A matter for debate has been the role of CF in second language acquisition. Some authors like Schmidt (1990, 1992) and Long (1996) claim that negative feedback plays a facilitative and crucial role in acquisition. Furthermore, Long believes that from the interaction between the teacher and learners, implicit negative feedback can give students a chance to pay attention to linguistic form. This focus, of the learner, on the linguistic forms may foster the student's acquisition of the language.

Schmidt (1990, 1992) adds that students should notice by themselves the space between the interlanguage, understood by Selinker and Gass (2008) as "interlanguage transfer is the influence of one L2 over another" (p. 152), and the target language since it allows the improvement of the acquisition of the language. However, Krashen (1981), Schwartz (1993), and Truscott (1996) differ from Long (1996) and Schmidt's (1990, 1992) beliefs by pointing out that just positive feedback is enough for students to acquire a second language. Moreover, they add that there is no sense in using negative feedback and it may cause damaging effects on the language development.

Ur (2006) compares the role of positive and negative feedback and states that "It is true that positive feedback tends to encourage, but this can be overstated [whereas] negative feedback, if given supportively and warmly, will be recognized as constructive, and will not necessarily discourage" (p. 257). It is interesting to notice the positive aspect of negative feedback and the negative side of positive feedback. Indeed, providing only positive feedback is not advisable because students can think that they are doing well when they are not. However, negative feedback should be given in a constructive and warm way.

Writing

Based on Harmer (2003), Musumeci (1998), Nunan (1995), Olshtain (2001), and Ur (2006), we point out that writing is the expression and the association of ideas which can be either in people's mother tongue or another language, being the association of ideas the most difficult to students. The principle idea of any writer is that their piece of work may be read but, as the reader's feedback (i.e. comments, opinions) is not received immediately any piece of writing should include conventions and mechanical devices to make the reader's understanding effortless. In fact, any a piece of writing should have two components: coherence and cohesion. The first one means that all the ideas in a paragraph flow smoothly from one sentence to the next, and cohesion refers to the use of transitional expressions or words to guide readers and show how the parts of writing relate to one other.

Feedback on Writing

Feedback on writing is the information or comments given by a reader to a writer in relation to organization, ideas, and writing mechanics. It is also a useful tool for writers in order to achieve their purpose, which is to let the readers understand what the writers want to convey. Furthermore, Ur (2006) notices that content is the most relevant aspect in a piece of writing because it includes the ideas and events the writer wants to express.

For this research project, feedback on writing will be considered as the comments given by the teacher to the students about their writings/writing tasks. Moreover, it can be concluded that feedback on writing is an essential element as part of the process approach to writing. The main purpose of feedback is to provide important information to the writers so they can use it to modify their mistakes (Ferreira, 2006). Indeed the most important element in a writing task is content. For that reason, feedback should be given principally on content and organization instead of on language forms. However, teachers should correct some language mistakes if and when they really affect the meaning of the message or if they are basic (Celce-Murcia, 2001; Harmer, 2003; Ur, 2006).

Motivation

Giving explicit feedback is a way that some teachers use to motivate students to improve; in fact, the research question of this study (Does explicit feedback, provided in content and organization in writing tasks, motivate EFL learners?) is related to the motivation that explicit feedback may cause in EFL learners. Dörnyei (2001) defines motivation as that which "concerns the direction and magnitude of human behaviour, that is: the choice of a particular action, the persistence with it, the effort expended on it" (p. 8). The author states that motivation is what guides people's behaviour. Likewise, motivation occurs when the reason or the will to improve and constant effort are present. In addition, it influences how people deal with different situations.

In addition, according to Ur (2006), motivation is classified into two types: extrinsic and global intrinsic motivation. "Extrinsic motivation is that which derives from the influence of some kind of external incentive, as distinct from the wish to learn for its own sake or interest in tasks" (p. 277). Therefore, extrinsic motivation can be understood as the external stimulus that students receive in order to learn. This kind of motivation should be provided first by teachers, second by parents, then by classmates, trying to enhance learners' performances in writing, to go beyond the task. In the case of intrinsic motivation, Miller, Benefield, and Tonigan (1993) as well as Perry (1998) mention that writing tasks that require high levels of cognitive engagement are related to higher levels of intrinsic motivation and self-monitoring activities.

