English Language Teaching Research Partnerships (ELTReP) Award programme 2012–2016

Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India

Issue 2: Assessing learning (1)

Edited by Brian Tomlinson

Contents

Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India

Issue 2: Overview

Assessing learning (1)

All three papers in this issue of *Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India* investigate the professional practice of assessing learners. This professional practice includes designing tasks to measure learners' progress and applying assessment criteria in appropriate ways. It also includes developing skills in analysing learners' errors and providing constructive feedback. Through this professional practice, teachers can use assessment effectively to monitor learning and use data from assessments to inform teaching.

Jayati Chatterjee and **Dhriti Sundar Gupta** investigate current ways of testing learner language skills at secondary school level. They examine test candidates' views and performance and recommend both formative and summative testing. **Kirti Kapur** also researches current practice, finding that approaches are inconsistent and proposing the design and use of standardised rubrics. **Kuheli Mukherjee** and **Kalyan Chattopadhyay** investigate how secondary school teachers can give feedback on the writing performance of their learners and suggest more focused and consistent feedback to help learners to gain greater writing competence in English.

About the authors

Jayati Chatterjee is Assistant Professor of Linguistics at the English and Foreign Languages University, Shillong Campus, Meghalaya, India.

Dhriti Sundar Gupta is Assistant Professor at Rajiv Gandhi University, Arunachal Pradesh, India.

Professor Kirti Kapur has 28 years of experience in ELT. At NCERT, she is involved in curriculum design, development of textual materials and teacher training. She has undertaken research on multilingualism, cultural aspects of language learning and making ELT learner centric.

Kuheli Mukherjee is a senior teacher of ESL at Sakhawat Memorial Government Girls' High School, Kolkata and has twenty years' experience in teaching, training, curriculum designing and developing materials.

Kalyan Chattopadhyay is Associate Professor and Director, ELC, Bankim Sardar College, Vice-President, AsiaCALL, and ex-Coordinator, IATEFL YLTSIG. He regularly speaks and publishes on language skills development and technology-assisted language learning.

About the English Language Teaching Research Partnerships (ELTReP) Award programme

India has a long tradition of educational research but the results of this have not always reached the wider world. Through a range of programmes, British Council India places considerable emphasis on encouraging and supporting inquiry. A key strand of that work between 2012 and 2016 has been the English Language Teaching Research Partnerships (ELTReP) Award programme. The programme aimed to facilitate high quality, innovative research to benefit the learning and teaching of English in India and to improve the access of ELT policy makers, professionals from

India and the United Kingdom and the global ELT community to that research. All writers contributing to the eleven issues of *Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India* were selected and supported in their research by the ELTReP Award programme.

All three papers in this issue have been written by practitioners in the field, whether teachers, lecturers, educational department personnel or other roles that involve day-to-day contact with the teaching and learning of English. The researchers, many of whom will be seeing their work published for the first time, have designed and implemented their studies and present results which in each case are innovative and thought-provoking. Each paper reflects the creativity, detailed awareness of context and practical suggestions of a wide range of writers, from different backgrounds and working in different situations.

We very much hope you enjoy *Explorations: Teaching and Learning English in India* and that you feel the insights the papers provide into a variety of educational environments are applicable to your own context, wherever you may be working.

Acknowledgements

The opinions expressed in the papers in this issue are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent or reflect the views of the British Council.

1

The impact of English language testing practice on Indian ESL learners: a study

Jayati Chatterjee and Dhriti Sundar Gupta

1. Introduction

Language testing is an inalienable component of any formal language-learning situation. Consequently, language testing attracts critical attention from teachers, students and testing practitioners in the field. How do the testees view a test? To some, it is a ritual to secure a placement to a higher class. Some feel it paves the way for entering a larger domain of education or any professional field. Some believe it exhibits the testees' proficiency in English. The varied opinions of the testees make the topic worthy of investigation. The project investigates the impact of English language testing practice on the ESL learners in the Indian subcontinent.

Several examination boards operating at the national and state levels conduct high-stake tests for English as well as other subjects for class 12 in India. It is assumed, after twelve years of exposure to English, the learners have reasonable mastery of the four skills, i.e. LSRW (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in English. Despite their differences in teaching–learning material, syllabus, pattern of test paper, imparting the four major language skills to the learners is a common objective of the English courses across these boards of secondary education. The content of the tests conducted by the boards are based on specific syllabuses and every year the English

language tests, conducted by several boards certify a galaxy of testees as high achievers. Have these high scorers in the English language tests mastered LSRW skills in English? The question is reinforced by Hughes' comment (1989): 'successful performance on the test may not truly indicate successful achievement of course objectives' (p.11). The high achievers in English in the final examination of class 12, conducted by several boards of higher secondary examination are expected to have general proficiency in English. However, teachers teaching at the tertiary level have observed that many of the higher education aspirants fail to meet the benchmark of proficiency in English, required for pursuing an academic or professional course. The problem demands some attention. How far the English language testing practice can address the problem is the thought that has motivated this study.

2. Research questions

This study investigates the empowering ability of the ESL test-practice at the +2 level across national and state examination boards. The investigation focuses on how far these tests assure skill development among Indian ESL learners so as to place them on the global platform.

The following are the research questions which this study has addressed.

1. To what extent does the testing practice of +2 level measure the development of LSRW Skills in ESL learners across educational boards?

2. To what extent do the views of test takers ensure the predictive validity of the tests in English at the +2 level?

3. Research methods

The present study is a combination of qualitative and quantitative research. The data is collected through a survey method.

Sampling: Six examination boards are selected from the north, south, east and west of India for the study. To maintain confidentiality, the six boards are named as Board A, B, C, D, E and F. Thirty testees who have successfully passed the higher secondary examination from each board have been selected for the study. The respondents have completed a questionnaire and have taken a proficiency test.

Instruments: Primarily, two instruments are developed for the investigation: a structured questionnaire for the testees and a test paper modelled on a globally accepted general proficiency test module. The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out the general opinion of the testees and the teachers on the core English test of the class 12 board examination and thereby investigate the impact of these testing practices on Indian ESL learners.

4. Findings

This section will summarise and comment on the testees' responses to the questions on the questionnaire. Survey findings can be found in Appendix 1.

In response to the question whether the English language test of the Class 12 board examination was a fair and accurate test of their English language skills, 70 to 90 per cent of testees across the boards appear satisfied with the ability of the test to evaluate the testees' total and sub-skills of the English language. It largely

matches with their response to the class 12 tests being a confidence and proficiency booster. This view indirectly confirms the positivity of the test impact. However, only 50 per cent of the respondents from Board D and 60 per cent from Board B strongly agree with the statement and this percentage of agreement is lower than the range of agreement (75 to 85 per cent) offered by respondents from other boards. The difference signals some gap in the learners' understanding of the non-immediate test objectives. Twenty to 30 per cent of the total respondents do not consider the class 12 tests as a confidence and proficiency booster and their response calls for an analysis of the test design with necessary modifications.

According to the survey, 65 to 70 percent of the respondents show their confidence in the test design. They feel the test can bring out the degree of their flexibility in using LSRW. However, only 45 to 50 per cent of test-takers from Board E and Board A recognise a proportional link between their score in the class 12 test and their flexibility in using English contextually. Although the testees find that the test is an authentic representative of their language (English) skills in general, they are not sure if their test-scores (class 12) indicate their flexibility in using LSRW in English separately. Ten to 40 per cent of them, consequently, remain undecided. A sizeable section (20 per cent) do not agree that either the class 12 test (English) can judge their acquired language skills or the test can be a confidence-booster in using the language. Such responses could be converted to more positive ones by exposing them at school to frequent mock tests with special focus on language use.

Nearly 60 to 90 per cent of the testees emphatically accept the fact that the test they have taken at the class 12 (Board Examination) is a test of their ability to communicate with native speakers. The response is in tune with their acceptance of the test being a true mode of exhibiting their skills. However, 10 to 35 per cent of the test-takers do not perceive the correlation. One may note that while 45 per cent of the respondents of Board D and Board F agree with the statement, 55 per cent of them are either undecided or disagree with it. A large

number of respondents show disagreement with the statement and it seems for them that the test impact is limited to immediate placement of the testees to the next level. The complete negative response to the statement (i.e. the test is a true mode of exhibiting their skills) indicates that the test-takers need to see other effects of such tests beyond the placement of testees as a part of the teaching programme.

Fifty to 90 per cent of the respondents acknowledge that the test under consideration measures the degree of their command over English. A higher degree of command will prove the test-takers' effectiveness at using the language in their respective professional domains. The response matches with the testees' earlier positive attitudes to the test. Ten to 50 per cent of the respondents react negatively, indicating their inability to comprehend or to accept the far-reaching predictable effect of the test. They do not interpret a test score beyond placement. The larger sections of Board E (70 per cent) and Board F (60 per cent) reject the statement, showing their inability to accept the test as an indicator of greater benefits. It may require redesigning the test to make the test-takers realise the larger benefit of tests in English, i.e. examining the testees' ability to use the language in future professional contexts.

A large number of the respondents find a perfect co-relation between the difficulty level of the test items and the teaching inputs received in their classes (English). The response signals test-preparedness, ensures good scoring, is likely to familiarise the prospective testees with the unique features of the language, and thereby contributes in enhancing their proficiency level. However, a sizable group of 25 per cent to 35 per cent of respondents remain undecided. They do not seem to perceive any co-relation between items taught and the items tested. Such a response calls for the construction of tests, based on teaching-learning inputs; tests that help the learners and testees to understand that learning and testing are not isolated domains but are complementary to each other.

