



Feedback for writing or writing for feedback?

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Abstract

Writing has been seen as a problem to many of students and learning to write fluently has been the most difficult of the macro-skills for all languages. From academic writing point of view, drawing attention to the constant needs to draft and revise can be considered one of the important ways to encourage students to be responsible for making improvements themselves. The best way to learn how to write is to be evaluated continuously across writing. Here feedback plays an important role in writing process. Considering the problems in writing classes, the aim of this study was to investigate a training procedure through which Language learners can develop self-confidence, be motivated, improve the quality of essays, acquire communicative competence through writing and following feedbacks. This study is triple phased study and the first phase comprised students' attitude about giving and receiving feedback. The study was conducted for 22 3rd grade female ELT students of UFUK University in Turkey. An attitude questionnaire was administered to elicit students' thoughts about the effectiveness of using feedback in writing classes. The ideas expressed through the questionnaire revealed that ELT students has mostly positive attitude toward using teacher-feedback in the case of getting useful points, learning from it, thinking about it before writing, finding it motivated, and making modifications in their writings.

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Keywords: Academic writing; continuous assessment; feedback; peer-feedback

1. Introduction

Writing is one of the problematic skills in English Language Teaching classes. For many years, students experienced difficulties through low self-confidence and high anxiety. Most of the students have even no information about giving and receiving feedback. For them the only person who can correct their errors and give feedback is their teacher. This can be seen as one of the sources of the problem of anxiety in writing classes. To overcome this obstacle, the teachers should change the mind of students from teacher-feedback towards peer-feedback.

According to Sadler (2010), "telling" students what is right or wrong is not enough for enhancing learning. The most important point here is what the students need to know about giving and perceiving feedback. So, effective feedback should provide not only verification, but also elaboration (Kulhavy & Stock, 1989; Narciss, 2008).

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1.1. Literature review

In countries like Turkey EFL (English as a Foreign Language) writing classrooms have favored mostly teacher-written feedback as an assessment for many years. In this context, teachers have to spend a huge amount of time in correcting and editing the student writing and they are trying to catch all errors for students. This has made students think that the teacher is the only dominant feedback resource.

According to Brannon and Knoblauch (1982), “In product-oriented writing classroom, the teachers tend to play the role of a judge commenting on student writing without giving the students an opportunity to act on the teachers’ commentary” (Cited in Lee, Mak, & Burns, 2015, p.143). However, this fact causes a high level of anxiety in students.

The anxiety may play a crucial role in students’ writing performance in avoidance of tasks. As a solution for this problem, Seliger (1983) referred to peer-feedback through which students can give feedback to each other. Cho and Mac Arthur (2010) pointed out that when students received feedback from multiple peers, they made more improvement in their writing drafts than when they received feedback from a single source. Liu and Hansen (2002, p.1) specified peer- feedback as “the learners’ use of sources of information and interactions for each other in such a way that learners take on the responsibilities in commenting on each other’s drafts in the process of writing.

Sadler (1989) states that feedback can be perceived as a practice of formative assessment, which attempts to close the gap between current and desired performance. According to him, formative assessment is: “specifically intended to provide feedback on performance to improve and accelerate learning” (Sadler, 1989, p.77).

Peter (1998) sees the getting feedback on an early draft as the getting criticized before s/he has had a chance to make his/her piece as good as possible. Depending on the actual state of learning, feedback can provide a variety of information. The most important fact is that feedback can be supposed to improve performance through its effect on motivation and/or strategy use (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Vollmeyer & Rheinberg, 2005).

There are several forms of feedback including teacher feedback, peer feedback and computerized feedback which have been frequently used in writing class. Tuzi (2004) gives a clear differentiation between three kinds of feedback: oral, written, and electronic response. He explains them as:

“In typical oral response, writers and responders communicate and negotiate verbally and nonverbally in real time as well as employ the printed text, which they can view, refer to, and mark up. In written response, responders read and then write a response on paper. Students may be required to write a response in class or by the next class. After the response is written, it is often given to the writer during a peer group session in which negotiation and interaction often take place. In the electronic environment, however, L2 writers using e-feedback may not be able to participate in the myriad of communication activities used in traditional oral response because the nonverbal elements are missing, or there is a time delay involved in the dialog, or the added writing filter in e-feedback makes encoding and deciphering messages more difficult. Additionally, the greater sense of anonymity may discourage a sense of community in some students, which can also inhibit scaffolding” (p.219).

