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Feedback in EFL Writing: Arab World Contexts, Issues, and Challenges

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Introduction

The English language has become the most widely used language in the world due to globalisation and internationalisation. More people are learning English worldwide, and it is expected that half the world will be using the English language proficiently by 2050 (Johnson, 2009). Proficiency in English writing is one of the most important skills needed for written communication nowadays. Written communication skills in English are twenty-first century skills required by employers worldwide as highlighted by the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) in its VALUE rubrics. In line with this, Leki (2011) justified the importance of written communication in English for the following five reasons. First, writing is a skill that achieves one's personal fulfilment. Second, it helps students to learn the content of different disciplines.

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Third, students need to write a lot in different courses at college and university levels. Fourth, good writing skills in English are required by employers worldwide. Finally, writing is considered a powerful tool for justice in a democratic world.

In the Arab world context, Rabab'ah (2005) assured that learning English for Arab students is a difficult process. Despite its importance, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing constitutes a challenge to most Arab students (Ahmed & Abouabdelkader, 2016). English writing is not only challenging for native speakers; it is even more challenging for non-native speakers whose first language is entirely different from English—such as Arabic (Muthanna, 2016). EFL writing entails a wide range of skills that Arab students, at different educational stages, need to master throughout their course of study. These skills include cohesion, coherence, style, clarity of writing, grammatical and lexical structures, and mechanics of writing (i.e. punctuation, spelling, handwriting, and revision). English writing and pedagogy need to be explored continuously in the Middle East and North Africa contexts (Arnold, Nebel, & Ronesi, 2017). In addition, research has highlighted that students' skills in EFL writing need to be assessed in more informative, accurate, and effective ways (Weigle, 2002).

The teacher plays an essential role in guiding the development of these skills through providing meaningful and constructive feedback. Feedback is a crucial aspect in the process of assessment as it fundamentally enables students to learn from assessment (Irons, 2008). Hyland and Hyland (2010) argued that teachers' feedback on students' writing is one of the ESL writing teacher's most important tasks through providing individualised attention to each student, something that is rare under usual classroom conditions. Feedback plays an essential role in educational practices and advancing students' learning (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). However, responding to students' writing seems to be an exhausting process for those teachers who invest their time and energy to give feedback to their students (Ferris, Brown, Liu, & Stine, 2011).

Teachers' feedback can take different forms: written commentary, error correction, teacher-student conferencing, or peer discussion (Hyland & Hyland, 2010). Similarly, Frodesen & Holten, 2011 referred to direct and indirect forms of grammatical feedback. Direct feedback can take

place through marking or correcting grammatical errors, or delivering instruction to the class as a whole on examples of students' error-filled sentences. On the other hand, indirect feedback can be delivered in three ways: (1) teachers asking students to discover the types of errors made and correct them independently; (2) teachers underlining or circling errors for the students; (3) teachers using a system of symbols to represent the categories of common grammatical errors.

Students expect feedback from teachers to help them understand their strengths in writing and identify areas for improvement (Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2010). In this regard, Ferris (2011) showed that teachers' error feedback on different language features has some significant functions. First, it helps students to become aware of where their writing fails to follow the conventions of Standard Written English. Second, it helps them to develop their editing skills by drawing their attention to patterned errors. Moreover, it helps students to write more accurately over time and value feedback. Finally, careful feedback sends a strong message emphasising that clear and appropriate language forms are important aspects of effective communication (Frodesen & Holten, 2011).

Aspects of feedback to which teachers attend are important. Irons (2008) referred to three aspects of feedback that enhance students' learning and lead to a good student-teacher relationship: feedback, quality of feedback, and timeliness of feedback. In addition, teachers respond in their feedback to aspects such as students' ideas, rhetorical organisation, grammatical and lexical choices, and mechanics of writing such as spelling and punctuation (Leki et al., 2010). Teachers' feedback on these aspects of EFL writing is crucial since it impacts students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Irons, 2008). Therefore, teachers' feedback must be constructive in order to help students identify their mistakes and encourage them to continue to develop their writing until they master it. Such constructive feedback has the potential to help teachers create a supportive teaching environment, convey and model ideas about good writing, and develop ways through which students can talk about their writing, mediate the relationship between their sociocultural worlds, and become familiar with their new literacy practices (Hyland & Hyland, 2010).

Previous research stresses the importance and need for feedback in English writing instruction in different Arab world contexts (Seliem &

Ahmed, 2009; Adas & Bakir, 2013; Ahmed & Abouabdelkader, 2016, 2018). Written feedback is an essential factor that is missing in some EFL writing classes (Ahmed, 2016; Ahmed & Abouabdelkader, 2018). For example, Seliem and Ahmed (2009) highlighted that teachers' electronic feedback on students' writing impacts upon students' revision and provides a positive learning experience. The lack of written feedback urged one author, in the Emirati context, to conduct an experiment measuring the effect of written corrective feedback (WCF) on developing Emirati students' academic writing (Solloway, 2016).