Moreover, Brown (2000) agrees with Ur (2006) in the sense that motivation is a relevant aspect in the learning process. Brown (2000) thinks that

"motivation is a key to learning" (p. 160). In addition, Brown classifies motivation into three different perspectives: behaviouristic, cognitive, constructivist. The first one is related to the desire to receive positive reward. The second one deals with the basic human needs. And the third one has to do with the social context (the community). Likewise, motivation can be classified as Gardner and Lambert suggest.

> Gardner and Lambert (1982) distinguish "instrumental motivation," which occurs when the learner's goal is functional (e.g. to get a job or pass an examination), and "integrative motivation," which occurs when the learner wishes to identify the culture of the L2 group. Another kind of motivation is "task motivation"—the interest felt by the learner in performing different learning tasks. (Gardner & Lambert as cited in Ellis, 1995, p. 300)

The concept of task motivation, suggested by Gardner and Lambert, was considered in this research because the motivation towards the task facilitates its accomplishment.

Finally, Celce-Murcia (2001), Harmer (2003), and Ur (2006) agree that the essential element in writing tasks is content, and furthermore, feedback on writing is a vital constituent inside the process approach. For this reason, although teachers should correct language mistakes, they should give feedback on content and organization principally; that is, global errors instead of local errors. According to Ferris (2002), global errors "are errors concerning overall content, ideas, and organization of the writer's argument [and] local errors refer to minor errors such as grammar, spelling, or punctuation 'that do not impede understanding' of a text" (p. 22). Nevertheless, no matter the kind of feedback provided, students should know how to use it.

Method

This study is an exploratory qualitative investigation and the type of research is a descriptive-interpretative one because, from the description of the phenomenon, some concurrent ideas were identified among the different sources of information. This research study has action research characteristics because the participant teachers took part in it actively during the research with the purpose of gathering information about the teaching and learning of the writing process of their own classes.

The main objective of this study was to find out how explicit feedback, focused on content and organization of written messages, motivates students to carry out writing tasks. The specific objectives established were to identify the kind of feedback provided by teachers in writing tasks, to study how important it is for learners to receive explicit feedback on writing tasks, to analyze students' motivation to rewrite and improve a task after receiving explicit feedback and to compare students' opinions about the importance of receiving feedback and the second written task.[1]

Participants

For this research, two groups of participants were chosen, one of students and another of teachers. The selection criteria were the following:

(a) Third and fourth year students from a subsidised high school from Concepción, Chile, who had had English lessons since fifth grade and a regular attendance of 90%. Their level of English, according to the school teacher, corresponds to lower intermediate.

(b) Teachers: those having five years of language teaching experience, belonging to a subsidised educational system and teaching English in secondary education, at the same school as the participating students.

With the criteria mentioned, six students and two teachers were selected, and each of them participated voluntarily.

---

1   The re-written task after receiving feedback on content and organisation.

Data Collection

The data were collected with the use of one structured interview and a document analysis methodology. The document analysis was carried out examining a collection of participating students' writing tasks, carried out before and during the investigation. The purpose of analysing previous and current students' written samples was to identify the kind of feedback provided by the teacher in writing tasks, to get a general idea of teachers' knowledge of feedback and to analyze students' motivation to rewrite the topic after receiving explicit feedback. In order to do that, a rubric was given to participating teachers to guide the feedback they provided in the second writing task.

The structured interview was conducted in the students' mother tongue, Spanish. Furthermore, the structured interview focused on the importance of explicit feedback in writing tasks for learners in order to understand how motivation affects the quality of a written task.

Data Analysis

During the data analysis, the data were tabulated and for the purpose of this research, the researchers analysed the data in each case. Case 1 considered three students and the teacher of subsidised School 1; in Case 2, researchers considered three students and the teacher of the subsidised school. The information collected was analysed through content analysis techniques, which includes the following phases: data to be analysed were selected, units of meaning or categories were determined, the properties of these categories were defined and finally the data were classified in each category.

The document analysis carried out by the researchers intended to observe and take notes about the different codes and characteristics that teachers used when giving feedback. The analysis was carried out according to the feedback categories defined below.

Affective feedback: It is the extent to which we value or encourage a student's attempt to communicate (Brown, 2000).

Cognitive feedback: It is the extent to which we indicate an understanding of the message itself (Brown 2000).

Positive feedback: Positive feedback has two principal functions: to let students know that they have performed correctly and to increase motivation (Nunan, 1995).