Although Yang, Badger, & Yu (2006) point out that students consider teachers to be more ‘professional’, ‘experienced’ and ‘trustworthy’ than their peers and incorporate more teacher feedback in their essay revisions, but Gielen, Tops, Dochy, Onghena, & Smeets (2010) clarify the place of peer-feedback in a more clear cut way: “Peer feedback is an assessment form performed by equal status learners. It does not contribute to the assessee’s final grade and has a qualitative output. The assessor discusses the strengths and weaknesses of a specific performance at length and indicates suggestions for further improvement. It is the counterpart of feedback by a teacher” (p.144).

In addition, Gielen et al. (2010) give a definitive classification of the advantages of peer-feedback as:

“1. Firstly, peer feedback can increase the social pressure on students to perform well on an assignment.

2. Secondly, research in higher education shows that students often perceive peer feedback as more understandable and more useful.

3. A third argument in favour of peer feedback is that it increases the students’ ability to understand feedback.

4. Fourthly, peer feedback is quicker. As teacher feedback often has a considerable delay after the submission of an assignment or test, feedback sometimes is not available until after the curriculum has passed to another topic.

5. Fifthly, peer feedback can be part of an increase in the frequency or amount of feedback.

6. A sixth possible advantage is the individualisation of feedback. If teachers try to provide more timely and more frequent feedback, they often organise it collectively to make this feasible. Collective feedback cannot, however, address personal needs and provide opportunities for personal interaction as often as individual feedback can. Additionally, pupils are not likely to show their ignorance or uncertainty during a collective session, so a lot of questions will not even be posed. Peer feedback can make it feasible to provide individual feedback, leaving the teacher available for personal interaction whenever assessors and assessees cannot find an answer to a specific question.

7. A final argument is the association of feedback with power issues, emotions and identity. Learners may hide their weaknesses and doubts from the teacher, rendering teachers unaware of particular student difficulties or misconceptions. Peer feedback may bypass these difficulties since it is less power-sensitive” (p.145).

The other important point which should be considered closely is that before giving the opportunities to students for giving feedback, the teachers should spend more time in training them how to be effective evaluators. In this way, the students may achieve the chance of improving their critical thinking abilities by the use of peer-feedback. Thus, the focus of this study is on participants’ attitude towards peer-feedback and teacher-feedback.

1.2. Research questions

Here the researcher wanted to know:

1. Do the students have positive attitude towards giving feedback?
2. Do the students have positive attitude towards receiving peer-feedback?
3. Do the learners have positive attitude towards teacher feedback?

2. Method

2.1. Sample / Participants

This study was conducted for twenty-two 3rd grade female ELT students of UFUK University in Turkey. The participants were chosen randomly and all of them had courses in writing. All of the participants had experienced giving and receiving peer-feedback in their writing courses.

2.2. Instrument(s)

An attitude questionnaire was administered to elicit students' thoughts about the effectiveness of using feedback in writing classes. A likert-scale was used in scaling responses from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The whole questionnaire covers the students' point of view in three parts: first part is related to giving peer-feedback, second part comprised of receiving peer-feedback, and last part is related to receiving teacher-feedback.

2.3. Data collection procedures

This study is a triple phased study and this research including the first phase, comprised students' attitude about giving and receiving feedback in ELT writing classes in Turkey. The second phase of this study will be conducted to find the reasons for the students' inclination and the third phase will be carried on improving a way in changing students' mind from writing for feedback to feedback for writing.

2.4. Data analysis

The data were analyzed through the IBM SPSS Version 25 (2018). Percentages and bar graphs were produced. Frequencies and percentages for the 17 items of questionnaire on EFL writing feedback were calculated. The detailed analysis has been shown in written form and in the forms of graphs in appendix 1, 2, and 3.

3. Results

Table 1 shows that regarding giving peer-feedback, on the whole less than 50% of the students agreed with the idea. Although the results indicated approximately zero strong disagreement with the giving peer-feedback, but they had not positive approach towards the idea that giving peer-feedback helps them learn better or motivates them to write.

Table 1. Giving peer-feedback

Giving peer-feedback	Percentages
1.The importance of assessing friends' writing	49% (NA)
2.Giving peer-feedback helps learners learn better	42.86% Agree
3.Giving feedback and motivation in writing classes	35% Agree

According to table 2, the results revealed that again less than 50% of the students agreed with the idea of receiving peer-feedback. It indicated that the students didn't find getting feedback useful in their writing courses. For most of them it not only doesn't help them learn better, but also doesn't motivate them to write.