Sixty to 95 per cent of the respondents feel that the test does give the testees a good scope of exhibiting their knowledge of the target language, i.e. its structure and its use. It may be inferred that they have had sufficient practice and are aware of the area where they are likely to make errors. Such response reinforces their positive attitude to the test. However, five to 40 per cent of respondents do not share their opinion. They are either fuzzy about their knowledge of the language or they find that the test cannot bring out what they know about the language. The negative impact may indicate that the test does not select items to test the test-takers' knowledge but to test the memory of the testees.

While commenting on the test-impact, 65 to 85 per cent of the test-takers agree that the test proves to be a tool of identifying their strength and weakness in using English. Their positive response shows that the test is likely to distribute equal importance to the LSRW so that the testees identify their acquaintance with the language skills and sub-skills. Fifteen to 35 per cent of respondents offer negative responses, thus questioning the test impact. They may not find all the test items test their language skills in all the four domains equally.

Sixty to 95 per cent of test-takers feel the test checks their acquaintance with the syllabus and the response may reflect that the test is primarily based on the class 12 prescribed syllabus. The disagreement of five to 40 per cent may indicate that some testing items do not seem to have any direct co-relation with the prescribed syllabus but have been selected to test the test-takers' concept and knowledge of the general use of the language. While 40 per cent of testees from Board F accept the statement position, 60 per cent of them do not find their acquaintance with the syllabus being tested. They need to be made familiar with the primary and the secondary objectives of the test.

Thirty-five per cent of the respondents accept that the test and assessment have measured their learning retention indicating it may be a test

of memory. The response contradicts their view that the test is able to acquaint them with their strengths and weaknesses in using the language. The testees seem to be confused between their strengths and weaknesses as regards their ability to use the English language and their strong and weak memory of the classroom learning inputs. However, a noticeable section of ten to 45 per cent disagrees with the statement, suggesting that the items should be tested contextually. One may argue that most of the testees may have attended classes regularly and have sufficient practice in the parallel, mock-format of the application-based version in the board test paper. The format may have been imprinted in their memory. Consequently, they feel that the class 12 test and assessment measure the retention of their learning.

As a post-test effect, 65 to 95 per cent do not lose interest in English, proving the success of the test designer. Only five to 35 per cent claim to have lost interest, probably as a consequence of their poor score. Their response reinforces their discomfort with the test-items, selected from a domain outside the prescribed syllabus.

Sixty to 85 per cent of respondents do not consider the test as a realistic placement test but 15 to 45 per cent of the respondents do. Though the majority is benefited by the test, a sizable section does not appear to receive any rewarding effects from the test, which may require a deliberation on how to motivate the learners through tests. Seventy-five per cent of testees from Board D find the test a mere ritual, suggesting that Board D needs to make efforts to redesign the tests and make the testees clear about its objectives beyond mere scoring for higher placement.

Sixty-five to 100 per cent agree that the test is able to identify those areas of the test-takers' learning which call for improvement. The response seemingly refutes a part of the previous response. Some test-takers benefited by the test as they feel that the test scores can make them recognise their aptitude in language learning. However, these testees consider these tests as rituals because testing is a mandatory

component of the educational system and the test-format is stereotypical. Twenty to 35 per cent of respondents do not receive any guidance from the test as regards the improvement of their learning. Once again the larger impact of the test is missing.

More than half of the respondents do not feel that the test and assessment generate nervousness because they seem to be clear about the test objectives. Moreover, their preparedness has made them familiar with the test pattern. However, 20 to 55 per cent of the testees feel nervous while taking the tests and receiving the assessments, which may indicate their lack of confidence rather than any intrinsic shortcomings in the test. One may note that from Board E, 55 per cent feel nervous as regards the test and assessment in English and 45 per cent disagree with the statement. In Board F the response is equally divided (50 per cent each). The testees of these two boards need to be given more mock tests at the school level to combat the fear of tests in English. The test papers need to include test items well distributed in the scale of easy-moderate-difficult.

In response to the question regarding the test of different skills and sub-skills and the adequate marks allotment, more than 75 per cent of testees claim their listening skill is often tested and adequately assessed. It indirectly proves the presence of trained teachers who are formally taught how to test the listening skills of the learners of English. The response appears supportive of the presence of an infrastructure for testing listening skills in schools. Fifteen to 25 per cent of testees however disagree with the statement, which indirectly implies unsatisfactory testing and assessment of their listening skill. It could be due to inadequate infrastructure and untrained teachers in some institutions/schools. In this context, one may note that while 45 per cent of testees from Board C are happy with the test of their listening skills, 55 per cent find that this skill is neither adequately tested nor assessed. This response calls for a deliberation on the distribution of marks of the skills being tested by the board examination English test paper. More than 70 per cent of test-takers accept

that reading skills are adequately tested, and assessed. The allotment of marks to the questions testing reading skill is adequate. Nevertheless, five to 30 per cent of testees do not agree with the response and their position questions the level of the acquisition of their reading skill.

More than 55 per cent of respondents claim that their oral production is adequately tested and assessed but 30 to 45 per cent of them do not find their oral skill is adequately tested and assessed or the marks allotment to the questions testing oral skill is satisfactory. Seventy to 80 per cent of respondents acknowledge that their pronunciation is adequately tested and assessed. However, 20 to 30 per cent of testees do not approve of the test, assessment and marks allotment as regards their pronunciation in English. The gap between the positive and negative responses projects that the test of oral skill varies in school examinations across different educational boards. One may note that nearly 15 per cent of test takers from Board C positively respond to the test of oral production and pronunciation but the majority of them, i.e. 65 to 80 per cent, negatively respond. Such a response leaves considerable doubts as regards the focus and testing methodology of the oral skill in English. The test designers need to revisit the test objectives and the selection of test items to promote and assess oral proficiency in English.

More than 65 per cent of testees are happy with the test of grammar, perhaps because they scored well and gained confidence but ten to 35 per cent of them offer a negative response. It questions their ability to generate grammatically acceptable English sentences or their discomfort with some grammatical items or their confidence in using their grammatical skill.

More than half of the total test-takers are satisfied with the test and assessment of their knowledge of words and phrases in English but 20 to 45 per cent of testees disagree with the statement. The varied responses may indicate that a sizeable section expects isolated testing of the testees' vocabulary and probably does not understand that the test of vocabulary can be embedded in the test of other skills. It may be pointed out

while 45 per cent of testees from Board C appear satisfied with the test of vocabulary skills, 55 per cent of testees seem to be dissatisfied. It may indicate that the vocabulary test items in the test paper do not have an adequate marks distribution or there is no correlation between the teaching of vocabulary items and the testing of them.

The testing of writing skills is more frequent. Therefore, it is not surprising that nearly 81 per cent of the total respondents find the testing and assessment of writing skills in English in their respective board examinations quite satisfactory. However, 19 per cent of the testees express dissatisfaction, indicating that they are unable to relate their scores on the English test to their ability in writing. One may notice that as regards Board D and F the range of negative response is 30 to 45 per cent. It may reflect that these testees are not comfortable with free response questions. Perhaps they are more comfortable in writing those answers that they have learned through rote methods.

According to the survey, most of the testees are unaware of IELTS/TOEFL, as they do not plan to pursue higher studies abroad. However, 35 per cent, who are likely to be the above average group, have explored the eligibility conditions of studying in Europe and in the USA. The argument is supported by the total positive response to the statement that these tests are required for fulfilling the eligibility criteria of admission to any academic programme abroad.

Nearly 86 per cent of the survey respondents express a need for a pan-Indian English language proficiency test. They may be looking for a common assessment process of Indian students' proficiency in English. In fact, such a test is likely to dissolve board-specific parameters and to select its own test items and test designs. It would prepare students for any international proficiency test in English and assess the testees' proficiency in English in relation to international standards. However, 16.7 per cent do not approve of any pan-Indian English language proficiency test, probably because they are apprehensive of its difficulty level or they may not be quite willing to leave the familiar comfort zone of their

board examination. Since a sizeable section of the respondents feel that their respective board examination can be considered equivalent to IELTS/TOEFL, they do not require any pan-Indian common proficiency test. However, 73.3 per cent of the population do not find any match between the respective board examinations and IELTS/TOEFL. They seem to be more critical of the selection of test items and test design and the test purpose of the two proficiency tests concerned.

In Figure 1, the testees from the low to high achievers group have been placed according to their scores in English in the class 12 board examination. However, their class 12 board examination score does not explain the cause of the variation visible in their performance in the skill-based proficiency test. The performance in the listening skill test is mostly uniform and the score in the listening comprehension test is comparatively higher than the scores in the tests of other skills across the testees. It appears that the listening comprehension test and assessment done in the class have benefited them in learning the skill. It matches their response to Q1 in the learners' questionnaire.

The score in the oral production test shows the next best performance of the testees. All the groups have done reasonably well and show proficiency in speaking. The test-takers' good performance on the oral test is not surprising.

In an urban set up the test-takers often have to communicate in English and face a test of their skill, and gradually improve their performance. The difference between the scores in listening and speaking tests may indicate they are able listeners but they are hesitant speakers. Moreover, the listening comprehension test in the sample proficiency test paper is comparatively more guided than the speaking production test, where to answer the questions the testees require a perfect combination of facts, structural knowledge of the language, good pronunciation and self-confidence. However, the positive result of the test matches their responses regarding the test and assessment of the speaking skill through oral production.

There is a moderate performance in the written production and reading comprehension test. Developing their writing skill is the most difficult task and the test-takers do not seem to be very comfortable in combining content with vocabulary and structures of English fluently and accurately. The testees mostly follow the rote method in preparing selected topics and textual answers. Most of them rarely offer genuine free response to a topic. Outside the classroom, their reading and writing skills may be tested infrequently as compared to the tests of their speaking and listening skills, which are required frequently to communicate with others in a cosmopolitan urban area.