Negative feedback: The teacher's overall attention towards mistakes (Brown, 2000).

Neutral: It simply informs the speaker that the message has been received (Nunan, 1995).

Explicit: It is extremely clear and evident and it is perceived by the students (University of Cambridge, 2005).

Implicit: It is not evident, the students have to notice it and know how to improve their performance (University of Cambridge, 2005).

Then, the structured interview was tabulated in order to study how important it is for learners to receive explicit feedback on writing tasks. Once the whole data were collected, the analysis was carried out and the answers were analysed applying content analysis methodology. After the development of the individual analysis, a comparative analysis was made in order to see what common aspects and differences might be observed among the participants.

To analyze students' motivation to rewrite the task after receiving feedback, through the writing task, a completely new writing process was undertaken. First, students wrote an autobiography; second, the teachers gave feedback on content and organization. Third, the students rewrote the autobiography. Once students returned the tasks, the researchers compared the two papers and analysed them in order to notice which the students' improvements in the writing tasks were.

Finally, a comparison between Specific Objective 2, To Know How Important It Is For Learners to Receive

Explicit Feedback in Writing Tasks; and Specific Objective 3, To Analyze Students' Motivation to Rewrite and Improve a Task After Receiving Explicit Feedback, was carried out with the purpose of corroborating if they were consistent between what they manifested in the structured interview and what they produced in the writing task after receiving explicit feedback.

Findings

Objective 1: To Identify the Kind of Feedback Provided by the Teacher in Writing Tasks

This analysis was based on the following categories: affective feedback, cognitive feedback, positive feedback, neutral feedback, negative feedback, explicit feedback, and implicit feedback. Two teachers were compared for this analysis.

To analyze each case, the information in Table 1 was used for the purpose of classifying each teacher in the categories that most represent them.

Both teachers give explicit negative feedback because they indicate where the mistake is, especially in grammar and spelling. To support the teachers'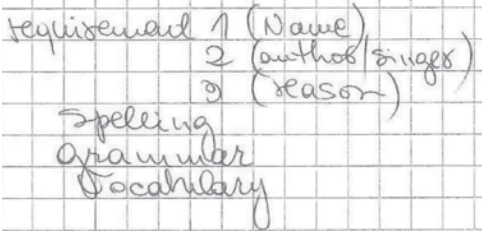 way of gi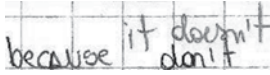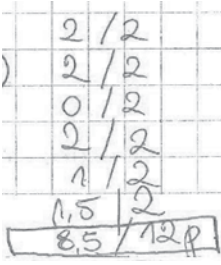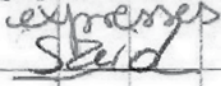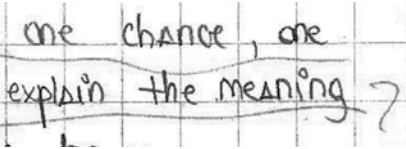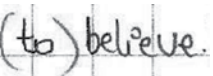ving feedback, Ur (2006) mentions that giving only positive feedback may not have a positive impact on students because they can think that they are doing well when they are not. Besides, this author states that negative feedback can be constructive if it is given in a supportive and kind manner. However, there is one teacher who provides positive explicit comments while the other gives the correct answers. Otherwise, both teachers provide cognitive feedback because they understand what students want to express. Nevertheless, there is one teacher that gives affective feedback because the teacher praises students to persist in doing the task.

In Table 2 it can be observed that the teacher marks in red and uses codes for grammar and spelling. Moreover, the participating teacher uses criteria such as requirements (name, author of song, reason), spelling, grammar, and vocabulary. Also, the teacher writes the correct version of the mistake. However, the teacher neither writes comments nor gives a mark but indicates the score. Nevertheless, it is important to mention that the teacher has other ways to mark the mistakes like underlining, question marks, and parentheses. After observing the feedback provided by the teacher, one can notice that the teacher gives feedback mainly based on negative aspects.