Table 2. Receiving peer-feedback

Receiving peer-feedback	Percentages
4.The importance of getting peer-feedback	52.38% NA
5.Getting peer-feedback helps learners learn better	40% Agree
6.Using what the learners learn from peer-feedback	36.36% Agree 36.36% NA
7.Thinking about peer-feedback before writing	47.62% Disagree
8.Making connection between writing and peer-feedback	42.11% Agree
9.Getting peer-feedback and motivation	40.91% NA
10.Useful points in peer-feedback	36.36% NA
11.Modification of writing through peer-feedback	36.36% NA 36.36% Agree

Regarding teacher-feedback, table 3 shows different results than table 1 and table 2. More than 64% of students indicated positive attitude towards teacher-feedback. The results revealed that students strongly agreed with the teacher-feedback in the case of: getting useful points, learning from it, thinking about it before writing, finding it motivated, and making modifications in their writings.

Table 3. Receiving teacher feedback

Receiving teacher feedback	Percentages
12.Teacher feedback and useful points	59.09% Strongly Agree
13.Using what the learners learn from teacher feedback	72.73% Strongly Agree

14.Thinking about teacher feedback before writing	61.9% Strongly Agree
15.Making connection between writing and teacher feedback	63.64% Strongly Agree
16.Getting teacher feedback and motivation	63.64% Strongly Agree
17.Modification of writing through teacher feedback	63.64% Strongly Agree

4. Discussion

To investigate the participants' view about feedback, an attitude questionnaire was used. The questions of questionnaire was divided into three parts: 1) the students' view about giving peer-feedback and its benefits in learning and motivating them, 2) the students' view about receiving peer-feedback and its benefits in learning and motivating them, 3) the students' view about receiving teacher-feedback and its benefits in learning and motivating them. The calculated percentages of students' answers to the questionnaire clearly indicated that the students had a positive and strong inclination to teacher-feedback. According to respondents, teacher-feedback is the main source of their learning, motivation, and modification of their writing. In this regard, the third question of researcher has been approved. In this way the other two questions relating to giving and receiving peer-feedback have been rejected. As most of the claims in literature review correspond to this result, the second step and phase of this research will be followed in finding the most common reasons which encourage students to find teacher-feedback more accurately than peer-feedback. And in the last phase of this study, the attempts will be in looking for some ways in changing students point of view from writing for getting teacher-feedback to feedback for writing in which the students will be motivated to write for getting and giving peer-feedback.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to investigate students' attitude towards peer-feedback and teacher-feedback. It can be concluded that although the students had no negative attitude towards peer-feedback, their inclination is mostly towards teacher feedback. Most of the students may consider teacher's written commentary the most effective method to improve the quality of their writing and they also favoured teacher feedback probably because they believed that their teachers had more knowledge and in this way, they can provide correct feedback than their peers. It should be pointed out that the place of peer-feedback still is not clear in the mind of learners. Therefore, the teacher should make the learner aware that peer-feedback does not contribute to their final grade. It has only the role of suggestion for them in helping them for further improvement. The other important point is the lack of criteria through which the learners would be able to think critically in giving peer-feedback. The teacher also should provide clear criteria to help students find their ways in giving and receiving suggestions. This study showed the students' absolute inclination towards teacher-feedback. The second phase of this study will be conducted to find the reasons for this inclination and the third phase will be carried on improving a way in changing students' mind from writing for feedback to feedback for writing. This may help the students think critically instead of living the anxiety arisen from teacher feedback. In Appendix 4, a checklist

was introduced as criteria for giving feedback. Some pedagogical benefits of peer-feedback could be emphasized as:

- 1) By training learners on how to give feedback and in which direction, learners in writing classes can improve their writing skills.
- 2) They would learn to think critically, and this help them produce better ideas.
- 3) In addition, peer-feedback provide students with opportunities to enhance individual reflection.
- 4) It is worth noting that highlighting the use of feedback is not complementary by itself. There should be a particular criterion to help the learners in giving their feedback.