Class XII English scores
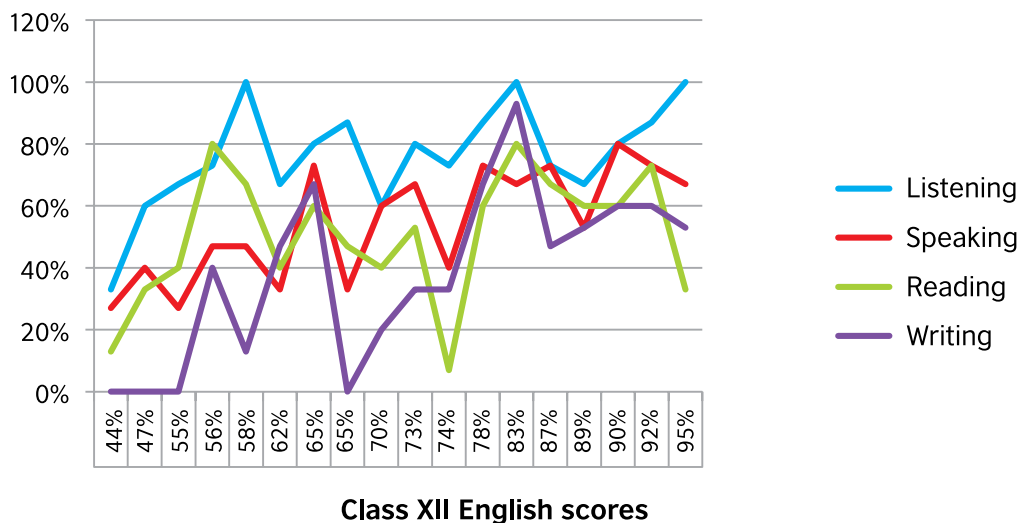
Figure 1: Scores in English in the class 12 Board examination

One may notice that the moderate to high achievers (i.e. those who have scored in English 50 to 80 per cent in class 12 board examination) have shown the most balanced performance in the proficiency test. However, the group of highest scorers have performed poorly in the reading comprehension and written production tests. Their board examination score in English may indicate their textual knowledge and not their mastery of the reading and writing skills in English.

5. Conclusion and suggestions

The result of the survey shows that the test-takers claim to have acquired a certain level of proficiency to become familiarised with the four skills in English in any given context and they believe test practice at the +2 level certifies their position. However, the study finds that there is a substantial gap between their belief and their performance. The study uncovered a wide range of issues concerning the existing testing practice of the +2 level across educational boards in India. The following suggestions are based on the major findings of the study.

a) workshop and training programmes for test designers and teachers on testing and assessment should be conducted so that there is a correlation between teaching-learning and testing of the four skills, and between board examination and school examinations

b) the test designers need to revisit test objectives and the selection of test items to promote and assess the ESL learners' proficiency in all the four language skills

c) representatives from all boards need to revisit the test objective and test design of the existing testing module and develop a uniform practice for testing and assessing Indian ESL learners' proficiency in English which matches international requirements

d) a detailed, descriptive assessment layout which explains the correlation between the test scores and the language performance of the test takers needs to be developed and made available to the test takers and the test designers.

References

Alderson, JC and Buck, G (1993) Standards in testing: a survey of the practice of UK Examination Boards in EFL testing. *Language Testing* 10(1), 1–26.

Alderson, JC, Clapham, C, and Wall, D (1995) *Language Test Construction and Evaluation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Bachman, LF and Palmer, AS (1996) *Language Testing in Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bachman, LF and Palmer, AS (2010) *Language Assessment in Practice: Developing Language Assessments and Justifying their Use in the Real World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

EALTA (n.d.) EALTA: Guidelines for Good Practice in Language Testing and Assessment. Resource Document. European Association of Language Testing and Assessment

Available at: www.ealta.eu.org/documents/archive/guidelines/English.pdf

Fulcher, G (2010) *Practical Language Testing*. London: Holder Education.

Fulcher, G and Davidson, F (2007) *Language Testing and Assessment: An Advanced Resource Book*. Oxon: Routledge.

Heaton, JB (1988) *Writing English Tests*. London: Longman.

Hughes, A (1989) *Testing for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kunnan, AJ (ed) (2000) *Fairness and Validation in Language Assessment*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Oller, J (1979) *Language Tests at School*. London: Longman.

Appendix: Survey results

Q1. The English language test at class 10/12 was a fair and accurate test of my English language skills (total and sub-skills).

Q2. The test score was directly proportional to the degree of my flexibility in using English.

Q3. The test boosted my confidence level or proficiency in using the language in non-exam/outside school contexts.

Q4. The test identifies my ability to communicate with native speakers of English.

Q5. The test identifies and ensures the usability of my command over English in your prospective specialised stream/professional domain.

Q6. The difficulty level of the test items matched the teaching input in my English classes at school/college.

Q7a. The class 10/12 test and Assessment in English showed what I know about the language.

Q7b. The class 10/12 test and Assessment in English acquainted me with my strengths and weaknesses in using the language.

Q7c. The class 10/12 test and Assessment in English showed my acquaintance with the syllabus.

Q7d. The class 10/12 test and Assessment in English measured my learning retention.

Q7e. The class 1012 test and Assessment in English made me lose interest in English.

Q7f. The class 10/12 test and Assessment in English appeared to be a 'ritual' of the curriculum.

Q7g. The class 10/12 test and Assessment in English provided me with information about which area to improve or learn better.

Q7h. The class 10/12 test and Assessment in English made me feel nervous.

Q8a. The following are often tested or assessed and adequate marks are allotted to each of them: listening comprehension.

Q8b. The following are often tested or assessed and adequate marks are allotted to each of them: reading comprehension.

Q8c. The following are often tested or assessed and adequate marks are allotted to each of them: oral production.

Q8d. The following are often tested or assessed and adequate marks are allotted to each of them: written production.

Q8e. The following are often tested or assessed and adequate marks are allotted for them: vocabulary.

Q8f. The following are often tested or assessed and adequate marks are allotted for them: pronunciation.

Q8g. The following are often tested or assessed and adequate marks are allotted for them: grammar.

Q9. Are you familiar with the names of any of the following tests? **IELTS-TOEFL**?

Q10. What is the purpose of these tests? (Tick the appropriate box)

For pursuing higher studies abroad in any discipline	
For passing Indian civil service examination	
For admission into different universities in India	
Don't Know	

Q11. Do you think the English language test at Class 10/12 can be considered equivalent to **/IELTS/ TOEFL**?

Q12. Do you think that there is requirement for a pan-India English language proficiency test?

2

Assessment practices in ELT: an exploratory study of the need for and design of a standardised framework in India

Kirti Kapur

1. Introduction

The present system of assessment and evaluation for school education in India is exam based. It focuses only on testing reading comprehension and writing tasks. Listening and speaking are neglected and their assessment is also ignored. The proposed project studied the English language testing and assessment processes in government and private schools in the National Capital Region (India) through classroom observation and analysis of the present assessment processes. The primary purpose of assessment is to improve children's learning to help them progress, leading to their overall development. Information about their learning gathered through assessment during teaching-learning also helps teachers to determine children's strengths and learning gaps. This data further serves to guide them in adapting the curriculum and teaching-learning approaches/methods to suit learners' needs.

There is a need to develop a common understanding so that teachers can use this information to make informed judgements according to their own contexts without compromising on procedural validity. Teacher autonomy and learner autonomy play a crucial role in the process of teaching and learning, which could help children acquire skills, positive attitudes and values and, above all, gain confidence.

It is therefore felt that there is not only a need for assessment literacy across the board, but that standardised tools by way of rubrics and checklists can help arrive at shared meanings of achievement and progress.

A well designed assessment enhances both teaching and learning experiences. It not only facilitates clear articulation of desired learning outcomes but enables learners to reflect on feedback and become co-creators of meaningful educational experiences. The following research will help articulate and recommend procedures for standardised assessment processes according to curricular expectations. It has also been identified that there is a need to develop common understanding so that teachers can use this information to make informed judgements according to their own contexts without compromising on procedural validity. The use of rubrics in the study emerges from the understanding that clarity of criteria used for assessment is powerful for testing both subject-specific and generic skills and knowledge. Instead of rote learning and recall, learners should ideally be assessed on the ability to analyse and synthesise inputs using diagnostic and

explanatory tools. While a 'checklist…provides an indication of whether a specific criterion, characteristic, or behaviour is present, a rubric provides a measure of quality of performance on the basis of established criteria. Rubrics were designed to assess listening, speaking, reading and writing skills according to focus of the activity. For example to assess the guided reading word play, comprehension, fluency, participation is criteria for assessment. Rubrics are often used with benchmarks or samples that serve as standards against which student performance is judged' (NCLRC, 2004:5). These tools also help focus on key organising principles such as content/language items, appropriateness of teaching strategy/method, the skill(s) being mapped and coherence in feedback for learners' self-improvement. Assessment is therefore an exercise in critical thinking and can help achieve a culture of excellence when implemented well.

In India, the National Curriculum Framework 2005 and the introduction of Continuous Comprehensive Education (CCE) led to a demand to identify and standardise learning levels for the purpose of constructive assessment. We are all aware that the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act, 2009) has been implemented since April 2010. The Act requires that CCE is be implemented for each child up to the completion of elementary schooling. In implementing CCE, the role of teachers becomes central to the entire process. Experience in the field and interaction with teachers helped identify that teachers are facing problems in the implementation of CCE. Teachers are largely engaged in compiling the data and keeping the records of children's test results rather than integrating assessment with the teaching-learning process as an essential component of CCE. They generally consider CCE an external activity, to be followed after the completion of a topic/lesson.