Table 1. Categories of Feedback

Affective Feedback	Positive Feedback	Explicit Feedback
		Implicit Feedback
	Negative Feedback	Explicit Feedback
		Implicit Feedback
	Neutral Feedback	
Cognitive Feedback	Positive Feedback	Explicit Feedback
		Implicit Feedback
	Negative Feedback	Explicit Feedback
		Implicit Feedback
	Neutral Feedback	

Table 2. Feedback Provided by Teacher 1

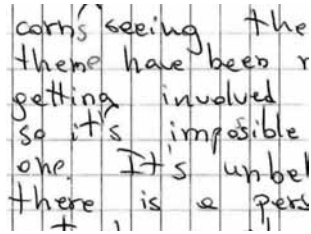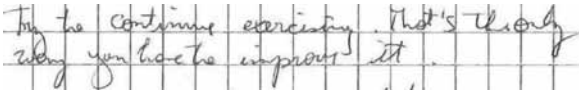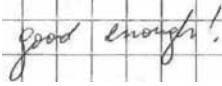| Category	Example
Teacher marks in red.	 (to be) afraid for (of) do (doing) that (so)*
Teacher uses codes for grammar and spelling.	
Teacher includes aspects to be assessed.	
Teacher writes the correct version.	 because (it doesn't) don't
Teacher tallies the score.	
Teacher underlines.	 said (expresses)
Teacher uses question marks.	
Teacher uses parentheses.	

* The corrections made by the teacher using red are shown in parentheses.

In this case, the teacher's tendency is to provide explicit negative feedback because the teacher marks all students' mistakes and giving the correction of the mistake could be considered as supportive since the teacher wants to show the students what the correct answer is. Otherwise, it is important to mention that the teacher marks in red, which could be interpreted as if the participating teacher were stigmatising mistakes. In this analysis, there is no evidence of positive and neutral feedback. There is no proof of affective feedback. Nonetheless, since the teacher responds to the student's message, it could be inferred that there is cognitive feedback because the teacher understand students' ideas.

In Table 3 below, it can be seen that the teacher marks in red. Moreover, the participating teacher provides the correct answer. Also, the teacher gives comments and suggestions about content. Besides, the teacher provides the final mark but not the points awarded for the task. It is relevant to realize that the teacher corrects the mistakes in other ways. For example, the teacher adds punctuation and crosses out extra words. Also, the teacher circles mistakes and wrongly-used words.

In this case, the teacher provides explicit feedback and both positive and negative feedback because the teacher gives positive comments and marks the mistakes. The teacher also provides cognitive and

Table 3. Feedback Provided by Teacher 2

Category	Example
Teacher provides the correct answer.	
Teacher gives comments and suggestions about content.	
Teacher provides positive comments.	
Teacher crosses out extra words.	
Teacher circles mistakes.	

affective feedback. It is affective as the teacher gives positive comments which encourage students to continue writing. It is cognitive because the teacher understands the message and reacts. The teacher reacts with comments and by correcting the mistakes.

Objective 2: To Know How Important It Is for Learners to Receive Explicit Feedback in Writing Tasks

Relating to the importance of receiving explicit feedback for learners in writing tasks, a structured interview was applied. The objective of this interview was to learn students' opinions and preferences about receiving feedback. For this reason, six questions were designed. These were in the students' mother tongue, Spanish, as the purpose was to learn students' opinions instead of measuring their level of English. The analysis is separated into two case studies.

In general, it is important for the students to receive explicit feedback on writing tasks, because they can improve their linguistic competence. It is important to mention that students prefer receiving feedback in Spanish in order to understand better the teacher's comments. Moreover, most of them prefer receiving feedback from their classmates because they trust them. There are three students who prefer receiving feedback from the teacher too since the teacher's comments help them to avoid making the same mistakes. Furthermore, students like oral and direct feedback in general. However, two of them prefer written feedback because this way they can avoid speaking to the teacher in English. In addition, another student points out that since she does not understand feedback in English, she cannot improve her writing. Table 4 shows some of the evidence commented on.

Some students report that the explicit comments made by the teacher help them. But, in general, students say that they do not understand comments in English because of their low level of competence.

Nevertheless, one of the interviewees manifests that comments help her to improve grammar aspects and ideas as can be found in Table 5.

Table 4. Students' Preference When Receiving Teacher's Explicit Comments[2]

Interviewees	How do you prefer to receive the explicit comments that your teacher provides about a writing task in the English class? Explain.
Student 3	I prefer to receive them in Spanish.
Student 5	Orally and written.

Table 5. Students' Beliefs About Receiving Teacher's Explicit Feedback

Interviewees	How do you think your teacher's explicit comments during a writing task help you in the English class?
Student 1	To learn more…but I do not consider them, because I never understand them.
Student 6	Correction helps not to make a mistake again.