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Appendices

1. Appendix 1: Frequencies and Percentages of Items

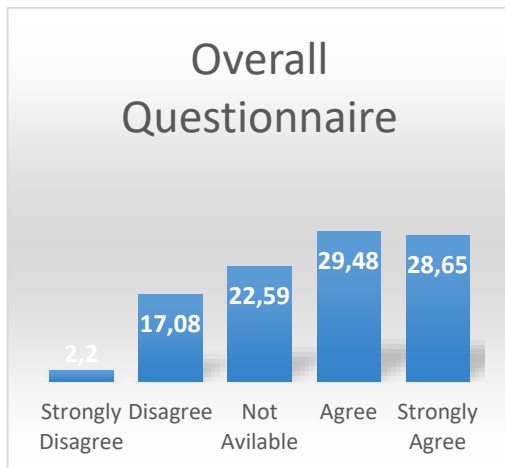
Item	SD	D	NA	A	SA	Total
1.It is important for me to assess my friends` writings.	0	5	9	8	0	22
	0.00	22.73	40.91	36.36	0.00	100
2. I am sure I can learn better if I give peer-feedback.	0	4	4	9	4	21
	0.00	19.05	19.05	42.86	19.05	100
3. Giving feedback to my peer`s writing motivates me in writing classes.	0	6	4	7	3	20
	0.00	30.00	20.00	35.00	15.00	100
4. It is important for me that my writing to be assessed by my friends.	1	4	11	3	2	21
	4.76	19.05	52.38	14.29	9.52	100
5. I am sure I can learn better if I get peer-feedback	0	5	5	8	2	20
	0.00	25.00	25.00	40.00	10.00	100
6. It is useful to use what I have learned from peer- feedback.	0	4	8	8	2	22
	0.00	18.18	36.36	36.36	9.09	100
7. Before I begin writing, I think about peer- feedbacks.	0	10	5	5	1	21
	0.00	47.62	23.81	23.81	4.76	100
8. When writing I try to connect the things in the writing with what I have learned from peer-feedback.	0	4	5	8	2	19
	0.00	21.05	26.32	42.11	10.53	100
9. Getting peer-feedback motivates me in writing classes.	0	6	9	5	2	22
	0.00	27.27	40.91	22.73	9.09	100
10. My peer`s feedback provides useful points.	0	6	8	7	1	22
	0.00	27.27	36.36	31.82	4.55	100
11. I modify my initial writing as a result of peer-feedback to improve it.	0	5	8	8	1	22
	0.00	22.73	36.36	36.36	4.55	100
12. My teacher`s feedback provides useful points.	1	1	0	7	13	22
	4.55	4.55	0.00	31.82	59.09	100
13. It is useful to use what I have learned from my teacher`s feedback.	1	1	0	4	16	22
	4.55	4.55	0.00	18.18	72.73	100
14. Before I begin writing, I think about teacher`s feedback.	2	0	2	4	13	21
	9.52	0.00	9.52	19.05	61.90	100

15. When writing I try to connect the things in the writing with what I have learned from teacher's feedback.	1	1	1	5	14	22
	4.55	4.55	4.55	22.73	63.64	100
16. Getting teacher's feedback motivates me in writing classes.	1	0	1	6	14	22
	4.55	0.00	4.55	27.27	63.64	100
17. I modify my initial writing as a result of teacher's feedback to improve it.	1	0	2	5	14	22
	4.55	0.00	9.09	22.73	63.64	100
Total	8	62	82	107	104	363
	2.20	17.08	22.59	29.48	28.65	100