The RTE Act prohibits any public examination up to class 8 and the 'no detention' policy has to continue. It must be clear that implementing the non-detention policy should not lead to absence of teaching-learning in schools. On the contrary, CCE can be a powerful instrument in respecting the intent of RTE on the one hand and ensuring learning of all children on the other hand, as assessment during the teaching-learning process could provide necessary and timely feedback for further improvements. CCE in turn would encourage all to focus on a child's progress with her/his own performance over time.

There are misconceptions related to various terms used under the CCE scheme. 'Continuous' is generally considered by teachers as a regular conduct of 'tests'. Many schools conduct weekly tests in the name of continuous assessment in all subjects. 'Comprehensive' is considered as combining various aspects of a child's behaviour in isolation. Personal-social qualities (empathy, co-operation, self-discipline, taking initiatives etc.) are judged in isolation and are being graded on a four/five point scale, which appears impractical. Evaluation is reduced to a record-keeping exercise. As a result of this, teachers are highly confused and they complain about being engaged in compiling the assessment records/data of CCE during their teaching-learning time, resulting in the loss of time meant for 'actual' teaching-learning.

Parents are likely to be most interested in knowing how their child is '*doing*' in school, what she/he has learnt, how their child is performing and what the progress of their child is over a given period of time. More often than not, teachers feel they have communicated effectively through comments made to parents such as – 'can do better', 'good', 'poor', 'needs to put in more effort'. For a parent what do these statements mean? Do such statements provide any clear information of what their child can do or has learnt? In order to enrich the feedback being communicated, it is suggested that simple and easily understandable language is used with a focus on the strengths of the learner and work undertaken on learners' weak areas. What can the child do, what are the strengths of a child, e.g. oral communication, level of confidence, team-spirit, habit of sharing material/food, etc? What does a child like to or not like to do? Qualitative descriptions of activities and work observed would be useful because parents always like to see what their children do in the school.

While there are several research findings informing us about the role and importance of formative and summative assessment in teaching-learning e.g. Puppin (2007); Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick (2006); NCLRC (2004), it is important to study ongoing practices so as to identify gaps from stated and curricular aims. In *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research* Carr and Kemmis (1986) explain action research as improvement of '...practice, the understanding of practice and the situation in which the practice takes place' (Carr and Kemmis: 162). This is the very schema that has been applied to the following study on assessment practices in the English language classroom.

Language assessment from a structuralist approach is a fairly easy task, since it aims at testing correct use of grammar and lexical structures. From the constructivist perspective, the comfort of teaching and assessing objective and homogeneous linguistic contents is replaced by a wider spectrum of language teaching and assessing possibilities, whose key elements are collaboration, negotiation, needs, diversity and critiquing. Here, the primary purpose of assessment is to improve children's learning and to help them progress, leading to their overall development. Information about their learning gathered through assessment during teaching-learning helps teachers determine children's strengths and learning gaps. The data generated further serves as a guide in adapting the curriculum and teaching-learning approaches/methods suited to learners' needs: 'assessment is an integral component of a coherent educational experience' (James et al, 2000: 1).

The online teaching resources of Carnegie Mellon states: '...assessments, learning objectives, and instructional strategies [should] be aligned... Assessments should reveal how well students have learned what we want them to learn while instruction ensures that they learn it' (Section: teaching). However, the present system of assessment in schools across India is exam-based and focuses only on testing reading comprehension and writing tasks. Listening and speaking are neglected and their assessment is ignored. Research insights on enumerating and addressing these gaps in teaching, learning and assessment practices can help make assessment more consistent and meaningful in the Indian context. Popham (2009) calls assessment literacy 'a sine qua non for today's competent educator' (Popham:11).

2. Objectives of the study

- To document assessment techniques being practised in ELT classrooms in government run elementary schools (English and Hindi medium) in NCR, India.

- To document assessment techniques being practised in ELT classrooms in private elementary schools in NCR, India.

- To undertake a comparative study of the outcomes of assessment techniques practised in ELT classrooms in government run and private schools.

- To identify the contextual variations in recording and reporting of student progress and its impact on learners.

- To correlate learning levels and effectiveness of assessment techniques being adopted in ELT classrooms.

- To identify strategies that can be adopted in English language classrooms to promote integration of assessment with teaching methods i.e. formative assessment.

The research is based on my first-hand experience with teachers and learners. Assessment techniques at the elementary level in ELT classrooms of both government and private schools in NCR are exam oriented. Formative assessment techniques are not being practised in ELT classrooms in the NCR. Assessment processes are not used to identify learning levels of learners with an aim to modify teaching inputs. Recording and reporting are regarded as impediments to the teaching learning process. It is strongly felt that there is a need to invest in teacher-training programmes to encourage a standardised approach to assessment.

The study looked at a cross section of sub-populations comprising students, teachers and parents who are direct stakeholders in assessment processes in government run English and Hindi medium schools and private schools in the National Capital Region (India).

For the study, six schools were identified where FA1, FA2, SA1 and SA2 practices are being followed. Out of these six schools, three were government schools and three were private schools (the names of the schools have been withheld because confidentiality was a precondition for participation). FA1 is a formative assessment test. It is a kind of formal exam which consists only of a paper-and-pencil test. FA2 is similarly a formal exam comprising paper-and-pencil tests and is a part of formative assessment. SA1 is summative assessment, also known as half yearly exams. SA1 is practised as a paper-and-pencil test only and its practices remain the same. SA2 is summative assessment and in the traditional mode is practised as a final exam.

The schools were chosen keeping in view the following:
- the infrastructure was comparable
- teachers were qualified for the level they were teaching
- all the children had books
- they were following the same CCE model.

The *qualitative* study of the six schools was conducted in two phases.

In the first phase, overt observation was conducted with the use of a checklist to map assessment practices for reading, writing, speaking and listening and in-depth interviews with teachers on the rationale behind the adoption of assessment techniques currently in use and the outcomes they are trying to achieve. These were analysed to create the codes and interview schedules of phase 2.

In the second phase overt observation of altered feedback mechanisms through use of rubrics – oral and written – was also undertaken. Along with this, in-depth interviews of students and parents on how they interpret and use the feedback and in-depth interviews with teachers on perceived effectiveness of the processes were conducted.

The tools of the data collection (the Rubrics and Interview Schedules are included in the appendices to this report) were adapted from various sources keeping in mind the principles of language assessment proposed by Brown and Abeywickrama (2010), namely 'practicality, reliability, validity, authenticity and washback'. Henning (1982) too was referred to in order to identify constructs for studying the various tests being administered. The four categories thus identified were general examination characteristics, item characteristics, test validity concerns, and administrative and scoring issues.

In-depth interviews were designed keeping in mind what Biazquez (2007) states, 'teachers often reflect on their teaching, especially just before and after a class. Reflection is the first step in a systematic review of whether something that is going on in the classroom - an activity, additions to the syllabus, or assessment - works or not. That systematic review is classroom-based/action research' (Biazquez: 26). For parents, Muller's (2005) description of authentic assessment as 'a form of assessment in which students are asked to perform real-world tasks that demonstrate meaningful application of essential knowledge and skills' is proof of effective assessment. Students' responses also helped identify gaps in assessment such as measurement of only knowledge of facts, absence of reference to discussions in class and poor or no feedback leading to a breakdown of meaningful learning experience.

Since self-reflection is a critical part of assessment practice, all stakeholders were made aware of the objectives and rationale of the study prior to commencement. Participants were given the opportunity to self-select themselves to be part of the study so as to prevent absenteeism during the course of the study. Also, to increase the validity and reliability claims of the research observations a triangulation method of observation, participation and field notes was used.

3. Findings

In terms of general examination characteristics, it was found that both government and privately run schools largely follow paper-and-pencil testing methods for assessment. Marks-based assessment predominates and assessment for learning is not being practised. While privately run schools do adopt activity-based learning methods in some areas, in the government schools the focus is largely on rote learning. Further, formative assessment techniques are not being practised in their true spirit. The multi-ability approach to designing activities (i.e. using a variety of activities for learners at different levels) is missing. Listening and speaking skills are given less attention than reading and writing. In government schools there was little to no focus on listening skills and in privately owned schools there were some instances of assessing listening but only basic comprehension was tested. Further, speaking skills are not being assessed summatively in government schools whereas private schools did conduct activities involving narration of stories, debates, roleplay and event description. Across the board it was found that there is a stark absence of any common assessment criteria or rubric being used while assessing learners. Such assessment techniques and tools as observation, projects, portfolios, oral test, group work, pair work, etc are practised in privately run schools but are largely missing in government schools. Self-assessment is not a priority in either type of school.

Teachers face immense pressure to finish transacting the syllabus by a due date and assessments are considered end of term milestones as opposed to processes that lead to insights, reflection and feedback for self-development during the process of teaching and learning. Recording and reporting are mechanical activities rather than tools for creating learning situations that bridge gaps. Feedback is in the form of marks or monosyllabic right/wrong comments. Percentages of tests across a time frame are combined and so a kind of cumulative reporting takes place. In case of grades generic and frequently repeated remarks accompanied the letters A,B,C etc. It was observed that there

is clearly no mechanism to connect assessment with the process of learning. Teachers do not link assessment to achievement of curricular goals, identifying levels of learners or creating appropriate learning situations. As a result, learners and their parents are not able to use this reporting format in a constructive manner. At the end of phase 1, it was strongly identified that assessment literacy should become a mandatory component of teacher and educational stakeholder training. 'After dividing educators' measurement-related concerns into either classroom assessments or accountability assessments, it is argued that educators' inadequate knowledge in either of these arenas can cripple the quality of education' (Popham, 2009: 4).