Feedback in EFL Writing Arab World

The present chapter reviews the issues, contexts, and challenges related to the provision of feedback practices in EFL writing instruction in the following eighteen Arab countries: Algeria, Kingdom of Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, the Sultanate of Oman, Palestine, the State of Qatar, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Yemen.

Feedback Practices in Algeria

Based on the present author's review of the literature, a few studies have been conducted in the Algerian context to measure the effects of coded content feedback, peer feedback, and weblogs on developing students' EFL writing performance (Baghzou, 2011; Moussaoui, 2012; Mansouri, 2017). First, Baghzou (2011) conducted a quantitative study to measure the effect of coded content feedback on the written performance of sixty sophomore Algerian learners. A quasi-experimental design and pre-tests and post-tests were used. Results showed that the experimental group of students, instructed using coded feedback, differed statistically from the control group students who received no feedback. In addition, the content coded feedback had improved students' written performance.

Second, another quantitative research measured the effect of peer feedback on developing Algerian students' writing autonomy (Moussaoui,

2012). Using pre-surveys and post-surveys, class observations and peer-evaluation rubrics, the research results indicated that the experimental group of students socially interacted during the peer-evaluation process and exhibited positive attitudes towards peer feedback. Peer review was found to reduce students' writing apprehension and augment their writing self-efficacy. Moreover, when students got involved in reading, rethinking, and revising, they were able to try new writing tasks independently and develop their writing autonomy.

The third study integrated technology in the form of weblogs to understand their impact on developing Algerian students' English writing performance (Mansouri, 2017). Participants enumerated the many beneficial uses of the weblog. First, weblogs were marked by authenticity and interaction where students shared their reflections, experiences, and assessed their achievements. Second, weblogs motivated students to write for purposes other than examinations. Third, weblogs were a flexible tool whereby students received feedback from their instructor and peers, and in turn gave feedback to their peers.

Feedback Practices in the Kingdom of Bahrain

Little research has been done on feedback in EFL writing in the Bahraini context. The author found just two unpublished PhD theses and a recently published research article that addressed the issue of written feedback in Bahrain (Mubarak, 2013; Wali, 2017; Wali & Huijser, 2018). The first study was conducted by Mubarak (2013) at the University of Bahrain using classroom observation, with three aims: (1) investigating the feedback and teaching practices of English writing; (2) examining the effect of direct and indirect feedback on developing students' English writing; (3) exploring teachers' and students' beliefs about feedback. Findings of the study showed that several problems were observed in the teaching of English writing and methods of feedback used at the university. Neither the direct nor indirect type of feedback had significantly affected the accuracy or grammatical or lexical complexity of the students' English writing. Despite the value and benefit of feedback reported by both students and instructors, students tended to prefer direct to indirect

corrective feedback, especially where instructors provided corrections of errors.

The study by Wali (2017) was a case study that examined the impact of a process-oriented approach on developing Bahraini students' accuracy in English writing. This intervention study included peer review as well as individual and collective teacher feedback. Results showed that the process-oriented approach and peer-review method contributed to students' learning of writing and enabled them to identify L1 Arabic interference errors in their peers' writing. Results also revealed the dynamic relationship between students' ability to produce correct English forms in their writing and spot errors in their peers' writing.

In an attempt to improve Bahraini students' English writing, Wali and Huijser (2018) evaluated the usefulness of Write & Improve; an automatic feedback tool. Findings indicated that students' responses were interesting and occasionally contradictory. Participants revealed that Write and Improve was effective in providing immediate feedback on students' writing. However, it was not effective in some areas in which students struggled, especially when the provision of feedback needed to be non-judgemental, contextualised, and personal. The authors of the study suggested combining the automated feedback tool with teacher feedback to avoid impersonal, uncontextualised and judgemental feedback.

Feedback Practices in Egypt

More research has been published in the Egyptian context (Seliem & Ahmed, 2009; Ahmed, 2010, 2016; El Ebyary & Windeatt, 2010; Ali, 2016). One study reported that Egyptian university professors do not always provide written feedback due to the large class sizes, volume of teaching responsibilities, and lack of research and professional development opportunities both locally and internationally (Ahmed, 2016). Low levels of teacher written feedback and oral discussion of common writing mistakes and the infrequent use of peer review are some of the feedback practices reported in the Egyptian university context (ibid.).

Seliem and Ahmed (2009) carried out a study in which eighty student teachers and seven teachers exchanged e-mails to explore the effect of

electronic feedback (e-feedback) on developing students' EFL writing at the university level. Findings revealed that students perceived e-feedback as capable of improving their writing for the following reasons. First, it positively impacted upon their revision. Second, it provided a positive learning environment and them feel responsible for their writing. Third, it facilitated teacher-student collaboration and increased students' participation. Teachers, however, perceived e-feedback as a good but exhausting and time-consuming pedagogic practice.

El Ebyary and Windeatt (2010) investigated the impact of Criterion—a software tool that provides automatic feedback at the paragraph, sentence, and word levels. Thirty-one teachers and 549 EFL student teachers participated in questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. A total of twenty-four student teachers received feedback through Criterion on two drafts of their essays. The findings showed that Criterion had a positive effect on students' second drafts. In addition, participants showed a positive attitude towards the feedback generated by the Criterion software.