Question 3 was conducted to learn of students' perception towards how the explicit feedback provided by the teacher helped them when they did the writing task in the English lesson.

The tendency is that all of the students mention that receiving feedback from their teachers helps them to avoid making the same mistakes and helps them feel more confident. There is one student who says that, in spite of the teachers' comments being important, s/he does not pay attention to them.

---

2   Questions and excerpts have been translated from Spanish.

In relation to the feedback provided by the teacher, the students said that they do not like receiving feedback since they feel uncomfortable and because the teacher just explains once. However, one student did not say anything about the last point. Students' answers are illustrated in Table 6.

In Table 7 one of the students manifests that she likes receiving written feedback as that way she avoids speaking with the teacher. And some other interviewees mention that they like receiving instant feedback.

Table 6. Students' Preferences When Receiving Feedback: Teachers vs. Peers

Interviewees	Who do you prefer to receive comments from, teachers or classmates? Explain why
Student 1	From my classmates, because it is more symmetrical relationship. I feel more uncomfortable with teachers and I do not understand a thing.
Student 2	From my classmates because I look for someone good and trustworthy who will answer in Spanish.

Table 7. Students' Preference at the Moment of Receiving Feedback

Interviewees	How do you prefer to receive comments? Explain why
Student 1	In written form and without talking to the teachers.
Student 6	Directly, I prefer to be told immediately, to correct as soon as possible.

Objective 3: To Analyze Students' Motivation to Rewrite and Improve a Task After Receiving Explicit Feedback

Two cases were analyzed. The results were analyzed under three categories related to the writing assessment: emergent categories (length of message), predetermined categories (content: improvement of ideas and organization: logical sequence of ideas and structured paragraph), and predetermined categories by participating teachers (use of linking words, neatness, and grammar and spelling).

It is important to mention that all the students re-wrote their task. In general, according to the category of *length of message*, it might be said that some students shortened the pieces of writing. However, two students increased the length of the autobiography. For example, Student 4 had 96 words in the first piece of writing and then 155 words after receiving feedback from the teacher.

In terms of *content: improvement of ideas*, most of the students kept the same ideas and two learners improved them. This happened because the students who did not add new ideas after the feedback provided were those who had well organized ideas in the first task. However, there was a student who did not write more ideas as she did not understand the feedback provided by the teacher. The two students who improved their ideas did so because the teacher suggested it. For example, Student 1's original writing (before receiving feedback) was about his opinion of a famous character; the feedback of the teacher pointed to the title (If you were Leonardo Da Vinci, How would your days be like), then said: "You were asked to write your biography and not his, nor your opinion about him." In the student's second writing (after receiving feedback), he starts: "I'm Leonardo Da Vinci I was boiring [*sic*] in 1440."

In the category of *organization: logical sequence of ideas and structured paragraph*, the majority of the

students had logical sequences of ideas. These were mainly in chronological order because the task was to write an autobiography. For instance, Student 5 started talking about her parents, then about her childhood; after that, about her career and finally, she talked about the present. Also, students had well balanced paragraphs; they had almost the same number of lines per paragraph. However, two students had unequal paragraphs because these did not have a similar number of lines.

In relation to the *use of linking words*, there was evidence that all the students used them correctly in general, even though they utilised only a few of them which were the common ones such as *so*, *and*, *since*. To exemplify this, Student 5 used the following linking words such as *so*, *and*, *when*, which were correctly used.

With regard to the category of *neatness*, all students wrote neat pieces of writing. They used legible hand-writing and the writing task was well presented. For example, Student 6 had a clear piece of writing, with legible hand-writing and a well-presented writing task as well. It is important to mention that one student largely improved the neatness of the piece of writing and this improvement contributed to the understanding of the writing process.

Finally, in the category of *grammar and spelling*, it was evident that students improved their grammar and spelling, making fewer mistakes in general. For instance, Student 6 corrected several grammar mistakes which had been indicated by the teacher. This occurred because the teacher, when giving feedback, provided the correct version of the mistake. However, only one student did not follow the teacher's feedback and kept the same mistakes.

It might be concluded that most of the students carried out the task correctly. However, two students did not follow the instructions of the writing task, thus they did not write an autobiography. Most of the students felt motivated to re-write the task. Furthermore, they improved their writing after receiving the explicit feedback provided by the teacher. The students incorporated the comments provided by the teachers, especially on content and grammar and spelling. Nevertheless, there was one student who did not improve her writing in any category; this student declared that she did not understand feedback provided in English.