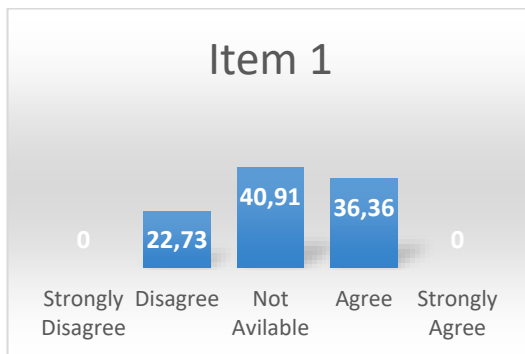
2. Appendix 2

- 1: Majority of the responses (40.91 %) had neutral attitude towards importance of helping peers with their writings. None of the responses showed strong agreement or disagreement (zero %). The results indicated that 36.36 % agreed with the importance of helping peers with their writings, while 22.73 % disagreed with that.
- 2: Majority of the responses (42.86 %) agreed with the idea that giving peer feedback will help them learn better. None of the responses showed strong disagreement (zero %). The results indicated that 19.05% agreed with this idea, while the same percentages of responses disagreed with the idea that giving peer-feedback will help them learn better.
- 3: The results showed that 50 percent of the responses (35 % agreed + 15 % strongly agreed) agreed with the idea that giving feedback to other students motivates them to study more. On the other hand; 30 percent of the responses (zero % strongly disagree + 30 % disagreed) disagreed with this idea, and 20 % had no idea about this idea.
- 4: The results showed that (52.38%) did not take negative or positive attitude towards the importance of peer feedback, while more than 23 percent of the responses (14.29 % agreed + 9.52 % strongly agreed) agreed with the idea, while 23.81 percent of the responses (4.76 % strongly disagree + 19.05 % disagreed) disagreed with this idea.
- 5: Majority of responses (40%) agreed with the idea that getting peer-feedback will help them learn better. None of the responses showed strong disagreement (zero %). The results indicated that 25 % disagreed with this idea, while the same percentages had neutral attitude towards the idea that getting peer-feedback will help them learn better.
- 6: The results showed that (36.36%) had neutral attitude towards the idea of using what the learners learn from peer-feedback while the same percentages agree with the same idea. None of the responses showed strong disagreement (zero %). And (9.09%) indicated strong agreement with the idea.
- 7: In the idea of thinking about peer-feedback before writing, majority of responses (47.62%) disagreed, while (23.81%) showed agreement and the same percentages had neutral attitude towards the same idea. None of the responses showed strong disagreement (zero %). (4.76%) of the responses showed strong agreement.
- 8: Majority of the responses (42.11%) agreed with the idea of making connection between writing and peer-feedback. None of the responses showed strong disagreement (zero %). (21.05%) showed disagreement and (26.32%) of responses had no idea about this view. Only (10.53%) indicated strong disagreement.

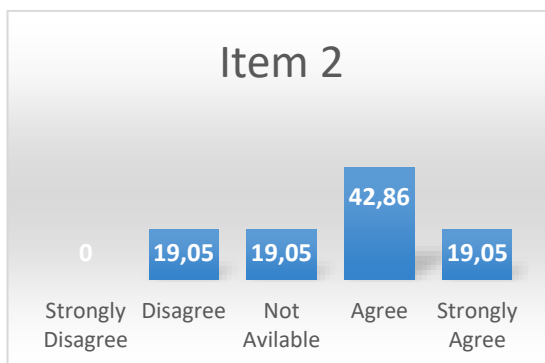
3. Appendix : Overall results



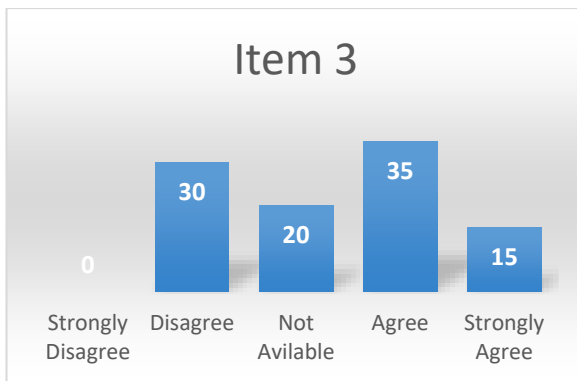
1. The importance of assessing friends' writing



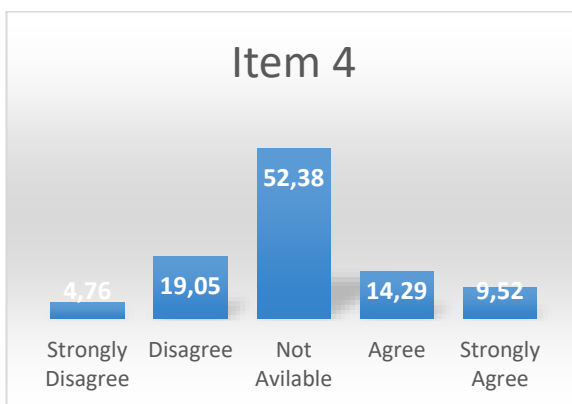
2. Giving peer-feedback helps learners learn better



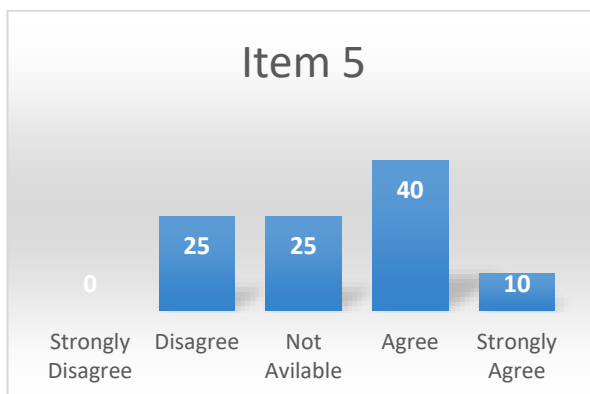
3. Giving feedback and motivation in writing classes