Similarly, Ali (2016) investigated the effect of Screencasting—a video feedback tool—on first-year students' writing skills in English. Using a quasi-experimental research design, students were divided into an experimental group which received Screencasting feedback on content, organisation, and structure, and a control group which only received written comments. Results revealed that in terms of improved EFL writing skills the experimental group outperformed the control group. Participants who received Screencasting feedback found it engaging, personal, constructive, supportive, clear, and multimodal. Despite its numerous benefits, however, participants also reported encountering two challenges: the slow loading time and the inability to download videos to computers.

Feedback Practices in Iraq

Surprisingly, only one published research paper was found on the impact of feedback practices on Iraqi students' EFL writing (Cinkara & Galaly, 2018). This study investigated Iraqi students and teachers' attitudes towards teachers' written feedback. A teacher's questionnaire was completed by 100 participants and a student one by 200. Results indicated

that teachers' written feedback helped improve students' writing skills, especially where the feedback was constructive and optimistic. Results also showed that Iraqi students preferred teachers' feedback when it was timely and when it corrected mistakes. Statistical analysis showed no statistical significance between male and female teachers and students towards this form of feedback.

Feedback Practices in Jordan

In Jordan three studies have been published in peer-reviewed journals about feedback practices in EFL writing (Al-Omari, 1998; AbuSeileek, 2013; Al-Sawalha, 2016). Al-Omari (1998) identified the focuses of EFL writing assessment among Jordanian university teachers in eight universities. He collected data from questionnaires, interviews, and an analysis of marked assessments of students' writing. Findings revealed that most teachers when assessing students' writing focused on grammatical accuracy and mechanics of writing (i.e. handwriting, spelling, and punctuation). Yet few teachers focused on organisation, content, and cohesion; and few teachers provide written feedback. No statistical differences were found among teachers by experience or specialisation.

In 2013 AbuSeileek measured the effect of computer-mediated corrective feedback on EFL writing. Participants were divided randomly into three experimental groups that gave and received computer-mediated corrective feedback while writing (track changes, word processor, and track changes and word processor) and a control group that neither gave nor received writing corrective feedback. Results showed that there was a significant effect for only the experimental group that combined track changes and word processor. In addition, the experimental groups that used the computer-mediated corrective feedback outperformed the control group in their English writing performance.

To examine Jordanian EFL students' reaction to their teachers' written feedback, Al-Sawalha (2016) investigated twenty junior undergraduate students. Findings revealed that participants varied in their attitude towards their teachers' written feedback; however, most participants reported that they found it useful to their writing in two ways: it improved their revision skills and enhanced their overall writing quality.

Feedback Practices in Kuwait

Only one published research paper was found addressing the Kuwaiti context: Alhumidi & Uba, 2016. In this study, the researchers examined the effect of indirect WCF on two assignments. No feedback was given on the first and only indirect feedback on the second. The results showed that indirect feedback was effective in improving the writing of Kuwaiti students at an intermediate level writing. However, a high number of spelling mistakes was noticed in students' written assignments. The authors recommended using indirect rather than direct feedback since it proved effective in developing students' writing skills.

Feedback Practices in Lebanon

The Lebanese context is unique in that feedback on students' L2 writing is paid more attention than most other Arab countries reviewed here (Diab, 2005, 2010, 2011, 2015; Ghosn-Chelala & Al-Chibani, 2018). For example, Diab (2005) investigated Lebanese EFL university students' preferences for paper-marking techniques and error correction. The study shows that students tended to expect surface error corrections from their teachers and believed that these corrections are useful. In another study, Diab (2010) investigated the effectiveness of peer feedback versus self-feedback in an attempt to reduce specific language errors in the writing of Lebanese university students. Findings indicated that students in the peer-feedback group performed better in their revised drafts than their self-feedback counterparts in rule-based errors (subject/verb agreement, pronoun agreement). Thus peer feedback proved effective in creating collaborative dialogue and negotiation of meaning that facilitated the learning of L2 writing. Similarly, Diab (2011) attributed the positive impact of peer feedback on students' writing to the interaction among peers, language peers' engagement with language during the peer-feedback process, and the use of learning strategies. Recently, another study examined the effect of Screencasting using Jing on developing the writing of EFL Lebanese students (Ghosn-Chelala & Al-Chibani, 2018). The remedial writing program used Screencasting videos that focused on indirect corrections, a rubric-guided oral commentary, and annotations. Students'

views about Screencasting were examined through a survey and an informal group discussion. The study showed that Lebanese students perceived screencast feedback as clearer and more useful than traditional written feedback on the one hand, and more engaging and supportive of learning preferences on the other.

