

Impact of Emotive Words in Teachers' Written Feedback on Students' Writing Performance: A Case Study

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Abstract

Written feedback provides a lot of insight into a student's writing performance. Students learn a lot from these feedbacks and escalate academically. Proficiency in writing also depends on the nature of feedback given by the teacher. It is in this context, a small case study has been done to see the effects of emotive words used in students' written feedback. The aim of this paper is to study the impact of direct written feedback of the teacher on students' written production and performance. Apart from this aim, we also want to explore within the direct written feedback, if the teacher uses emotive words or content in their written feedback, how it affects in terms of the (i) motivation level of the students towards writing and (ii) their growth in their written performance. For this study, we chose 6 participants ($f=6$) who were between 13-14 years of age. Hindi is their L1 and English is their L2. The study is done during the pandemic and therefore, limited data was gathered only limiting to their write ups. 6 open-ended contextual questions were given to the participants, which they needed to read, understand, and then answer in the form of paragraphs. All their writing compositions were collected in a span of 6 weeks. Within these 6 weeks, students' write ups were collected, evaluated with feedback and processed for the next write ups. Qualitative analysis was done on the participants' written compositions. Each student's work was individually analyzed, and a qualitative case study was built for each student. The study's findings implicate that use of emotive words in written feedback did motivate and enhanced the writing performance of students and would help them do better academically.

Keywords: Emotive words; ESL context; Feedback; Pandemic; Paragraph writing.

1. Introduction

English language learners have many concerns when it comes to learning language skills. In the contexts of Indian classrooms, teachers are more concerned about completion of the syllabus and henceforth, they resort to product approach of teaching-learning process (Hyland, 2003a; Silva, 1993; Grabe & Caplan, 2014). This approach towards teaching-learning of English has led to inadequate mastery of skills on the part of the ESL learners. Error analysis studies of learners' performance mostly in the domain of productive skills- speaking and writing- have enough evidences (Corder, 1967; Richards, 1971; Selinker, 1974; Dulay, 1982; Ellis, 1994; Sashttra, 2014). Specific mention of error-analysis studies of written English has grabbed more attention over the years, as most learners commit a lot of errors in their written compositions (Huang, 2006; Hengwichitkul, 2006; Jenwitheesuk, 2009; Bumroongthai, 2011; Liu, 2013; Runkati, 2013; Zheng & Park, 2013; Rattanadilok Na Phuket & Othman, 2015). ESL learners also undergo the same process when it comes to written production and performance.

Language teachers have tried their best in responding to learners' errors by providing feedbacks when required. Feedback is an important pedagogical practice in classroom-based instruction that contributes to students' learning and facilitates their achievements (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). With the help of feedback, students get to know their weaknesses and strengths in learning and how to improve their learning outcomes (Yu, Wang & Teo, 2018). In the context of second language writing, teacher written feedback, acts as an effective pedagogical method that scaffolds ESL learner's writing process and enhances their writing performances (Zhang, 2018; Hyland and Hyland, 2019). Studies on teacher written feedback have gained attention over the recent years and their effectiveness in students' writing performance in L1 and L2 contexts. There are claims that teachers' written feedback has strengthen students' written performances (Shintani & Aubrey, 2016; Benson & DeKeyser, 2019; Li & Roshan, 2019; Karim & Nassaji, 2020). In line with the teachers' written corrective feedback, three objectives seemed to be more prominent (Hattie & Timperley, 2017, pg. 92)

- (a) Improving the fluency, accuracy and complexity of learner's speaking and writing,
- (b) Motivating learners to improve their learning outcomes, and

(c) Developing learner autonomy

Along with the scores, teachers provide feedback in two different ways—indirect and direct. The former refers to the identification and indication of errors without providing corrections and the latter has the provision of direct corrections to the errors. The former's feedback includes identifying the errors (marking, overwriting, underlining, re-writing) without any indication of corrections or suggestions, while the latter includes teacher's written corrective feedback in the form of comments, suggestions, presentation of correct answers (Lee, 2017; Wang, 2015; Geng, 2017).