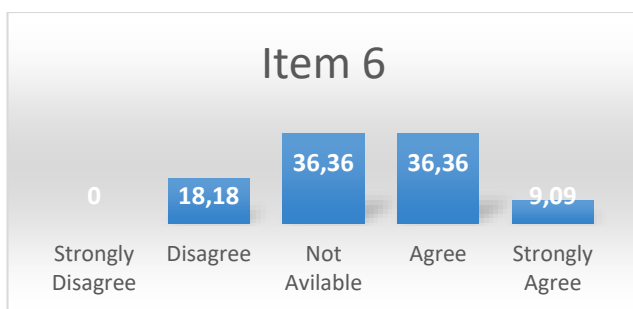
4. Importance of getting peer-feedback



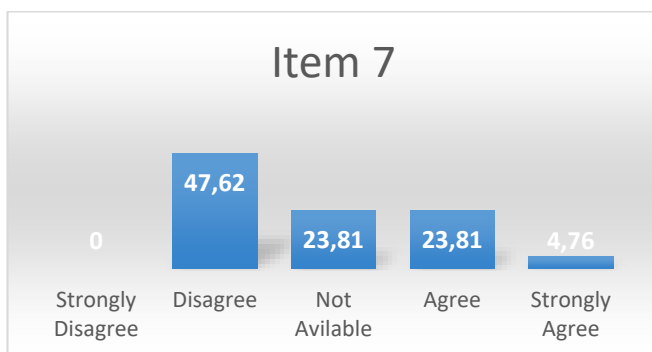
5. Getting peer-feedback helps learners learn better



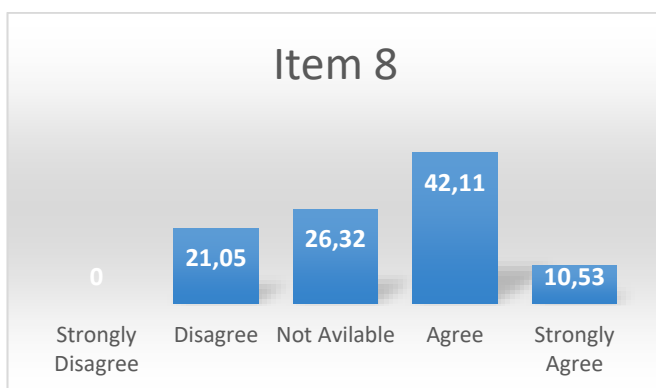
6. Using what the learners learn from peer-feedback



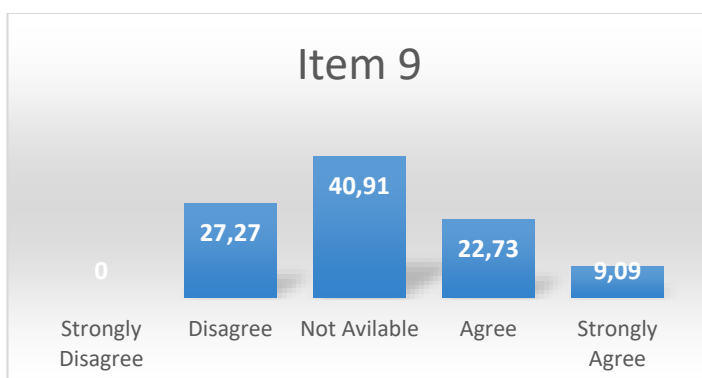
7. Thinking about peer-feedback before writing



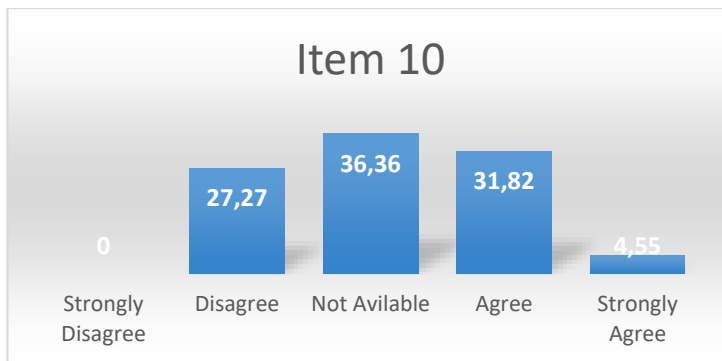
8. Making connection between writing and peer-feedback