Feedback Practices in Libya

Work on feedback practices in Libyan students' L2 writing has only emerged in recent years (Gashout, 2014; Omar, 2014; Ghgam, 2015; Amara, 2015; Sopin, 2015). The type of teachers' written feedback can be a helpful factor in motivating Libyan students to write and revise their written assignments (Gashout, 2014). Therefore, using facilitative feedback strategies combined with the process approach to writing can help students enhance their writing and revision skills and gain more self-confidence when composing text (ibid.). Similarly, Amara (2015) revealed that Libyan participants were highly interested in teachers' written comments; preferred complimentary feedback that praised good work; complained when feedback was not linked to specific errors; and sometimes misinterpreted teachers' comments. Besides, Sopin (2015) confirmed the value of teachers' corrective feedback and revealed that Libyan students felt offended or uncomfortable when the teacher provided them with feedback in front of their peers.

Concerning the type of feedback, Omar (2014) studied the effects of teachers' coded and uncoded feedback on EFL Libyan writing and found that the group that used coded feedback recorded more improvement in terms of error correction than the group that used uncoded feedback. Also, the participants had a positive perception of receiving and giving feedback. In addition, Ghgam (2015) examined the effect of face-to-face feedback on the L2 writing of 200 third-year Libyan university students. Students were assigned to an experimental group that received face-to-face feedback and a control group who received written feedback. The experimental group outperformed the control group in their L2 writing performance. The study findings showed that students preferred face-to-face feedback to written and perceived it as a useful experience in developing their writing.

Feedback Practices in Morocco

Unlike many other Arab contexts in which feedback is rarely given, Moroccan researchers have paid much attention to investigating feedback practices on Moroccan students' L2 writing (Bouziane, 1996; Haoucha, 2005, 2012; Bouziane & Zyad, 2018). In this regard, Bouziane (1996) urged teachers to use any of five different types of feedback: comments, error treatment, peer review, reformulation, and conferencing. In response to Bouziane's call (1996), Haoucha (2005) used a case-study approach to explore students' use of three types: self-monitored feedback using annotations; peer feedback; and teachers' written feedback and taped commentary. The study showed that first, annotated self-monitored feedback helped students identify their problems with their writing skills and that annotations revealed students' perceptions about good writing. Second, peer feedback did not only encouraged students' revision but also benefited them linguistically, cognitively, and affectively. Third, teacher-taped commentary proved effective in commenting on the content and organisation of students' writing.

In reference to the integration of technology-mediated feedback, Bouziane and Zyad (2018) investigated the effects of technology-mediated self-review and peer feedback on Moroccan students' university L2 writing. The researchers used a quasi-experimental design in which experimental and control groups were used. The study revealed that self-review and peer feedback led to an improvement in students' ability to spot problems in writing since unhelpful comments decreased and meaning-level comments increased.

Feedback Practices in the Sultanate of Oman

Research on feedback in L2 writing in the Omani context showed that different aspects of feedback have been well researched (Kasanga, 2004; Al-Badwawi, 2011; Denman & Al-Mahrooqi, 2014; Al Ajmi, 2015; Al-Bakri, 2016). For example, Kasanga (2004) combined the use of peer feedback along with teacher feedback using the process approach with a sample of Omani first-year students while revising their essays. The study

proved that participants preferred teacher over peer feedback. Nevertheless students were very willing to peer-review each other's work and incorporated peers' feedback in their revision. Moreover, the types of feedback received from peers and teacher differed notably and suggested a combination of both types in the revision stage. Surprisingly, a negotiated classroom practice thought to be unacceptable culturally turned out to be not only acceptable but favoured by the study participants. Similarly, Denman and Al-Mahrooqi (2014) investigated Omani university students' perceptions of peer feedback in their English writing classes. The students were shown to have constructive views of peer feedback, despite the limitations related to implementation.

Two other studies have explored the effect of teacher written feedback on different aspects of students' L2 writing. First, Al-Badwawi (2011) investigated Omani students, their EFL teachers, and disciplinary teachers on the subject of academic writing. The study revealed that teachers' written feedback improved students' writing and motivated them to exert more effort to produce better pieces of writing reflected in higher scores. Other students, however, were discouraged and depressed by their teachers' red ink in their assignments. In reference to students' reaction to their teachers' written feedback, students either accepted the feedback and revised the assignment accordingly; accepted the feedback and simply deleted the problematic sentences, not knowing how to revise them; or ignored the feedback and reproduced the same written essay without any revision. Second, Al Ajmi (2015) conducted a quasi-experimental study to measure the effectiveness of WCF to Omani students on their uses of prepositions in English. The experimental group received WCF on their writing whereas the control group only received general comments. The experimental group outperformed the control group and showed that WCF has the potential to develop students' use of prepositions in English.

Moreover, Al-Bakri (2016) examined teachers' beliefs about WCF and the reasons for their practices and challenges while providing students with WCF in a public college in Oman. Six writing instructors were interviewed, and feedback on eighteen written assignments was analysed. Findings revealed that teachers were responsible for the provision of WCF to students. In addition, the teaching context proved to influence teachers' beliefs. For example, teachers who believed that their students

had spelling mistakes in their writing, changed their practice to give WCF on students' spelling mistakes. Moreover, teachers were not able to give WCF congruent with their beliefs because of contextual factors such as workload and fatigue. Finally, all teachers were content with their WCF; however, they were not satisfied with their students' attitudes towards their teachers' feedback.