In phase 2, parents too were interviewed and, even though socio-economic contexts and educational levels varied, parents did feel that grades and marks did not indicate the degree of real world application of the skills acquired. While better informed parents were able to distinguish that grading and scores are not the be all and end all of learning a language, for several others, marks were the only parameter through which they reviewed progress of their ward or the effectiveness of teachers. The top-down approach of assessment has clearly been naturalised. At the same time, there was realisation that knowing what the child has learnt and where she/he faced difficulty helps teachers as well because parents can take care of those aspects. Attributes such as willingness to cooperate and take group responsibility, sensitivity towards others, interests, etc manifest in group and pair work. When shared with both the learner and the parents, information about them could become an effective means for growth and learning.

After the introduction of rubrics, teachers generally agreed that this would make assessment processes easy and transparent but were reluctant to use them. Most teachers felt that it would increase their workload and that the school system is not as yet ready for such aspects. Unfortunately, finishing the syllabus and achieving learning outcomes seemed to be two distinct activities for them. A few teachers from private

institutions showed enthusiasm and felt that using rubrics is an innovative and effective tool to involve the learners. They felt that it worked as a part of formative assessment.

Teachers also felt that they could introduce more authentic tasks and even target a particular language item that the class may need encouragement in improving. They also felt that they were forced to articulate learning objectives more often and to examine which aspects had been covered or not. In their estimation, learners were also more proactive in sharing their assessment and were able to identify specific areas for improvement. Since the process was time intensive, teachers did express a need for change in syllabi and the re-designing of achievement levels and targets. Here, it is important to mention that teachers in privately run schools were more receptive towards testing rubrics and other forms of assessment as opposed to government run schools.

Another perceptible shift was in the teachers' acknowledgement that recording should bring out a comprehensive picture of children's development. Most teachers felt that a record of a child's progress in English should be maintained in a qualitative manner and not in quantitative terms only (marks). They felt that anecdotal records are better since it is likely to help parents understand how proficient the child is in speaking, reading, writing and understanding the language. In other words, the progress of the child needs to be reported to the parents in a way that it is easily understood by them.

As one of the stakeholders for children's education, it becomes important for the administrators to work in collaboration with students, teachers, parents and the community. A constructivist classroom requires a great deal of flexibility in terms of managing the syllabus, designing the activities and determining the manner in which they are undertaken. Therefore, teacher autonomy and learner autonomy play a crucial role in the entire process of teaching and learning. This would help children acquire skills, positive attitudes and values and above all to gain confidence.

As for learners, when teachers shared the learning space with them, they felt a sense of involvement in the whole process. They were able to connect better with activities and understand the guidance or instructions better. They even claimed to be able to evaluate their own progress and identify areas for improvement. For several learners, in private schools, being involved in their assessment process made them enjoy learning better. They reported that they do not like formal testing at all. In fact, there was greater preference for doing projects in a group or making portfolios.

It is therefore felt that there is not only a need for assessment literacy across the board, but that standardised tools by way of rubrics and checklists can help arrive at shared meanings of achievement and progress.

4. Researcher's note

The ethnographic design of the study i.e. 'introspection, observation, participant-observation *and* interviewing' (Saville Troike, 1989: 117-135) has played a huge role in my own journey as a researcher and academic. By conducting research in a natural setting I was able to use previous experiences and insights to establish a rapport and conduct the research. At the same time, the grounded theory approach also helped me be open minded and flexible in terms of incorporating feedback and reflections of the various stakeholders involved. Findings from the study will certainly inform facilitation of teacher training programmes, development of assessment packages and writing materials emerging from my own professional practice. I also recognise that personal endeavour is critical to institutional and policy level reform when it comes to assessment. The onus on teachers and parents is as much, if not more, in terms of redefining their own perspectives on the value of assessment practices. However, the biggest achievement of this study and others in the area of assessment literacy will be to contribute towards fostering a culture where self-assessment is seen as both an act of empowerment as well as integral aspect of teaching and learning. Data can trigger analysis but a culture of self-motivation is equally critical. Assessment literacy is an urgent

need of the hour. Teachers and teacher educators must develop '...an acute awareness of what we teach, how we teach, and why we teach' (Moore and Whitfield, 2008: 587).   In terms of outreach the reference framework resulting from this study, including the research design, has the potential to be used for further research across different states in the country. Findings can also be shared in national and international conferences and shared with teachers and teacher educators in workshops via teleconferencing, webinars and online forums.

References

Biázquez, B (2007) Reflection as a necessary condition for action research. *English Teaching Forum*, 45 (1), 26.

Carr, W and Kemmis, S (1986) *Becoming Critical: Education, Knowledge and Action Research*. Basingstoke: Falmer Press.

Brown, HD and Abeywickrama, P (2010) *Language Assessment Principles and Classroom Practices*. New York: Pearson

Dalton, J and Smith, D (1986) 'Extending Children's Special Abilities – Strategies for primary classrooms.' Available at www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au

David, JN and Macfarlane-Dick, D (2006) Formative assessment and self-regulated learning: A model and seven principles of good feedback practice. *Studies in Higher Education*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 04.2006.

Dunn, KE and Mulvenon, SW (2009) *Critical Review of Research on Formative Assessment: The Limited Scientific Evidence of the Impact of Formative Assessment in Education.* Arkansas: University of Arkansas.

Henning, G (1982) Twenty Common Testing Mistakes For EFL Teachers To Avoid. *English Teaching Forum* Volume 20: No. 3.

James, R, McInnis, C and Devlin, M (2002) *Assessing Learning in Australian Universities* Centre for the Study for Higher Education for the Australian Universities Teaching Committee Available at: www.cshe.unimelb.edu.au/assessinglearning

Mellon, C 'Teaching Excellence and Educational Innovation' from *Eberly Center Blackboard* Available at www.cmu.edu

Moore, J and Whitfield, VF (2008) Musing: A way to inform and inspire pedagogy through self-reflection. *The Reading Teacher 61* (7). pp566-8.

Mueller, J (2005). Authentic Assessment Toolbox. *Journal of Online Learning and Teaching* Volume 1: Number 1.

National Capital Language Resource Center (NCLRC) (2004) Assessing learning: Alternative assessment. *The Essentials of Language Teaching* Available at www.nclrc.org/essentials/assessing/alternative.htm

Popham, WJ (2009) *Assessment Literacy for Teachers: Faddish or Fundamental? Theory Into Practice*. Ohio State University: Ohio.

Puppin, L (2007) A paradigm shift: From Paper-and-Pencil tests to Performance-based Assessment *English Teaching Forum.* 45: 4.

Savile-Troike, M (1989) *The Ethnography of Communication: An Introduction*. Blackwell: Oxford.

Shaw, SD and Weir, CJ (2007) *Studies in Language Testing, Examining Writing Examining Writing: Research and Practice in Assessment*. Cambridge: University of Cambridge.

2. Sources of rubrics

Assessing guided reading	Stewart, Angie. 'Free Rubric for Assessing Students in Guided Reading.' *Teaching Idea*s www.pinterest.com/pin/134545107590521347/
Assessing reading comprehension	www.digitallearningforallnow.com
Assessing independent reading	K-12 Reading Rubric Pack Sample from www.getworksheets.com
Assessing listening skills	www.slideshare.net/lavillal/rubrics-presentation
Assessing speaking tasks	www.mextesol.net
Assessing speaking tasks	www.slideshare.net/lavillal/rubrics-presentation
Assessing writing tasks	http://ronhoutman.com/2014/02/rubrics-help-your-learners-build-speaking-and-presentation-skills/
Self-assessment	http://ronhoutman.com/2014/02/rubrics-help-your-learners-build-speaking-and-presentation-skills/

All sources retrieved 8 May, 2015

Appendix

1a: Interview schedule (Teachers on assessment)

- How do you assess your learners?
- Have you heard of formative and summative assessment? If yes, could you explain the difference between the two? If no, may I explain the same?
- Why do you think formative assessment is also known as 'assessment for learning'?
- Why do you think summative assessment also known as 'assessment of learning'?
- Are formative and summative assessment a part of CCE? What is continuous and what is comprehensive?
- How relevant do you think assessment is to teaching per se? Why?
- Which techniques and tools do you use to assess your learners?
- How do you record the performance of your learners?
- How do you report the performance of your learners?
- Is there any washback mechanism?
- Do the existing assessment techniques give you insights for your own teaching strategies?

1b: Interview schedule (Parents on altered assessment)

- How is the current system of recording as opposed to the previous one?
- Does this seem more beneficial to you and/or your child(ren)?
- Are you now able to ascertain your child's performance?
- What form of reporting is most beneficial to you - marks, grades or anecdotal records?
- What form of assessment and reporting would you prefer?

1c: Interview schedule (Students on altered assessment)

- Which is your favourite activity in an English language class?
- Does the teacher share why she is doing that particular or any other activity with you?
- What are the different kind of tests that you write all year round – weekly, monthly, half-yearly, final, surprise tests etc?
- Do you get any project or portfolio work to do?
- What aspects do you enjoy of these? If not, then why not?
- Did your teacher share the rubrics with you this time? How did you find them?
- Were they useful? Why or why not?

1d: Interview schedule (Teachers on altered assessment)

- How easy or difficult was it to transact the rubrics?

- Were you able to diversify the kind of activities or assignments that you conducted?

- Will you be able to adapt or adopt any of these long term for your classes?

- What were the merits/demerits of using these tools as opposed to traditional testing techniques?

- Were the learners more involved in their own progress through the activity after you shared the rubric with them?

- Do you think learners can be equipped to self-assess using these rubrics?

- Will incorporation of rubrics in your assessment repertoire increase or decrease your overall teaching burden?

- How does use of rubrics impact recordings?