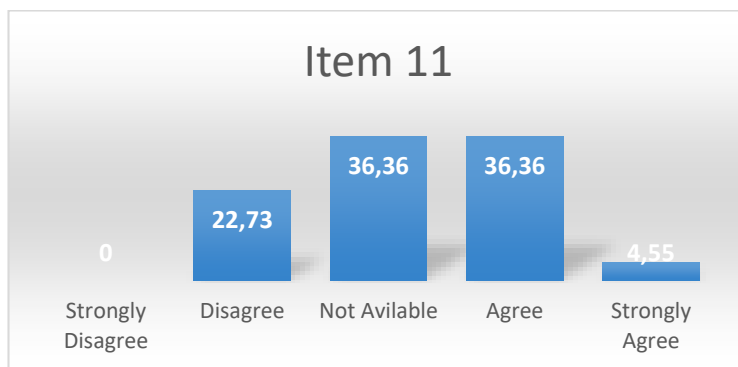
9. Getting peer-feedback and motivation



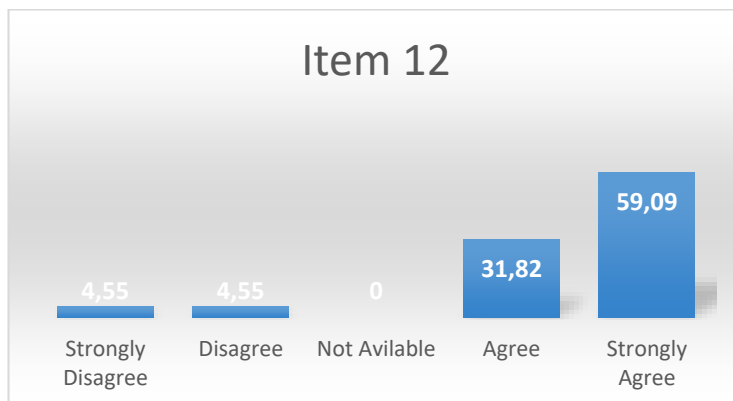
10. Useful points in peer-feedback



11. Modification of writing through peer-feedback



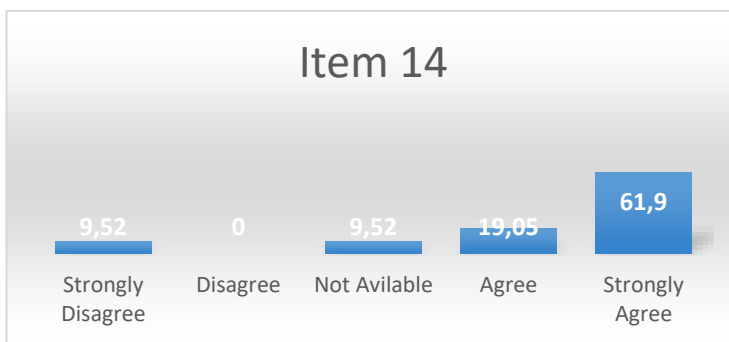
12. Teacher feedback and useful points



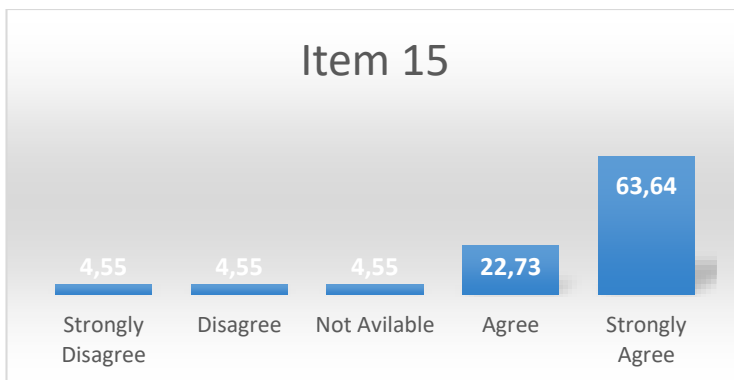
13. Using what the learners learn from teacher feedback