Feedback Practices in Palestine

Feedback practices in Palestine is well investigated (Hammad, 2014, 2016; Farrah, 2012; Abu Shawish & Abd Al-Raheem, 2015). For example, Hammad (2016) explored essay-writing problems as perceived by Palestinian EFL university students and their teachers. Results showed that the students' English essay-writing problems were attributed to many factors, the most important of which was that writing teachers did not provide students with the necessary feedback in order to improve. The lack of teachers' feedback was due to the lack of adequate time and teachers' suspicions about how effective feedback would be in developing their students' written performance.

In response, three published studies reviewed feedback practices in Palestine. Farrah (2012) examined Palestinian students' attitudes towards peer feedback and assessed its effectiveness. The study showed that students perceived peer feedback as a valuable experience that offered opportunities for social interaction and developed their writing skills. In a later study, Hammad (2014) explored the effect of direct teacher feedback on the writing of female Palestinian EFL university students. The study revealed that teacher direct WCF improved the writing performance of high achievers; however, it did not enhance the writing performance of middle and low achievers. Finally, Abu Shawish and Abd Al-Raheem (2015) identified the feedback practices of Palestinian university professors and assessed their awareness of audio feedback practices. The study also investigated students' reactions to their teachers' feedback. Results showed that Palestinian writing professors were aware of audio feedback practices since they provide oral discussion of feedback and WCF, suggest strategies for revision, and provide constructive feedback that does not

discourage students. Palestinian students reacted satisfactorily to most of their teachers' feedback practices.

Feedback Practices in Qatar

Feedback practices on students' English writing in Qatar are gaining attention. In 2011, Al-Buainain identified EFL writing difficulties among Qatari university students. The study recommended that teachers identify their students' writing problems and spend more time giving feedback. In response to this recommendation, Pessoa, Miller, and Kaufer (2014) examined challenges faced by multilingual students in reading and writing in their transition to college in Qatar. It is noteworthy that students were provided with substantial written and oral feedback on their multiple drafts in their ESL writing courses. The study showed that students' academic writing and reading levels developed as their understanding of the expectations of college writing increased. Additionally, Williams, Ahmed, and Bamigbade (2017) emphasised the importance of the support given to L2 writing in Qatar by comparing and contrasting the different services offered by the writing centres in ten different higher education institutions. These services included face-to-face writing support, teachers' corrective feedback, and online feedback, and were found to help Qatari university students develop and enhance their English writing skills based on their individual needs and levels. Finally, Weber (2018) explored how the First-Year Writing Seminar (FYWS) at the Cornell campus in Qatar helped develop Qatari university students' English writing. During their study in the FYWS, Qatari students write five to eight formal essays, using multiple drafting. The feedback practices used in this course include oral corrective feedback, written comments, individual conferencing with the teacher, and formal peer review.

Feedback Practices in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Saudi context is another that is well researched. Grami (2010) investigated the effect of peer feedback on Saudi students' English writing at university. The study revealed that students were satisfied with teachers'

written feedback but were apprehensive of peer feedback since they lacked confidence in their classmates' linguistic level. Using a quasi-experimental design, the experimental group of students outperformed the control group of students in their writing development, demonstrating that peer feedback assisted students in gaining new skills and developing existing ones. Using a Saudi university as their setting, Alshahrani and Storch (2014) explored teachers' beliefs and practices of WCF and students' preferences. The study revealed that teachers provided students with indirect WCF that focused on the mechanics of writing. However, teachers were not aware that students preferred direct feedback that focused on grammar. A year later, Alkhatib (2015) explored Saudi writing teachers' beliefs and practices of the role of WCF in a Saudi university. The study showed that teachers' beliefs corresponded with their practices about the focus and amount of WCF. On the other hand, teachers' beliefs were not aligned with their practices about the use of positive feedback, the source, and explicitness of WCF. The university context, teachers' teaching experience, and students' proficiency levels were behind the incongruences between teachers' beliefs and practices. Finally, students reported finding it difficult to understand teachers' comments.

Feedback Practices in Sudan

Research on feedback practices on EFL writing in Sudan is limited. Indeed Ali (2014) recommended that additional research is needed in this area. In response, Zakaria and Mugaddam (2013) assessed the English written texts of 240 Sudanese university students and reviewed their teachers' views. The study showed that EFL students had some language problems, lacked organisational skills, produced disconnected and incoherent paragraphs, were unable to meet audience expectations, lacked awareness of cohesive ties, and did not use teacher or peer feedback. In addition, Ali (2014) investigated how teachers' written feedback can develop Sudanese Secondary students' writing performance. The study showed that despite its importance, teachers' feedback does not meet student expectations since this type of feedback does not take students' ability level and lesson objectives into consideration.

Feedback Practices in Syria

Similarly, there is limited peer-reviewed published research on feedback practices in Syria. Janoudi (2011) compared teachers' and students' perceptions and attitudes towards teacher written feedback in three secondary schools in Syria. This findings suggested that teacher feedback is the preference in the Syrian context due to four factors related to teachers, students, the educational system, and the social system. In addition, the study by Meygle (1997) aimed at developing the English writing of Syrian undergraduate students. The study showed that 66% of students preferred teachers' written feedback and 77% liked teachers' correction of their mistakes in writing. Some participants in the study also preferred oral feedback.