3

Teacher written feedback on ESL learners' writing in vernacular medium schools in West Bengal: an exploratory study

Kuheli Mukherjee and Kalyan Chattopadhyay

Teacher written feedback on young learners' writing at the school level has remained an unexplored area compared to teacher-written feedback on students' writing at the tertiary level. In this study we investigated how far ESL teachers' written feedback practices in vernacular secondary schools in West Bengal corroborated their beliefs and concepts about appropriate feedback in the second language writing classroom. Data was collected from questionnaires for teachers (n=52) and students (n=60), interviews with practising teachers (n=6) and samples of teacher written feedback. Teachers spoke of how they provided feedback while coping with the constraints of time, syllabus and large class size. Student data reveal students' expectations from their teachers' written feedback and their response to such feedback. Our findings suggest certain mismatches between teachers' beliefs and their feedback practices, and what would be the most appropriate feedback practice in similar contexts to help learners develop their writing skill.

1. Background description

1.1. Context

The importance of teacher-written feedback on students' writing in the process approach is a much-debated and explored area in ESL

writing research. However, with the exception of a few (Farneaux, Paran, Fairfax, 2007; Lee, 2008), most of these studies investigate teacher written feedback at the tertiary level (Ferris, Liu, Sinha, Senna, 2013; Bitchener and Knoch, 2010; Bitchener, 2008; Truscott, 1996; Saito, 1994; Ferris, 1993). Scant attention has been paid to written feedback on young learners' writing. Research from India also has focused mostly on written feedback at the tertiary level (Dheram, 1995; Barik, 2011). Little is known about how teachers in state-run vernacular schools in India in general and in the state of West Bengal in particular give written feedback on ESL learners' (14-16 years) writing and how learners respond to their practices. We as teachers and researchers working in the school contexts in West Bengal became interested in exploring these issues in depth, and hence we applied for an ELTReP research grant to investigate these areas.

1.2. Previous research

1.2.1. Trends in research on feedback
Written feedback refers to teachers' written comments (whether marginal or exhaustive) as well as error identification on students' written work provided to help students improve their writing (Saito, 1994). Both 'supportive and corrective' feedback scaffold students' language development (Mahboob and Devrim, 2013:102).

Research has mainly focused on two issues – the approaches of teacher written feedback and the type and extent of such feedback.

Before the advent of process based writing instruction teacher feedback focused on correcting errors (Zamel, 1985; Lalande, 1982). A shift in the approach came when feedback focused on issues such as content and organisation of writing also (Saito, 1994; Ferris, 1995; Lee, 2007). Truscott (1999) found error correction not only useless in improving student writing but also harmful as it diverted attention from other productive aspects of writing. Ferris (1999) argued in favour of selective error correction as an effective feedback technique. Her study (2006) claimed that accuracy in writing continued to matter in the academic and professional world and obvious errors might stigmatise an L2 writer in certain contexts. There has been no conclusive evidence so far to resolve this debate.

1.2.2. Types of feedback
A substantial amount of research on written feedback focused on types and extent of error. Researchers mentioned direct and indirect corrective feedback (Ellis, 2009; Bitchener and Knoch, 2009) in writing. In direct corrective feedback, the teacher either provided the correct linguistic form or structure near the error or gave a written explanation about the nature of a particular error at the end of a student script. Indirect corrective feedback, on the other hand, just indicated the error without providing the correct form. It included underlining or circling the error, recording the number of errors in the margin and using codes to locate and typify the error (Bitchener, 2008). Direct feedback was used on errors which were complicated and beyond learners' ability to self-correct whereas teachers used indirect feedback to engage students in problem solving and developing editing skills (Lee, 2008). Adding to this debate, Mahboob and Devrim (2013) mentioned four types of corrective feedback based on two criteria, the degree of explicitness and the amount of rationale provided. The more explicit feedback provided fewer options for revision whereas less explicit feedback offered a range of options for revision.

Direct feedback, considered more beneficial, reduced the chance of confusion by providing concrete information regarding the error (Bitchener and Knoch, 2008). Direct and explicit feedback, described as 'hand holding' (Mahboob and Devrim, 2013), would work best with low-level learners because 'low explicit feedback without rationale' could be effective only with learners having sufficient knowledge in the language to identify errors and correct them in revision (Mahboob and Devrim, ibid: 111-112). Bitchener, Young and Cameron (2005) found that providing oral metalinguistic explanation along with direct written feedback might be crucial in reducing student errors in writing. So teachers could feel free to use a combination of error feedback strategies keeping in view the immediate context of use (Ferris, 2006).

1.2.3. Focus of feedback
Ellis (2009) mentioned focused and unfocused feedback strategies. Selective error correction rather than correcting all errors (Lee, 2008; Ellis, 2009) and written and focused feedback provided for specific error types were found to be more effective than comprehensive commentary on errors in general (Ferris, Liu, Sinha and Senna, 2013; Saito, 1994). Unfocused corrective feedback, though not effective in the short term, might be more effective in the long run (Ellis, 2009).

However, focus on grammatical errors only could make students believe in the importance of formal accuracy over 'transmission of meaning, overall organisation and content development' (Lee 2005: 2). Research found evidence that feedback on content and organisation helped in improving student writing (Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Diab, 2006). However, ESL teachers' feedback on content often tended to be vague and contradictory, resulting in student revision showing scant attention to the comments (Sugita, 2006). Recent studies (Ferris, Liu, Sinha and Senna, 2013, Hyland and Hyland, 2006) suggest a balanced coverage in written feedback addressing issues of content, structure, organisation, language and style.

1.2.4. Role of students in shaping feedback

Students' response to teacher-written feedback is found to be context-driven and culturally mediated. Hence, teachers in different contexts also respond to students' writing differently. In some contexts students expect teachers to notice and comment on their errors (Ferris et al., 2000; Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, 1994) to help them improve language accuracy. In such contexts good writing would be error free and teachers would be expected to correct all errors (Diab, 2006). In some other contexts teacher feedback was interpreted as denial of students' voice and imposition of teachers' requirements to produce texts. While research evidence from multi-draft classrooms revealed students making effort to redraft incorporating feedback points to improve writing (Diab, 2005), in other contexts students paid less attention to redrafting. Teachers' beliefs also played an important role in shaping their practice as teachers constructed their own theories of effective teaching (Lee, 2009).

This study attempted to investigate how teachers are dealing with these issues while giving feedback to student writing in the West Bengali school context and how students perceive feedback.

2. Statement of topic and research questions

Initially the study was entitled: 'The effect of teacher written feedback on ESL learners' (14-16 years) writing skill development in state run vernacular schools of West Bengal'. However it was changed into 'Teacher written feedback on ESL learners' (14-16 years) writing in vernacular medium schools in West Bengal: an exploratory study' in keeping with the focus of our study.

The research questions guiding the study were:
- What are the teachers' latest practices of giving feedback to young learners' writing?

- What are their beliefs and assumptions behind such practices?

- How do learners perceive and respond to such practices?

3. Research methods

3.1. Procedure

A survey mode of research (Brown and Rogers, 2002) including interviews and questionnaires was used because mixed methods research using both quantitative and qualitative data provided a stronger understanding of the research problem than either of the methods alone (Creswell, 2014). Using convergent mixed method design, we would 'first report quantitative statistical results and then discuss the qualitative findings that either confirm or disconfirm statistical results' (Creswell ibid: 273). So triangulation was another key reason for interviewing teachers who responded to the questionnaire.

3.1.1. Quantitative data

The questionnaire was developed and piloted with five teachers. After incorporating the required changes, it was administered to 82 teachers. Fifty-two responses were received. Another questionnaire was developed and translated in Bengali to obtain student responses regarding the feedback practice of their teachers. Sixty students responded to this questionnaire.

3.1.2. Qualitative data

At the piloting stage 15 practising teachers took part in semi-structured interviews (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). Since not all the interviews yielded useful data to address our research questions, six interviews were selected on the basis of data useful for our study. Samples of written feedback were collected from student copies. The interviews were recorded, transcribed and later codified according to the main issues. The samples of written feedback were analysed to investigate how far teachers' practice corroborated their beliefs and concepts about appropriate feedback.

3.2. Participants

Fifty-two teachers of ESL and 60 students of class 9 from state run vernacular medium schools in Kolkata and neighbouring districts of Hooghly, North 24 Parganas, South 24 Parganas, and Howrah participated in the study.

3.3. Limitations

Access to feedback samples was too limited to generalise conclusions and the study could not take into account students' written revisions as the available samples contained no such writing. Second, the scope of the research was too broad and a case study approach would have been better to investigate the issues in depth.

4. Findings

Almost all the teacher respondents taught in large classes with more than 60 students. The time devoted for writing instruction varied from six hours a week to only once a week.

4.1. Current feedback practices

4.1.1. Frequency of giving feedback

All teacher respondents gave comments on students' writing. However, 38.5 per cent of them claimed to always give feedback. Only 14 per cent of respondents admitted providing feedback sometimes. Teacher interviewees said that they always gave feedback to student writings. However, the students' response revealed that most of their teachers only sometimes gave feedback.

4.1.2. Type of feedback provided

a. Written as well as oral feedback

More than 90 per cent of respondents claimed to give feedback on their students' writing both orally and in writing. None of our respondents provided feedback electronically. The interviewees also used written and oral feedback simultaneously on students' writing. Teachers, claiming to use written comments all the time, gave varied reasons for using oral feedback simultaneously. Nandana said:

Mostly, I give them written feedback … but … there are many cases when they fail to understand what I have written … So I talk to them personally, or I talk in class.

(IntN/July'15)

Oral feedback in class was considered effective especially in large classes as Sulogna said:

There are some common mistakes that out of a class of fifty students thirty-five have made … In that, I give a general instruction to open your copies and see that most of you have made this mistake. In the next writing skill please don't do it.