Objective 4: To Compare Students' Opinions About the Importance of Receiving Feedback and the Second Written Task

As Table 8 shows, most of the students were consistent between what they declared in the structured interview and what they did after receiving feedback. However, there was only one student who was inconsistent because she said that she did not consider feedback in English since she did not understand it. However, she incorporated the feedback provided by the teacher in her writing.

Conclusions

Throughout the whole process the researchers have tried to find out whether explicit feedback, provided on content and organization in writing tasks, motivates EFL learners. In order to have a logical sequence of conclusions, this section will be organized by the specific objectives and their corresponding hypotheses.

According to the study of the document analysis of the two case studies provided by participating teachers, we can conclude in general that teachers do not give feedback on content and organization systematically or that they are not aware of it and give it unconsciously. In fact, it can be interpreted that neither students nor teachers have a culture of feedback. However, teachers know how to assess error correction in writing tasks as they specifically pay attention to local errors. Ur (2006) mentions that giving only positive feedback may not have a positive impact on students because they can think that they

Table 8. Comparison of Students' Opinions and Second Written Task[3]

Students	Opinions about feedback	Comment on second written task
1	I prefer to receive written comments in Spanish, if not I do not consider them. I prefer to receive comments from my classmates. I usually do not correct.	This student re-wrote the task and improved the ideas following the teacher's feedback which was in English. Therefore, it can be said that Student 1 was not consistent with what she manifested in the structured interview.
4	I like to receive good explanations, written or oral. My teachers and classmates' comments help me a lot, because I can improve my writing in English. I generally try to overcome my mistakes.	Student 4 stated that he preferred receiving feedback. Also this student liked receiving feedback since he could improve his performance in the writing task and in class. As a result, student 4 improved grammar and spelling mistakes as the teacher marked and gave the correct version of them. Besides, the student kept his ideas and organization as he received positive feedback on them.
5	I prefer to receive written or oral comments from teachers and classmates. These comments give me more confidence when writing. I try to put the comments into practice.	This student kept her ideas and organization in the writing task and corrected some grammar and spelling mistakes as indicated so she followed the teacher's feedback. Therefore, what the student did in her writing task after receiving feedback matched with what she declared in the structured interview.

are doing well when it is not so. Besides, this author states that negative feedback can be constructive if it is given in a supportive and kind manner. For that reason, it is important to mention what Harmer (2003) states about the role of feedback which is not only to correct students, but also offer assessment on their performance.

Through the data analysis the researchers may conclude that when giving feedback, participating teachers provided feedback that could be classified in these categories (*use of linking words*, *neatness*, *grammar and spelling*). Some of them are considered basic categories in the process of writing by practitioner researchers, but what was intended was to

go one step forward and demand the students' best efforts in terms of *content*, *logical sequence of ideas*, and *structured paragraphs*.

What could be observed in the structured interview, in terms of students' opinions, is that in general students like receiving explicit feedback in order to improve their written tasks. Furthermore, students said they preferred to receive feedback from their partners. This is emphasized by Gattegno (as cited in Nunan, 1995), who recognises the importance of the establishment of a consistent relationship between teachers and students. In addition, Harmer (2003) states that written feedback influences students' final products and also orients students' writings. The direct relation between students' opinions about feedback and their improvement in writing tasks is also evident.

---

3   Students' opinions have been translated from Spanish.

After the document analysis of the writing task, we can conclude that the kind of feedback provided by teachers does impact on students' motivation, in fact, it was demonstrated that students improved their pieces of writing in the following categories: *content: improvement of ideas, grammar and spelling*. Moreover, there is a relation between categories of *length of message* and *grammar and spelling*. And in relation to the category of *organisation* students do not have problems.

The relationship between teachers and students also has an impact. For instance, teachers can create significant learning through giving the appropriate feedback. On the contrary, Brown (2000) says that negative cognitive feedback can cause students to perceive that their writings are totally bad and they will feel frustrated.

In addition, the assumptions proposed by the researchers were confirmed. The first one, which was related to learners' improvement in writing tasks after receiving explicit feedback on content and organization from teachers, was confirmed. This is evidenced in both cases in the data analysis chapter as students improved their ideas and organization. The second one, related to positive changes in learners' attitude towards the writing task after receiving explicit feedback on content and organization, was also successfully confirmed. It can be verified since the majority of the students re-wrote and improved the task incorporating the comments given by the teachers because they felt motivated.