The first aim of this paper is to study the impact of direct written feedback of the teacher on students' written production and performance. Apart from this aim, we also want to explore within the direct written feedback, if the teacher uses emotive words or content in their written feedback, how it affects in terms of the (i) motivation of the students towards writing and (ii) their growth in their written performance. This component has been said to impact learner's academic success and is termed as Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Low & Nelson, 2006). Therefore, we hypothesize that teacher's direct written feedback which contains emotional words, phrases or sentences, provides better scaffolding in the students' writing process and thereby enhances their written production.

2. Emotional Intelligence and Teacher's Written Feedback

Academic performance and achievements among the students rest upon various factors—student's IQ, socio-economic status, motivation, peer-relationship, teacher-student relationship, and parental involvement. Among all these factors, IQ of the student is commonly considered the most determinant factor for academic success. However, recent studies yield result that IQ is not the only reliable predictor of student's academic achievement, emotional intelligence of a learner can help him or her to learn better and perform academically (Goleman, 1995; Low & Nelson, 2006). The theory of emotional intelligence states that it involves the ability to monitor one's own and other's feelings and emotions, to discriminate them and to use this information to guide one's thinking and actions. It further adds that it has the ability to perceive accurately, appraise and express emotion, understand emotion and emotional knowledge, and promote emotional and intellectual growth (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Goleman, 1995). In the context of academic success of learners, emotional intelligence theory is studied to a greater extent and strong correlation has been found between learners' academic achievement and emotional intelligence (EQ) (Downey

et al. 2008; Parker et al. 2004a, 2004b; Stottlemayer, 2012; Aghasafari, 2006; Bozorgmehr 2008; Pishghadam, 2008). Eventhough, there are studies done on the above aspects, but very less studies can be found in the context of raising emotional intelligence and language related skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing (Abdolrezapour&Tavakoli, 2011; Rouhani, 2008).

When we look at L2 classrooms, written feedback of teachers' plays a very important factor in improving learners' competence in their written performance. On providing feedback that contains emotional words, phrases or sentences, it automatically comforts learner's emotions and thereby motivates them to express their opinions or ideas with less anxiety whether be it speaking or writing (Jaegar& Eagan, 2007; Tajularipin & Rohaizan, 2009). Some of the studies which looked at emotional intelligence and academic success among the learners have said that (i) emotional intelligence skills are statistically significant predictors of academic achievement; (ii) emotional intelligence is said to influence various facets of human performance, including physical and psychological well-being, social interaction, and academic and workplace performance (Abdolrezapour&Tavakoli, 2012;Mayer & Salovey,1990;Stottlemyer, 2002; Akki, 2006; Bar-On, 1997). A major part of these studies is done through questionnaires and correlations are shown with academic scores.

As reported before also, in this study we specifically focus on teacher's written feedback and its impact on the performances in learners' written compositions.

3. Research Questions

In the present study, we would like to see the relationship between emotional intelligence, teacher's written feedback and learners' written performance. To see the effectiveness, we propose the following research questions:

1. To what extent teacher's written feedback enhances learner's academic performance?
2. How far emotive words in teachers' written feedback have an impact on learners' written performances?

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

A single case study design was used in the study. As it considered to look at a specific issue-feedback based writing performance, therefore, it can be sought after as an instrumental case study (Johnson & Cristenson, 2016). The choice of this case study is justified by the nature of the enquiry, the use of direct and indirect feedback on the learner's written performances and its impact (Lee, 2017; Wang, 2015; Geng, 2017). We wanted to see how qualitatively the feedback holds positive impact on the learner. The current study addresses these features through qualitative method.

4.2 Context and Participants

This case study has collected data from 6 participants (f=6) who were between 13-14 years of age. Hindi is their mother tongue (L1), and English is their second language (L2), which was also their medium of instruction (MOI) at school. All the participants were from St. Anthony's Senior Secondary School, New Delhi. This study was conducted during pandemic when schools were closed and therefore, all instructions including presentation, teaching and feedback happened via Whatsapp.