(IntS/July'15)

Monish said that he used face-to-face talk where he might use mother tongue. He said:

'they cannot express themselves in writing in their own language, so I have to discuss with them directly what is their fault, what is their mistake'.

Ariful preferred writing conference or one-to-one talk, as it gave individual attention. However, Atari never used writing conference as many of her students lacked the basic vocabulary to carry on conversation without her help. Face-to-face talk in class was less challenging for her students.

Teachers often used face-to-face talk in class in addition to written comments as Sulogna said:

… when I am distributing their copies I call each of them… especially the girls who have made more mistakes … so I just call them and show them that this is something that I do not want to see repeated in the next writing, so you must be conscious of what you are doing …

(IntS/July'15)

The students' responses revealed that the most frequently used mode of feedback by their teachers was oral feedback in class although only 35 per cent of student respondents expressed a preference for oral feedback.

b. Direct feedback with explanation

Eighty per cent of our respondents gave feedback to provide correction with explanation while 57 per cent also used hints about mistakes. Only four per cent gave feedback without explanation. Nine out of 51 participants gave feedback with multiple options for revision. Although the quantitative data showed that most of the participants practised leaving hints for students to identify errors the interview data revealed a contrary practice. All six interviewees considered that their students needed direct pointing out of errors.

Sulogna said, 'There are just a handful of students who can pick up the hints, but most of the students need detailed descriptions'. The rationale for using direct feedback basically concerned one issue – the language proficiency of students.

Addressing the same issue Atari said that most of her students' errors had grammatical issues and merely mentioning an error type might not help students correct them. She mentioned the error type on the blackboard, and usually wrote the correct sentence directly in students' copies. Atari repeatedly mentioned her students' lack of proficiency in English as the cause for explicit feedback. According to Monish, 'They cannot understand the hints ....because they are first generation learners'. Dharani echoed Monish's view when he said:

...my students...they are coming from very backward families and they are first generation learners, so hints they can't follow. I give in writing in their writing skill copies and I tell them face to face.

(IntD/July'15)

Around 25 per cent of teacher participants corrected students' errors directly while the rest did it quite often. Only one out of 50 teachers said that she directly corrected student errors only once in a while. The interview data revealed varied practice in this issue. Seventy per cent of the participants addressed some issues and 30 per cent claimed to address all issues in students' writing. With the exception of very few, student respondents also showed preference for direct feedback with an explicit rationale. Only one student preferred implicit feedback without a rationale.

c. Generic versus specific feedback
The majority of the respondents to our questionnaire used general comments like 'try to improve', 'very good', 'take care of grammar and spelling' or 'you can write better' while 26 per cent claimed to use specific comments like 'this is not the right expression here'. The interview data however showed teachers giving more specific comments regarding errors or other aspects of writing like content, organisation and lexis.

Sulogna said:

In class 9 standard the focus is on the format. The format carries marks for them since they will go and sit for a board exam. Next is whether they have dealt with all of the points that have been given in the question because this increases their number of marks. The next thing is the construction of the sentences. Maybe they have written some extra points and whether they are relevant to the passage or not. And also grammatical mistakes and spelling mistakes ... Those are the general lines that I deal with.

(IntS/July'15)

Students showed a preference for comments on content and organisation of writing.

4.1.3. Varying feedback techniques
The participating teachers practised varied feedback techniques. Highlighting or underlining errors was the commonest practice followed by pointing out grammatical issues. Thirty-five per cent of the respondents used marginal comments while 43 per cent directly corrected student errors. Very few participating teachers used conferencing as a method of feedback while 36 per cent asked for clarification from students as a method of feedback. Sulogna said:

I make comments. I mark very distinctly the portions where they have made spelling mistakes, grammatical mistakes. They know by symbol that this is a spelling mistake, and this underline is a grammatical mistake. I also make comments that this portion is irrelevant. This is extra. Do not add this, or you have exceeded the number of words....

(IntS/July'15)

The students' response about the type of feedback received from teachers corroborated what the teachers said. It seemed that teachers focused on correcting errors though their approaches varied.

4.1.4. Following up on feedback
Most of the teacher respondents asked their students to revise their drafts. However 21 out of 38 respondents said that their students submit only one draft; 13 teachers received two drafts

and only one teacher received three drafts from students. Four teachers said that their students submit four drafts based on their feedback. The qualitative data, however, revealed a different picture. Monish's students never submitted revised drafts. Nandana said:

Normally, they do not submit more than one draft. Those who are overly enthusiastic, they submit ... I try my best so that they submit more than one draft ...

(IntN/July'15)

Sulogna however, seemed more successful when she said:

Yes, they immediately write a second draft and give it back to me ... [Do all of them do that?] No, not all. There are always some girls who are either lazy or not interested. Apart from that most will redo it and give it to me ...

(IntS/July'15)

Ariful was only partially successful as he said:

Some exceptional students they submit the draft regularly, but most of them don't ... [How do you follow up on it?] In my next class, I always try to remind them that I have given a re-do work. Please submit it. And I find that the students who are interested in the subject will always do it.

(IntAr/July'15)

Atari had her own way of motivating students to redraft as she said:

'In my follow up, I make group work. My students who can write the second draft, they will help the backward students'.

Participating teachers' beliefs and assumptions were found to play the most important role in shaping these feedback practices.

4.2. Beliefs underlying feedback practices

4.2.1. Purpose

More than 80 per cent of responding teachers believed in giving feedback to provide corrections with explanations and suggest ways to fix problems. Few believed in providing multiple options for revision in their comments. This data is corroborated by the qualitative data. Ariful said that he gave feedback for general improvement of his students. Dharani said :

... I should give feedback to my students because they won't know their faults. To rectify their faults.. to correct that mistake so that next time for the exam purpose for their use, for their learning purpose, they will learn it correctly.

(IntD/July'15)

Nandana's rationale was, 'so that they can correct their mistakes and give me a better writing next time'. Monish however believed that he gave feedback to 'encourage them and to make them interested'. Teachers' belief about error correction as the purpose of feedback is also reflected in their belief about what constituted effective feedback for their writing students.

4.2.2. Effective feedback

Seventy-five per cent of teacher respondents believed face-to-face talk to be the most effective feedback type. The qualitative data, however, revealed a slightly more complex picture. Three interviewees said that though they believed in the efficacy of written feedback they used face-to-face talk more in order to cope with contextual factors like large class size, time constraints, pressure of the syllabus and learners' poor language proficiency.

Our teacher participants thought that appropriate feedback should encourage individuality and creativity. The question remained whether face to face talk, as described by our interviewees, would encourage individuality and creativity. All the interviewees emphasised individual attention to make their feedback effective for students. Sulogna said:

There are different types of persons in the class... some are very extrovert, some are very outspoken. For each group we have to deal with differently. There are some girls that never respond in the class. I have to call them, make them stand up, bring them to my desk. There are some girls that I

know will not submit their writing properly. I have to be alert to make sure that they submit their work.

(IntS/July'15)

Asked why he used different techniques with different students Dharani said:

Average students, they are in the same category, but one, two students I find that if I can give them more impact they are capable of taking that.

(IntD/July'15)

Expressing the same belief Atari said:

I have to select my feedback according to the level of the students. Their level means their mental level, their maturity level, their emotional level, their psychological level— all these levels are in my mind when I give feedback to the students.

(IntA/July'15)

A mismatch was detected between teachers' belief about 'identifying all errors' as appropriate feedback and their real practice. Although quantitative data showed teachers' belief in indirect feedback to enable students to identify errors the interviewees believed direct feedback to be more fruitful. Sulogna, the only teacher using hints said:

Because I have been working with them for a long time….they know that if I have made a circle that is a spelling mistake. Sometimes if I have made a question mark also it means I cannot understand this portion.

(IntS/July'15)

Notably she also needed to explain her codes orally again sometimes. The other interviewees' belief about the poor language level of students acting as a deterrent to the use of hints resulted in exhaustive use of direct feedback and 'reformulation' at times. However Atari's practice of crossing out learners' wrong sentences to write the right structure on the board corroborated 28 per cent respondents' belief in 'crossing out or rewriting student text' as appropriate feedback.

4.2.3. Impact of teachers' feedback

Quantitative data found the majority of the teacher respondents believing that their feedback helped students to improve their writing technique, ability to reflect on their writing and self-evaluation. The interview data however showed teachers expressing doubts about the impact of their feedback in improving students' writing. Expressing this doubt Dharani said that in spite of several reminders about their errors 'after a few days they forget and do the same mistake again'. He believed that students' reluctance to focus on developing writing was the reason behind this situation. Nandana, Monish and Ariful also failed to have the desired impact on student writing because students did not pay heed to the feedback even though it addressed the learners' need. However, when asked whether teacher training on how to provide effective feedback might help him Monish said, 'No' even though he was not happy with the impact of his feedback. Other teachers also informed that existing in-service training said nothing about feedback on writing.

4.3. Teachers' belief versus students' perception of feedback

Contrary to the questionnaire respondents' belief in students' preference for written comments over oral feedback, the teachers interviewed firmly believed that their students preferred oral modes of feedback. The student respondents' preference concurred with the interviewees' belief. The students' responses revealed that their teachers used face-to-face talk most in writing classes. Atari believed, 'face-to-face talk is more effective because they also can follow my body language, my gestures'. Dharani said:

I give them face-to-face feedback … the corrections that I think will be more fruitful to them because they do not open their copies when they go back to see what the teacher has written …

(IntD/July'15)

Most of the teacher respondents believed that students preferred feedback on grammatical issues. However, 69 per cent felt that students also preferred feedback on content. Forty-two per

cent of teachers thought that students preferred feedback on organisation while 49 per cent thought students preferred feedback on word choice. Only 19 per cent of teachers thought that students preferred feedback on the purpose of writing. The data collected from students showed that feedback on content topped students' preference list followed by feedback on organisation. Only ten per cent of student participants preferred feedback on grammatical issues. Thirty-seven out of 44 teachers believed that students preferred explicit feedback with rationale provided. The students' responses corroborated this data. The sample feedback collected revealed specific and detailed feedback though the rationale was not explicitly given all the time.

