

Feedback: Underrated Classroom Activity

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Abstract

Feedback is the most underestimated classroom technique in India. Good feedback will improve students' learning. The descriptive essays of the pupil are reciprocated with marks or grades by teachers. Sometimes, valuable feedback from the teacher is unnoticed or refuted by students. The study focuses on what feedback channel is in practice among teachers and how students comprehend or approach feedback.

Keywords: feedback, marks, grades

Background

Feedback is not feeding back. It is a part of the learning process in all sorts of elements in language learning to enhance the performance. From our childhood we learned language through communication and what feedback was received is the instigation we received to recall, reciprocate, redraft our language. This act is important for us in all walks of life. The paper tries to explore what kind of practices is prevailing in the classrooms of our colleges in terms of assessing the descriptive essays and try to give suggestions for good classroom practices.

Descriptive essay is a sacrosanct practice in all language courses. It is treated as a decider in every language and literature courses. But the real issue of the descriptive essays is the evaluation. Descriptive essays: the only practice exists in order to test students' writing ability.

Writing is not a single process but exploring, formulating and reformulating meaning through revision (Dheram, 1995). Writing a descriptive essay about so and so doesn't undergo the above mentioned stages. As the students have to revisit their draft and revise their draft for betterment of form and content but it happens hardly.

The role of teacher/facilitator is to scaffold pupil with the act of revisiting their own draft and giving suggestions to enhance their writing. We are paying little attention to the issue of teacher readiness to implement change in feedback (Lee, 2011).

Review of Literature

The feedback technique had its inception from the 1980's. Feedback is a rereading process and it's a responding to the written (Perl, 1980). Feedback helps the learners to monitor their own learning (Schriver, 1992). Feedback is a central process in teaching and learning in revising the process of writing. Feedback is a contentious and problematic component (Brandt, 2008). A good feedback channel will exist in a learning environment if the teacher is ready for innovation (Lee, 2011).

The existing literatures about the feedback insist on the channel of the process. It christens feedback as a two way process. It has peer and tutor channel, while the later is more significant as of the earlier because of its credibility among students (Brandt, 2008).

Hypothesis

The researcher hypothesises that feedback to descriptive essays are not taken seriously by both students and teachers.

Research questions

The researcher tries to suggest solutions to the following research questions:

1. Is writing is a 'reflection'?
2. What is the position of writing in classrooms?
3. Who are the stockholders the recurrent practice?
4. How to better our classrooms with good feedback channel?

Discussion

Today in our classrooms we often assign writing courses in terms of testing the content knowledge of the students. The assumption of today's classrooms is to test and evaluate and grade (herd) pupil into various knowledge categories. Pupils are minimized to grades and point scales. The knowledge of pupil considered lucid with the marks scored is the prevailing consciousness.

But when it comes to writing the situation becomes worse. Writing is a process as mentioned earlier but it doesn't exist in the curriculum. Writing was merely treated as a product of the course not a reflection. Even students have no room to reflect as their task in writing descriptive essays is to mint marks so they try to plagiarize the existing knowledge about their content ditto.

Writing has to be reviewed by peers or tutor which is essential for mastering the skill. In practice when it comes to internal examinations which is a formative assessment lane, it is common to find writing teachers adopting conventional feedback practices, collecting single drafts from students, marking students' writing laboriously with little student involvement (Lee, 2011). The classrooms are forced to do this when little involvement and resistance to change are the characteristics of the teacher.

In today's practice we can see the descriptive essays are the most take it for granted element. From the students, it is a part of exam where a minimum mark was ensured no matter what their writing would (depends on the teacher and institution). On the other hand teachers evaluate the content and the summarization of the student, to a bad extend some look for the rewritten content of the given handout. On the other hand some teachers focus predominantly on the language form in responding to student writing (Lee, 2011).

The feedback for a descriptive essay received by the student is nothing but marks which are more situational (depends on the wit of the evaluator). Some evaluators have the habit of pinpointing the errors which is in term a feedback. Some teachers provide direct feedback by overwriting the script with their version or suggesting a good improvement via some useful techniques. Coded feedback is a critical one in terms of the students as they ignore readily.

Students ignore feedback because most of them were not aware of reformulating their draft as the curriculum wanders on a supreme single draft of the student at a particular fixed time. This attitude affects the student's comprehension towards grammar because inductive grammar learning is more significant way of mastering accuracy in language.

The teachers also neglect giving feedback because of the learning/Teaching climate of the institution. Some teachers believe that it is not necessary to discuss the writing of students as there will no progress in the learning. In the same way curriculum didn't emphasize feedback. Some teachers believe that students rectify their errors if it is coded by the teachers but the issue is students look for marks not rectification or reformulation.

Interpersonal issues play a major role in the feedback channel (Brandt, 2008). The Teacher/Student communication is a major part of building a good feedback channel. The student's always prefer and accept criticism from their teachers rather than peers.

A positive student-Teacher rapport can be built by conducting writing conferences. Writing conferences is one-on-one direct strategy, designed to guide and assist students through the process of writing (writing conferences, n.d). The writing conference provides immediate feedback and it creates positive attitude among the students towards writing and the teacher. The writing conferences should be held personal with all students throughout the academic period. A teacher can have 3-5 students per day. The writing conferences should be personal: between the student and the teacher. She/he discuss with the teacher in person about their writing and their way of preparing their drafts and how to redraft and revise the existing one. The teacher should follow 'positive-negative-positive sandwich' approach as it is the practice of sandwiching a

negative feedback with two positive feedbacks back and forth (Brandt, 2008). Donald H. Graves (1982) suggested that:

Six characteristics of successful writing conferences between teacher and student are discussed. Conferences should: (1) have a predictable structure; (2) focus on a few points; (3) demonstrates solutions to students' problems; (4) permit role reversals; (5) encourage use of a vocabulary appropriate for writing; and (6) Stimulate pleasure in writing.

A good writing conference practice will built a good student-teacher rapport which is beneficial for both teachers and student.

Conclusion

This paper have a diminish view throughout it process but the importance of improving feedback shouldn't be compromised. Feedback is most underrated practice in the writing classrooms. The paper lit on the need for feedback practices and its need for practices like writing conferences. The research on the field of feasible feedback is in need. Good feedback channel will promote good interaction between student/teacher, build good academic relationship and process based assessment of student learning.

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