Feedback Practices in Tunisia

As is pointed out in this book, a select few studies have been conducted on the Tunisian context (Athimni, 2019). For example, Mhedhbi (2011) investigated the effect on the quality of students' revised writing of teachers' feedback using a specific marking scheme that highlighted errors constructively with positive and negative comments. The study indicated that teachers' error correction produced well-written final drafts in terms of grammar, spelling, and organisation of ideas. In addition, teacher's written feedback and peer reviews had motivated students to rewrite their work. In a recent study, Athimni (2018) researched how teachers communicated test results to their students. The study showed that teachers provided test scores accompanied by written feedback on the topic ideas, style of writing, and the organisation of writing. In addition, Tunisian teachers underlined or corrected students' language mistakes. Other teachers organised in-class oral group feedback sessions in which students' errors were discussed collectively. In the current edited volume, Athimni (2019) identifies how Tunisian teachers provide feedback and focuses on feedback type, the writing features they focus on, and the guiding theories and beliefs that inform their approach. The study shows that Tunisian teachers possessed some theoretical knowledge about feedback practices; however, translating this knowledge into practice was not

always a success. The results also disclosed that teachers viewed feedback more of a directive or corrective nature which justified their provision of WCF.

Feedback Practices in the UAE

In the context of the UAE, Shine (2008) investigated the type, timing, and mechanism of feedback from both a student and a teacher perspective. The study indicated that students did not strongly believe in peer feedback and preferred to use teachers' written feedback while revising their essays. Besides, teachers also focused on grammar more than content. Students did not understand the extent of revision expected from them and the aspects to which they should attend. The study suggests using classroom teaching and revision strategies to improve students' reaction to teachers' written feedback. Mohammedi (2016) explored the perceived and actual written feedback preferences between secondary EFL students and their teachers in the UAE. The study showed that teachers and students' preferences for feedback were similar. However, the following factors were taken into consideration while giving feedback to students: school requirements, orientations on feedback, students' proficiency levels, and the nature of tasks. Students regarded direct correction as a practical choice for them. Another study examined the impact of training students on how to provide effective peer feedback on students' motivation and engagement levels on peer review and self-feedback (Hojeij & Baroudi, 2018). The study reported that when peer feedback training was combined with face-to-face and mobile learning, it positively affected EFL students' revisions and overall writing.

Feedback Practices in Yemen

It has been shown to be the case that Yemeni teachers of English regard giving feedback to students on their English writing as a burden (Al-Hammadi & Sidek, 2015). Previous research in the Yemeni context has shed light on students' dissatisfaction with their English writing skills and indeed EFL provision in general due to specific challenges that

include the absence of EFL programme policy, admission policy, material development and evaluation, insufficient instructors and classrooms, and educational environment (Muthanna, 2016). These challenges have negatively influenced students' acquisition of EFL writing skills and made them helpless to pursue postgraduate degrees that require higher levels of writing skills (ibid.).

In an attempt to address students' concerns about their EFL writing development and teachers' provision of feedback on their writing, two researchers have investigated the impact of using portfolios as a mechanism to obtain feedback from the course instructor and classmates. Assaggaf & Bamahra's study (2016) found that portfolios assisted students in obtaining better feedback on their technical report writing from both the instructor and their classmates. More specifically, 64% of students believed that the instructor gave them more feedback and 82% received more feedback from their classmates due to the close relationships between them.

Yemen seems to be the only Arab country in which students' affective reactions to their teachers' written feedback have been the subject of study. For example, Mahfoodh and Pandian (2011) explored Yemeni EFL students' affective reactions to and perceptions of their teachers' written feedback as well as the contextual factors that are believed to impact on those reactions. Using semi-structured interviews, think-aloud protocols, students' written essays, and teachers' written feedback, research findings have revealed that students viewed teachers' written feedback as useful and important to developing their writing skills; however, they wanted their teachers to pay attention to all aspects of their written essays when giving written feedback. Some of the contextual factors reported as having an impact on students' affective reactions to their teachers' written feedback include students' acceptance of their teachers' authority and handwriting, students' experience, and teachers' choice of wording in feedback. Similarly, Mahfoodh (2017) studied the relationship between EFL university students' emotional responses towards their teachers' written feedback and the success of their revisions. Findings showed that students' emotional response to their teachers' written feedback varied between acceptance, rejection, surprise, dissatisfaction,

happiness, disappointment, satisfaction, and frustration. These findings could be ascribed to teachers' harsh criticism, negative evaluations, and miscommunication with their students.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how feedback in EFL writing has been addressed in eighteen Arab countries. In concluding, I will pull together all the issues related to feedback by focusing on the following six issues: (1) lack of teachers' feedback; (2) effective types of feedback, (3) ineffective types of feedback, (4) peer feedback, (5) students' reactions to feedback, (6) technological tools/applications used to give feedback.