Both quantitative and qualitative data reported student reluctance to revise and redraft. Monish believed that his students were reluctant to submit revised drafts because 'there is…. pressure. They have to do project work. They cannot get much time'. According to Ariful: 'Some exceptional students… they submit the draft regularly, but most of them don't'. He further mentioned that perhaps his students took personal help at home and hence did not pay heed to his instruction. However, student respondents said that they always followed teachers' instructions and revised their drafts and improved their writing by incorporating the feedback comments of teachers. The sample feedback copies of students however had no revised drafts.

5. Discussion and reflection

The findings of this research exemplify some general trends seen across teachers' practices of giving feedback and of students' responses.

Frequency and type of teacher written feedback

Our findings suggest that most of the teachers of ESL students (14-16 years) provided feedback on student writing although their frequency varied, and the most frequently used form of feedback was oral feedback. The teachers who believed written feedback to be most effective used oral feedback simultaneously to cope with learners'

low language proficiency and constraints of time, syllabus and large class size. Acknowledging the importance of individual attention they tried to cope with reality by using oral feedback on common errors that might prove crucial in reducing errors (Bitchener, 2008). Teachers rarely used indirect feedback as low proficiency students were unable to identify and correct even marked errors (Hyland and Hyland, 2006). In view of ESL students' language level in West Bengal, teachers seemed to employ the right approach (Abdullah and Sidek, 2014) in using direct corrective feedback on students' writing. However, this study could find no conclusive evidence whether all teachers in West Bengal provided enough and effective (Myles, 2002) feedback on errors. The samples of feedback revealed great variety in the amount as well as in the focus of written feedback. Teachers' repeated references to time constraints and other limitations reflected the practical problems of providing detailed feedback to a large number of L2 students on a regular basis. Teachers' reluctance to build a revision phase (Lee, 2005) into the instructional cycle to make use of error correction, related to grammar, cohesion or content reduced the effectiveness of their approaches.

Revision and process based approach

Despite teachers' repeated advice only a few students submitted a revised draft incorporating corrections based on teacher feedback. Instead of building a revision phase into the instructional cycle teachers expected that in the next piece of writing students would not repeat the same type of mistakes. The sample writings with teacher written feedback, however, bore no such evidence. It might explain why teachers in the West Bengal context were not confident about the impact of their written feedback. The practice raises questions about how the process based approach is implemented in writing classrooms in West Bengal.

The study could not ascertain whether feedback focused on various aspects of writing, rather than on correction of errors, could be more effective in developing West Bengali students'

writing skill. Teachers' comments at times were not always focused and provided no scaffolding for students to improve their writing. Hence the training of teachers in formulating appropriate feedback is the need of the hour. Teachers might be introduced to approaches in which only the revised draft is given a mark. Students would be given marks for the degree of improvement between the first draft and subsequent drafts; the prevailing continuous comprehensive evaluation would provide the opportunity to teachers to introduce such a revision phase in the instructional cycle.

Teachers' beliefs and assumptions behind feedback practices

There seemed to be a mismatch between teachers' belief and teachers' practice so far as feedback was concerned. Responses to the questionnaire showed belief in the efficacy of indirect feedback but teachers' practice told a different tale. Moreover, though they believed that their feedback suited their learners' needs none of the participants expressed satisfaction with the impact of their feedback on developing student writing. Teachers believed that their feedback attempted to enable students to improve their writing in general. However their practice always emphasised correcting errors. Teachers believed in encouraging individuality and creativity. However, their practice of oral feedback in class had little scope for translating their belief into practice. Teachers' complacency about their own feedback approaches brought out two facts – lack of professional awareness and lack of faith in existing training to help them improve.

Teachers' assumptions about what students expected from their feedback, however, was found to be true as students' responses revealed their preference for direct corrective feedback. Contextual factors such as the number of students, their socio-economic background, and student motivation for improving writing have influenced the shaping of our teachers' beliefs. A number of participants mentioned that motivated students aspiring for higher education or professional careers tended to submit revised drafts whereas students just aiming to pass

out of school somehow did not care to revise and redraft. Case studies on teacher cognition and formulation of feedback might enlighten us further about the issue.

Students' perception of teacher written feedback

Our study showed clear evidence of students' preference for readymade feedback. The pivotal role of context (Lee, 2008) was evident when students contradicted the view that their teachers always gave feedback. Most of the student participants' preference for feedback on grammatical errors might point to a socio-cultural context where lack of accuracy stigmatised a student. Written work, however rich in content and organisation, might not be assessed as good if there were grammatical errors. Secondly, the participating students seemed to expect feedback that would be too directive (Hyland and Hyland, 2006). Teachers' feedback also rarely provided options. The situation might be explained with reference to the conventional classroom set ups in West Bengal where learner centred teaching has just been initiated.

6. Conclusion

The study, though small scale, has several implications for similar contexts. It suggested that teachers should be consistent in providing written feedback that was clear, focused and applicable and did not just consist of vague comments or praise (Linderman, 2001). Next, selective error correction along with comments on content, organisation and language might be the most effective approach keeping in view the contextual demand for error-free writing. Third, writing lessons should be planned in a way that would have a built-in cycle of revision and redraft. Fourth, sufficient time needs to be allotted for writing instruction so that teachers are not constrained by time. Last but not least, appropriate in-service training has to be arranged to enable teachers to make effective use of feedback to improve students' writings. Further research involving case studies on the impact of teacher written feedback in similar contexts would be useful to reveal how teachers could provide the most effective feedback in such contexts.

References

Abdullah, H and Sidek, HM (2012) L2 writing feedback: Alignment of instructional planning and implementation. *English Language Teacher Education and Development (*ELTED*) Journal* 15: 15-24.

Barik, NK (2011) *The Effects of Teachers' Feedback on ESL Writing at the Higher Secondary Leve*l. Hyderabad. EFLU.

Bitchener, J and Knoch, U (2009) The value of a focused approach to written corrective feedback. *English Language Teaching Journal* 63 (3): 204-211.

Bitchener, J (2008) Evidence in support of written corrective feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 17: 102-118.

Bitchener, J and Knoch, U (2008) The value of written corrective feedback for migrant and international students. *Language Teaching Research* 12: 409 - 431.

Bitchener, J, Young, S and Cameron, D (2005) The effect of different types of corrective feedback on ESL student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 14: 191-205.

Brown, JD and Rodgers, TS (2002) *Doing Second Language Research*. Oxford: OUP.

Cohen, L, Manion, L, Morrison, K (2007) *Research Methods in Education*. London: Routledge.

Creswell, JW (2014) *Research Design: qualitative, quantitative and mix methods approaches*. New Delhi: Sage Publication.

Diab, RL (2006) Error correction and feedback in the EFL writing classroom: comparing instructors and student preferences. *English Teaching Forum* 3:2-14.

Diab, RL (2005) EFL University Students' Preferences for Error Correction and Teacher Feedback on Writing. *TESL Reporter* 38 (1): 27-51.

Dheram, PK (1995) Feedback as a two bullock cart: a case study of teaching writing. *English Language Teaching Journal* 49 (2): 160-168.

Ellis, R (2009) A typology of written corrective feedback types. *English Language Teaching Journal* 3 (2): 97-107.

Ferris, D, Liu, H, Sinha, A, Senna, M (2013) Written corrective feedback for individual L2 writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 22: 307-329.

Ferris, D (2006) 'Does error feedback help student writers? New evidence on the short- and long-term effects of written error correction' in Hyland K and Hyland F (eds) *Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts and Issues.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ferris, D and Roberts, B (2001) Error feedback in L2 writing classes: How explicit does it need to be? *Journal of Second Language Writing* 10: 161-184.

Furneaux, C, Paran, A and Fairfax, B (2007) Teacher stance as reflected in feedback on student writing: an empirical study of secondary school teachers in five countries. *IRAL* 45: 69-94.

Hyland, K and Hyland, F (2006) 'Contexts and issues in feedback on L2 writing: An introduction'. In K Hyland and F Hyland (eds). *Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts and Issues*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hyland, K and Hyland, F (2006) Feedback on second language students' writing. *Language Teaching* 39 (2): 83-101.

Hyland, F (1998) The impact of teacher written feedback on individual writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 7(3): 255-286.

Lee, I (2005) Error correction in the L2 writing classroom: what do students think? *TESL Canada Journal* 22(2): 1-16.

Lee, I (2008) Understanding teachers' written feedback practices in Hong Kong secondary classrooms. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 17: 69-85.

Lee, I (2009) Ten mismatches between teachers' beliefs and written feedback practice. *English Language Teaching Journal* 63 (1): 13-22.

Mahboob, A and Devrim, D.Y. (2013) Supporting independent construction online: feedback in the slate project. *Linguistics and the Human Sciences* 7:101-123.

Myles, J (2002) Second language writing and research: The writing process and error analysis in student text. TESL-EJ 6 (2) Available at: http://tesl-ej.org/ej22/a1.html

Saito, H (1994) Teachers' practices and students' preferences for feedback on second language writing: A case study of adult ESL learners. *TESL Canada Journal* 11 (2): 46-67.

Sugita, Y (2006) The impact of teachers' comment types on students' revision. *English Language Teaching Journal* 60 (1): 34-41.

Truscott, J (1999) The case for 'the case for grammar correction in L2 writing classes': A response to Ferris. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 8: 112-122.

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

www.britishcouncil.in/englishpartnerships

9 780863 558641