Table 1: Participants' profiles

Participants	L1& L2	Age	Gender	Qualifications
TANF10	Hindi (L1) & English(L2)	13	Female	Grade 10
CRIF10	Hindi (L1) & English(L2)	14	Female	Grade 10
SANF10	Hindi (L1) & English(L2)	13	Female	Grade 10
PRIF10	Hindi (L1) & English(L2)	13	Female	Grade 10
VANF10	Hindi (L1) & English(L2)	13	Female	Grade 10
CARF10	Hindi (L1) & English(L2)	14	Female	Grade 10

4.3 Data collection

Prior to data collection, all the 6 participants were intimated and had a casual meeting with the researcher/facilitator to build rapport with them. Talks regarding their academics, interests, hobbies, lockdown experiences were discussed. In the same meeting, the objective of the study was also

highlighted towards the end. All the participants were happy to participate in the study.

Before administering the first task, in the first week, the participants were thoroughly explained what Emotional Intelligence means, and an elaborative discussion about its benefits was done. These participants were school students and did not have mail IDs. Therefore, for sharing tasks and information, a WhatsApp group was created for smooth running of the study for a period of 6 weeks. One task each week was administered through WhatsApp. Identification of errors and comments on one hand and the written feedback, on the other hand, were provided through Whatsapp itself. All the 6 participants, if they had any issue with regard to understanding of the concept or task, communicated through that Whatsapp group. To submit their tasks, each participant was asked to share separately with the researcher/instructor. After they submit their tasks separately, the researcher would provide feedbacks- identification of errors, comments, suggestions, etc. This individual feedback to the participants had made them feel secure and comfortable. To evaluate the tasks submitted by the participants, the researcher would take printouts and assess them physically, and then would scan and sent the evaluated tasks to the individual participant separately through Whatsapp.

The students were administered a task each week and were given 45minutes to complete a task. A set time was decided before a task was administered to ensure all students were free at the given time. Direct written feedback was provided to the participants (Lee, 2017; Wang, 2015; Geng, 2017)

4.4 Materials

As referred to in the earlier sections, we aim to see the effect of teacher's written feedback which includes emotional words, phrases or sentences, on these participants' writing performances. For the writing tasks, we looked at the **paragraph writing skill** of the participants. For this purpose, we referred to their English grammar textbook - **NCERT Words and Expressions 1, Workbook in English for Class 9**. All the tasks for paragraph writing have been designed, taking clues from this book. Unlike the questions of the textbook, we modified our questions by bringing in more contexts for better facilitation in terms of comprehension on the part of the participants. Before we asked the 6 questions to attempt, we had provided a small contextual text which would actually guide and help in terms of ideation and organization of thoughts. That small contextual

clue was also taken as a precursor to ideation which would help trigger the participants to write their paragraphs in a more meaningful manner. 6 questions were selected to test their paragraph writing skills. Out of the 6 questions, 2 were familiar as they were adopted from their textbook and 4 were unfamiliar. The unfamiliar questions were not taken directly from their textbook but were constructed with respect to similar level of complexity as the 2 familiar questions.

The rationale for consulting and using the school textbook was to maintain the reliability and validity of the test construction. As we had less time and the prevailing Covid-19 situation did not leave any other option like consulting and comparing textbooks of different curriculums, accessibility to the teachers in a comfortable manner to discuss issues of writing performance, etc., to adopt other available resources which would seem authentic. Therefore, we resorted to consulting their own textbooks.

5. Data analysis

Our data analysis comprises of the teacher's written feedback and learner's paragraph writing. In the teacher's feedback we look at the types of feedback provided to the learner's along with the scores (McNamara, 1996). Learner's writing performance was also studied case by case where we not only looked at the components of writing-content, organization of ideas and , grammar and mechanics, but also tried to do a textual analysis of their writing performance where we were more interested to see if emotionally intelligent (emotive words in written feedback) feedback and the context clues that were provided along with the questions, had helped them to attempt better writing performances after each feedback session (Mayer & Salovey,1990; Stottlemyer, 2002; Akki, 2006; Bar-On, 1997). For our data analysis, we are limiting to task 2, 3 and 4 as we assumed to elicit more amount of emotional content in these learners' writing performances.