Lack of Teachers' Feedback

The literature review demonstrates the paucity of research about feedback in EFL writing in some Arab countries. For example, Zakaria and Mugaddam (2013) revealed that teacher or peer feedback is missing in Sudan. In addition, teacher feedback is reported by university students as lacking in Egypt due to the dearth of qualified writing teachers and heavy workload faced by Egyptian teachers (Ahmed, 2011). It is also absent from Palestinian EFL writing classes due to the lack of adequate time and teachers' doubts about how effective feedback would be to developing their students' writing (Hammad, 2016).

Effective Feedback

Previous research has, however, highlighted the following six types of feedback that proved effective and was preferred by participants in different Arab contexts: constructive feedback, face-to-face feedback, teachers' written feedback, direct correction of students' mistakes, indirect feedback, and coded feedback.

Constructive Feedback

Giving constructive feedback has been reported and preferred by students in Iraq, Tunisia, Libya, and Palestine. For example, in Iraq, participants preferred feedback that is timely, constructive, and optimistic (Cinkara & Galaly, 2018). Similarly, Tunisian students liked teachers' comments on their written assignments, whether positive and negative (Mhedhbi, 2011). Besides, Libyan participants preferred complimentary feedback that praised students' good work (Amara, 2015). Finally, writing teachers in Palestine provide feedback and comments on students' English writing that do not disappoint students (Abu Shawish & Abd Al-Raheem, 2015).

Face-to-Face Feedback

Provision of face-to-face feedback is another effective type of feedback as revealed in Libya, Syria, Palestine, and Qatar. For example, in Libya, students preferred face-to-face feedback to the written type and perceived it as a faster and more effective means of developing their English writing skills (Ghgam, 2015). Participants in Syria reported their preference for oral feedback (Meygle, 1997; Janoudi, 2011), and in Palestine, oral discussion of feedback and provision of written comments on students' writing were believed to be effective in developing students' English writing (Abu Shawish & Abd Al-Raheem, 2015). Similarly, in the Qatari context, oral corrective feedback was provided and used with Qatari students and helped them to develop their English writing (Weber, 2018).

Teachers' Written Feedback

Teachers' written feedback was preferred by students in Syria, Libya, Oman, UAE, Tunisia, and Palestine. It was favoured by Syrian students due to factors related to teachers, students, the educational system, and the social system (Janoudi, 2011). We also found that 66% of Syrian undergraduate students preferred teachers' written feedback (Meygle,

1997). Libyan students were highly interested in teachers' written comments (Amara, 2015), and in Omani, participants preferred teacher written feedback to peer feedback (Kasanga, 2004). Similarly, in the UAE, students preferred and used teachers' written feedback while revising their essays, since they did not strongly believe in peer feedback (Shine, 2008). On the other hand, both teachers' written feedback and peer feedback motivated Tunisian students to rewrite their work. In Palestine, the provision of teachers' written comments on students' writing was believed to be effective in developing students' English writing (Abu Shawish & Abd Al-Raheem, 2015).

Direct Corrections of Students' Mistakes

Provision of direct correction of students' mistakes in writing has been repeatedly used and favoured by students in ten Arab countries. First, Iraqi students preferred writing teachers who correct their mistakes (Cinkara & Galaly, 2018). Second, Syrian students liked teachers' correction of their mistakes in English writing (Meygle, 1997; Janoudi, 2011). Third, Emirati students regarded direct correction as a practical choice (Mohammedi, 2016). In Palestine, direct WCF enhanced high achievers' performance in a new piece of writing but did not improve the performance of middle and low achievers (Hammad, 2014). In Qatar, written comments and individual conferencing with the teacher proved effective in enhancing students' writing performance (Weber, 2018). Bahraini students tended to prefer direct to indirect corrective feedback, especially when instructors provided corrections on mistakes (Mubarak, 2013). In Lebanon, students tended to expect surface error corrections from their teachers and believed that these corrections are useful (Diab, 2005). Saudi teachers were not aware that students preferred direct feedback that focused on grammar rather than indirect WCF that focused on the mechanics of writing (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014). Emirati students regarded direct correction as a practical choice (Mohammedi, 2016). Finally, in Yemen, students wanted their teachers to pay attention to and correct all aspects of their written essays when giving written feedback (Mahfoodh & Pandian, 2011).

Indirect Feedback

Indirect feedback proved effective only in Kuwait. Research results showed that indirect feedback was effective in improving intermediate Kuwaiti students' English writing (Alhumidi & Uba, 2016).

Coded Feedback

Coded feedback—giving feedback using writing symbols that encourage learners to self-correct their writing errors—has only been researched in the Algerian context. Using a quasi-experimental design, Baghzou (2011) revealed that using coded feedback with Algerian students proved statistically significant and helped improve students' performance in English writing.