The comparison between students' opinions about the importance of receiving feedback and the re-written task, once they had received feedback on content and organisation, showed that most of the students' opinions were consistent with what they stated in the structured interview and what they did after receiving feedback on the writing task.

To sum up, it might be concluded that explicit feedback motivates EFL learners as they become aware of their writing process by knowing their strengths and weaknesses. This demonstrates the impact of providing feedback to EFL students which then leads them to improve their writing. Nevertheless, if corrections do not happen, learners cannot modify their mistakes.

References

Aparicio, N. (2007). *Monitoring, error correction, and giving feedback* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from http://www.slideshare.net/jema/monitoring-error-correction-and-givimg-feedback

Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching.* New York, NY: Addison Wesley Longman.

Celce-Murcia, M. (2001). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language.* New York, NY: Heinle Cengage Learning.

Dörnyei, Z. (2001). *Teaching and researching: Motivation.* London, UK: Longman.

Ellis, R. (1995). *Understanding second language acquisition.* New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Ferreira, A. (2006). Estrategias efectivas de feedback positivo y correctivo en el español como lengua extranjera [Effective positive and corrective feedback strategies in Spanish as a foreign language]. *Signos, 39*(62), 379-406.

Ferris, D. (2002). *Treatment of error in second language student writing.* Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press.

Harmer, J. (2003). *The practice of English language teaching.* London, UK: Longman.

Krashen, S. (1981). *Second language acquisition and second language learning.* Los Angeles, CA: Pergamon Press.

Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the linguistic environment in second language acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 413-468). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Miller, W. R., Benefield, R. G., & Tonigan, J. S. (1993). Enhancing motivation for change in problem drinking: a controlled comparison of two therapists' styles. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 61*(3), 455-461.

Musumeci, D. (1998). *Writing in the foreign language curriculum: Soup and (fire)crackers.* Retrieved from ERIC database. (ED433725)

Nunan, D. (1995). *Language teaching methodology: A textbook for teachers.* London, UK: Prentice Hall.

Olshtain, E. (2001). Functional tasks for mastering the mechanics of writing and going just beyond. In Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 207-217). Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle.

Perry, C. (1998). A structured approach to presenting theses: Notes for students and their supervisors. *Australasian Marketing Journal, 6*(1), 63-86.

Schmidt, R. (1990). The role of consciousness in second language learning. *Applied Linguistics, 11*(2), 129-158.

Schmidt, R. (1992). Awareness and second language acquisition. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 13*, 206-226.

Schwartz, B. (1993). On explicit and negative data effecting and affecting competence and linguistic behavior. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 15*(2), 147-163.

Selinker, L., & Gass, S. (2008). *Second language acquisition: An introductory course.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Sheen, Y. (2004). Corrective feedback and learner uptake in communicative classrooms across instructional settings. *Language Teaching Research, 8*(3), 263-300.

Truscott, J. (1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language Learning, 46*(2), 327-369.

University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations (2005). *Teaching knowledge test, glossary.* Cambridge, UK: Author.

Ur, P. (2006). *A course in language teaching: Practice and theory.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

About the Authors

Roxanna Correa Pérez, B.A. English Teaching, University Teaching Diploma, and M.A. in Higher Education, from Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción (Chile) and CertTESOL (Sussex University, Trinity College of London). She teaches Methodology in the English Pedagogy Program at Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Chile, where she has also been Head of the English Pedagogy Program and Curriculum Advisor.

Mariela Martínez Fuentealba, EFL Teacher graduated from Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción in Chile. Nowadays, Mariela is working at a public high school in a small city where she teaches English and organizes different activities to encourage students to use the language.

María Molina De La Barra, graduated in Secondary English Education from Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Chile, in 2010. Nowadays, María is working at a public high school in Concepción, Chile, where she teaches English.

Jessica Silva Rojas, English Teacher graduated from Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción in Chile. After her graduation, she started to work in different types of schools and after a year, moved to the USA. There, she worked in the SPLASH Program in Elon Elementary School. Nowadays, she is working with an ONG giving English lessons.

Mirta Torres Cisternas, graduated from Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Chile, in 2010 as an EFL teacher. After a year of working at the high school level, she started teaching socially deprived students (from 2011 to the present) at the elementary level.