5.1 Scoring criteria

Assessing writing is something we are looking at. Therefore, we analyzed the writing process of the participants by looking at three parts of the write up- content, organization of ideas and, grammar and mechanics (McNamara, 1996). Each question is assessed out of 10 marks.

Table 3: Scoring criteria

No.	Components	Marks (10 marks)
1	Content (ideas)	6
2	Organization of ideas (cohesive devices & links between paragraphs)	2
3	Grammar and mechanics (punctuations, etc)	2

Participants were experimented and provided feedback from task 2 onwards. For the subsequent tasks, it was made sure that the participants had read up or gone through the feedbacks given by the teacher/ researcher and then proceeds to attempt the next paragraph tasks. This process was followed till the end of the 6th task.

Therefore, in the findings section, we look at the following components

1. Teacher's emotive words in written feedback to the students.
2. Learners' production of emotional contents-words/phrases/sentences
3. Improvement in learners' writing compositions

6. Findings

6.1 Teacher's emotive words in written feedback to the students

In the study, 6 students were asked to attempt 6 tasks over 6 weeks. After the 1st task, the instructor provided written feedback to each student's writing compositions. The following are the comments of the instructor to each task (2, 3 and 4) case by case.

For task 2, 3 and 4, we post the comments and briefly talk about them by the instructor in the student's written compositions. Two posts for each task are presented below.

Analysis of each task's written feedback by the instructor is commendable. The instructor has provided positive feedback on each task. Reading the feedback, students would feel motivated and would try to do better in the next tasks. The instructor's remarks include words, phrases and sentences like the following which instills good vibe in the students.

1. Powerful.....
2. You could make the essay better by quoting.....
3. The lines from the lyrics make me feel more confident
4. Well-written
5. Paragraph division is better here from your first work
6. Good compositions of ideas
7. Good layout
8. Well-written introduction
9. You have improved and used short sentences which make it more impactful
10. Good introductory lines... you should do the same for the conclusions...
11. Picked up a clear distinct habit... good move
12. No spelling mistake....
13. Use of emoticons to highlight good work
14. Great improvement from your last work...
15. The essay is very well-structured...
16. Good work... keep it up

The above consolidated comments are from the six sample posts of task 2, 3 and 4. The words and expressions used by the instructor in the written feedback on the tasks yielded positive writing motivation among the students. One of the hidden agenda was also to see if students after reading the written feedback which contained emotive words, phrases and encouraging expression also incorporate emotional words in their compositions which again provide us that indirectly the feedback has also lend to learner's production of novel emotional vocabulary.

Learners' production of emotional contents-words/phrases/sentences

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, one of the criteria of good content production by the students is also to analyze the frequency of emotional content they have generated in their written compositions. As all the tasks (1-6), basically asked free writing tasks and the questions have been also molded to procure responses with expectations for emotional words, phrases and sentences on the part of the learners. Therefore, we look at each student's outcome in the tabular form. Presentations of three

students' writing outcome have been demonstrated as these three learners received more emotive content in their written feedback from the instructor. The remaining three students who have participated did not receive emotive content in their written feedback. In this paper, we are interested in highlighting the positive effects of written feedback and its impact on the writing performances. Therefore, we deliberately choose to include the data from these three student participants.

TANF10		
Tasks	Emotional content (words/phrases/sentences)	Total number
2	Expression of emotion , music helps reduce stress, pain, tension , makes you better	7
3		
4		

CRIF10		
Tasks	Emotional content (words/phrases/ sentences)	Total number
2	Completes me, really likes , heart-touching , relaxing , reduce stress and anxiety , feel better in depression , overcome my stress , enjoy , happy , sad	14
3	Amazing , exciting moments , most memorable thing, pretty place, heaven on earth, great experience	7
4		

SANF10		
Tasks	Emotional content (words/phrases/ sentences)	Total number
2	raise somebody's mood , excited , feel calm , feel at peace , feel sad , confident	8
3	Rejuvenate , happiest , amazing , enjoyed	4