Ineffective Feedback

Some feedback provision practices proved ineffective in some Arab countries. For example, in Egypt, the correction of the most common mistakes in students' English writing was criticised by undergraduate university students (Ahmed, 2011). In Oman, marking and commenting on students' assignments in red ink proved to be a depressing experience for first-year students still learning to operate within a new academic context (Al-Badwawi, 2011). Finally, Libyan students complained about teachers' feedback that was not linked to specific errors, and misinterpreted some of their teachers' comments (Amara, 2015). In another study, Libyan students felt offended or uncomfortable when the teacher provided them with feedback in front of their peers (Sopin, 2015)

Peer Feedback

Results of the effectiveness of peer feedback in the Arab world varied. In Egypt peer feedback was infrequently used due to sociocultural reasons such as academic jealousy and competition (Ahmed, 2016; Ahmed &

Myhill, 2016), while in Sudan, it is missing altogether (Zakaria & Mugaddam, 2013). For is peer feedback favoured in Saudi Arabia or the UAE. Saudi students were apprehensive since they lacked confidence in their classmates' linguistic level (Grami, 2010), while Emirati students did not strongly believe in peer feedback and preferred instead to use their teachers' written feedback while revising their essays (Shine, 2008).

Despite this, the literature shows that peer feedback is frequently used and highly recommended in many other Arab world contexts. For instance, in Bahrain, the process-oriented approach and practice of peer review contributed to students' learning about writing and enabled them to identify the L1 Arabic interference errors in their peers' writing (Wali, 2017). In Algeria students interacted socially during the peer-evaluation process and exhibited positive attitudes towards peer feedback; moreover, peer feedback was found to reduce their apprehensions about writing and helped augment their writing self-efficacy (Moussaoui, 2012). Using peer feedback in process writing classes in Palestine, students viewed it as a worthwhile experience that offered them an opportunity to interact socially, improve their writing, and enhanced their critical thinking, confidence, creativity, and motivation (Farrah, 2012). Formalised peer review using peer-review sheets was used to help develop Qatari university students' English writing (Weber, 2018), and in the Lebanese context, Diab (2011) examined peer feedback and proved its effectiveness in creating collaborative dialogue and negotiation of meaning that facilitated the learning of L2 writing. Finally, in Omani English writing classrooms, university students demonstrated constructive views of peer feedback and were willing to peer-review each other's work and incorporated peer feedback in revisions (Kasanga, 2004).

Students' Reactions to Teachers' Feedback

The literature also demonstrated varied reactions from students to teacher feedback in eight different Arab world contexts. In Yemen, Mahfoodh (2017) showed that students' emotional response to their teachers' written feedback varied between acceptance, rejection, surprise, dissatisfaction, happiness, disappointment, satisfaction, and frustration. These

emotional responses could be ascribed to teachers' harsh criticism, negative evaluation, or miscommunication with their students. Jordanian students reacted positively to teachers' written feedback and reported that they found it useful to their writing process since it improved their revision skills and enhanced the overall quality of their writing (Al-Sawalha, 2016). University students in Saudi Arabia (Grami, 2010) and Palestine (Abu Shawish & Abd Al-Raheem, 2015) reacted satisfactorily to most of their teachers' constructive feedback practices as they believed that it developed their writing skills. Omani students either accepted the feedback from their teachers and revised their writing accordingly; accepted the teachers' feedback but did not know how to revise and thus simply deleted the problematic sentences and effectively ignored the feedback; or reproduced the same essay without any changes or revision (Al-Badwawi, 2011). Finally, students in the UAE did not understand the extent of revision expected of them nor the aspects to which they should attend (Shine, 2008). The study suggested using classroom teaching and revision strategies to improve students' reactions to teachers' written feedback (ibid.).

Technological Tools/Applications Used to Give Feedback

The literature suggests that integrating technology into feedback on EFL writing has been used and recommended in many universities in the Arab world. Weblogs proved authentic, interactive, flexible, and motivating to write among Algerian students (Mansouri, 2017). The automated feedback tool Write & Improve was found to be effective in providing immediate feedback on Bahraini students' writing (Wali & Huijser, 2018). The video feedback tool Screencasting was used with Egyptian university students and proved to be engaging, personal, constructive, supportive, clear, and multimodal (Ali, 2016). Screencasting was also used in a study conducted in Lebanon and proved to be clearer, useful, engaging, and supportive of students' learning preferences (Ghosn-Chelala & Al-Chibani, 2018). Electronic feedback was recommended by Seliem and Ahmed (2009) in Egypt due to its positive impact on students' revision and the fact it helped students feel responsible for their writing,

facilitated teacher-student collaboration, and increased student participation. The Criterion automated feedback tool was found to enhance Egyptian students' writing through the provision of feedback at word, sentence, paragraph, and text levels (El Ebyary & Windeatt, 2010). In Jordan, AbuSeileek (2013) used computer-assisted corrective feedback, in the form of track changes and word processor, with Jordanian students and found that it proved effective in developing students' EFL writing. Bouziane and Zyad (2018) investigated the effect of technology-mediated self-review and peer feedback on Moroccan students' university L2 writing. They found an improvement in students' ability to identify problems as unhelpful comments decreased and meaning-level comments increased. Finally, in the Qatari context, online feedback services are offered in some writing centres in higher education institutions (Williams et al., 2017).

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