4	Confidence, inspiration, motivation, favourite, fantastic, special to me, love reading, entertaining	8
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Improvement in learners' written compositions

We describe the learners written compositions and present the improvements they have made in their written compositions. Even for this section, we analyze the three selected participants and draw upon their written performances. Here we specifically look at their sentence types-simple, compound and complex constructions as a mark of their improvement. A learner incorporating more number of error-free sentences with more frequency of compound-complex construction is taken to be better writer than compared with simple constructions and with errors in their compositions. In this section also we look at the positive outcome of the learners and not documenting the errors in their compositions. A further scope for another exploration will be to do an error analysis of these learners written performances, which we will not be dealing in this current paper. Like in the previous section, here also we look at the learner performances in the tabular form case by case.

CARF10	
Tasks	Sentence structure
2	The participant has written three short paragraphs. Paragraph one comprises of compound sentence, while paragraph two has a combination of simple, compound and complex sentences. Paragraph three has one sentence which is a complex sentence.
3	The participant has written three paragraphs. Paragraph one comprises of compound sentences (2). In paragraph two, there are two sentences respectively, complex and compound. Paragraph three has sentences that comprises of simple, compound and complex.
4	The participant has two paragraphs. First paragraph comprises sentences of complex, compound and complex. Second paragraph comprises sentences of simple and compound.

SANF10	
Tasks	Sentence structure
2	The participant has written two paragraphs- 1 sentence and 5 sentences. The sentence in paragraph one is a compound sentence. Paragraph two has a combination of simple, compound and complex sentences.
3	The participant has written four paragraphs-first 3 having 2-3 sentences and last one with 1 sentence. In most of the paragraphs, the participant has used complex sentences. In one paragraph, the writer started with conditionals which again provide proof of good writing skills. In all the first three paragraphs, the participant has used a balanced of independent and subordinate clauses.
4	The participant has written two paragraphs. The first one is a big elaborate and the second one with 4 sentences. In the first paragraphs, the participant has written 7 sentences, out of which 3 are complex with more embedding clauses with multiple events being represented in the sentences. This is an example of improvement in writing skill. Apart from these three complex sentences, the participant has written two compound and two simple structures.

CRIF10	
Tasks	Sentence structure
2	The participant has written two paragraphs with 4 sentences each. In both the paragraphs, representations of compound and complex sentences are available. But the complex sentences are shorter with fewer events presented.
3	The participant has written two paragraphs- 2 and 9 sentences. The sentences are mostly in simple and compound forms. Paragraph 2 has more number of compound sentences than simple. A maximum of two events are narrated in each of the compound sentence by the participant. As the sentences are shorter in form, therefore, most of them are error-free.

4	The participant has written two paragraphs-3 and 9 sentences. The first paragraph has two simple sentences, one having an adjunct to it, and a compound sentence. Sentences in the second paragraph have mixed representation of simple, compound and complex. The events presented in the sentences are two at the maximum and therefore, shorter in forms with error-free.
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If we look at the sentence structures of the participants, we see that there is a gradual improvement in terms of structuring them in an individual level as learning anything depends on individual differences. Some learners have generated more number of complex sentences error-free but some learners have errors. Some learners have generated more number of compound and simple sentences error-free and with more information. Even though the writing seems to be a bit lengthy because of the structure of the sentences, but they are able to express themselves. Syntactic structures and its awareness also bring a lot of differences in the way a written piece is dealt with. Many novice writers start with simple constructions with only a verb and an object. Later on the same simple constructions will have additions in terms of the number of object they add, the number of complements they add and the adjuncts they add. If I have to analyze, the data of simple sentences from the three participants presented above have very less simple sentences with complements and adjuncts added to them. Even if we talk about the compound sentences, many sentences have restricted themselves to two verbs at the maximum which gives two event representations and thereby the number of sentences in the paragraph gets increased and lengthier. Very less complex sentences have been generated by the participants, with only one embedded clause. This is a developmental growth that the participants are showing over a period of six weeks.

7. Discussion

There is a relationship between feedback and writing. A good feedback will show a significant difference in the writing performances of learners (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Zhang, 2013, 2018; Hyland and Hyland, 2019). It is in this context, that we did a small study in the course of 6 weeks with 6 learners to see the impact of written feedback on these learners' written proficiency. We looked not only the support of written feedback but also were much concerned with the amount of emotive contents which was included in the written feedback. Emotive contents in written feedback, was the larger side of this study which we hypothesized that such kind of

feedback will not only improve the written performances of the learners but will create an environment of well-being, motivation and zeal towards their learning to write (Mayer & Salovey, 1997; Goleman, 1995).

Research in the area of emotional intelligence with respect to academic success and IQ have been adequately studied but in the context of language skills are very limited (Downey et al. 2008; Parker et al. 2004a, 2004b; Stottlemayer, 2012; Aghasafari, 2006; Bozorgmehr 2008; Pishghadam, 2008). Abdolrezapour, Tavakoli, and Rouhani in their studies have mentioned the limited studies done with relation to emotional intelligence and language skills (2011, 2008). This has put particular focus on strengthening studies on language skills and the impact of emotional intelligence on them. Jaegar & Eagan along with Tajularipin & Rohaizan in their studies have found that use of emotive contents automatically comforts learner's emotions and thereby motivates them to express their opinions or ideas with less anxiety (2007, 2009). The researchers have mentioned that such low affective filter can be achieved through bringing awareness of emotional intelligence in speaking and writing. More studies are required to see the effects of emotional intelligence specific to speaking or writing skills per se in the ESL context.

In line with what Jaegar & Eagan along with Tajularipin & Rohaizan, had explored that use of emotive contents automatically comforts learner's emotions and thereby motivates them to express their opinions or ideas with less anxiety (2007, 2009), we have found that in our study, learners were comfortable in expressing their opinions and were less anxious while writing their compositions. This we could say with the number of clarifications the learners had with the instructor without any hesitations. The written feedback made the learners at ease and eventually they could ask the instructors without any second thought. This is evident on speaking with the learners after they had completed their tasks over the phone. One of the learners said *"I felt very comfortable receiving the feedback and the instructor made me comfortable by clarifying all the queries I had"*. Another learner emphasized, *"I could concentrate on writing my compositions without any inhibitions on receiving the feedback which were encouraging"*. Therefore, from the opinions reflected on the learners' part, it felt the study we conducted had positive effects on learners' writing performances on receiving the written feedback. This study being very small with a limited number of learners' was impactful but further scope for such kind of study will be to look and examine more variables in terms of tasks and assessment, face to face intervention, different groups, age and the number of learners.

One of the inherent hypotheses is to evaluate learners' production of emotional words as it is very much align with the tasks. These 6 tasks indirectly elicit learners' production of words related to emotions and well-being. Ability to produce words related to emotions is also one of the improvements learners' shows in terms of their vocabulary growth. This can be evident from the results of the study captured in the section titled- *Learners' production of emotional contents-words/phrases/sentences*. We were interested in looking at tasks 2, 3 and 4 as we believed that more words related to emotions would get generated and thereby, the frequency counts of the emotional words had the following pattern- Task 2 > Task 3 > Task 4. Other than vocabulary production, there is an improvement in the production of structures too. Under the section titled- *Improvement in learners' written compositions*- of the findings section, it is evident that learners have used different structures- *simple, compound, complex, compound-complex* - in their written compositions.

8. Conclusion

If I have to talk about the pedagogical implications of the study, it has a great potential to do something for the emotional well-being on the part of the learners and teachers. Not only learners become aware of being emotions but they can also use in their daily life to combat any issue related to academics or non-academics. A small step towards making the stakeholders aware of the state of positive emotions is very important. Language tasks related to emotional intelligence through the medium of writing, speaking will be of great help. Not only will it enhance learners their ability to write and speak using words related to emotions but they will also become intelligent enough to deal with different emotions and might influence others in their lives.

Language skills- listening, speaking, reading and writing- of the learners can be developed through emotional intelligence. Very fewer studies in the ESL contexts have been done and most probably looked at academic success and emotional intelligence via questionnaire. A need of task specific studies on language skills is required.

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