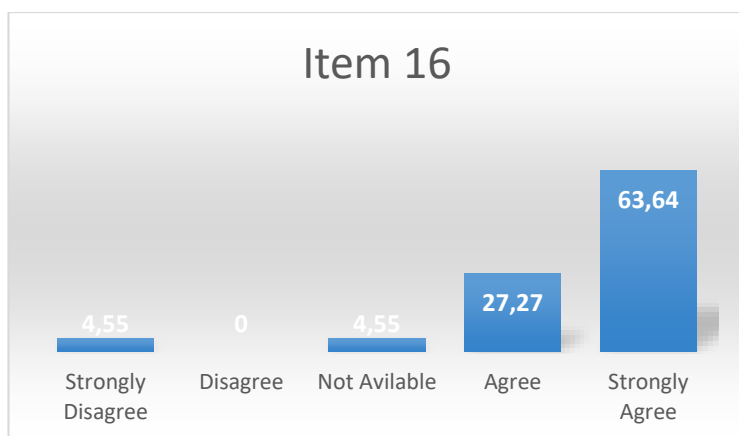
14. Thinking about teacher feedback before writing



15. Making connection between writing and teacher feedback



16. Getting teacher feedback and motivation



17. Modification of writing through teacher feedback



4. Appendix 4: Paragraph Assessment Checklist

These are the criteria for a well-written paragraph. Use them to examine your writing, or a classmate’s and check *Yes* or *No* for each item. You may wish to add comments or suggestions.

Content and ideas	Yes	No	Reader’s comments
1. The writer has thought carefully about the topic and has a clear main idea.	
2. The writer’s purpose (to define, compare, or decide, and so on) is clear in the paragraph.	
3. The paragraph is convincing because there are enough logical points to support the main idea.	
4. The paper has the writer’s voice; that is, it sounds like him/her.	
Organization and form			
5. The paragraph has correct format. The first sentence is indented, and the remaining sentences follow each other without gaps.	
6. The main idea is clearly expressed in a topic sentence.	
7. The logic is easy to follow, so the reader understands the paper easily after one reading.	

Language

8. The paper is easy to understand. These elements are used well:		
- sentence structure (no fragments or run on sentences)
- grammar
- vocabulary
- mechanics (spelling, capitalization, punctuation)

Adapted from: Smalzer (2005: 54)

5. *Appendix 5: The Questionnaire*

6.

Male Female

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Applicable	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. It is important for me to assess my friends' writings.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am sure I can learn better if I give peer-feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Giving feedback to my peer's writing motivates me in writing classes.	1	2	3	4	5
4. It is important for me that my writing to be assessed by my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I am sure I can learn better if I get peer-feedback	1	2	3	4	5
6. It is useful to use what I have learned from peer-feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Before I begin writing, I think about peer-feedbacks.	1	2	3	4	5
8. When writing I try to connect the things in the writing with what I have learned from peer-feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Getting peer-feedback motivates me in writing classes.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My peer's feedback provides useful points.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I modify my initial writing as a result of peer-feedback to improve it.	1	2	3	4	5
12. My teacher's feedback provides useful points.	1	2	3	4	5
13. It is useful to use what I have learned from my teacher's feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Before I begin writing, I think about teacher's feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
15. When writing I try to connect the things in the writing with what I have learned from teacher's feedback.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Getting teacher's feedback motivates me in writing classes.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I modify my initial writing as a result of teacher's feedback to improve it.	1	2	3	4	5

Geri bildirim için yazma mı yazma için geri bildirim mi?

Öz

Yazma, birçok öğrenci için bir problem olarak görülmüş ve akıcı bir şekilde yazma öğrenme, tüm diller için makro becerilerin en zoru olmuştur. Akademik yazım bakış açısıyla, taslak ve gözden geçirme konusundaki sürekli ihtiyaçlara dikkat çekmek, öğrencileri kendilerini geliştirmekten sorumlu olmaya teşvik etmenin önemli yollarından biri olarak düşünülebilir. Yazmayı öğrenmenin en iyi yolu, yazı boyunca yazıyı sürekli olarak değerlendirmektir. Geri bildirim yazma bu süreçte önemli bir rol oynamaktadır.

Yazma sınıflarındaki problemler göz önünde bulundurulmuş ve dil öğrencilerinin özgüven geliştirebilmeleri, motive olabilmeleri, makale kalitesini geliştirebilmeleri, iletişim yoluyla iletişim becerilerini kazanabilmeleri ve geri bildirimleri takip edebilmeleri için bu eğitim prosedürünü incelemek bu çalışmanın amacı olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu çalışma üç fazlı bir çalışmadır ve ilk aşama öğrencilerin geri bildirim alma ve verme konusundaki tutumlarından oluşmaktadır. Araştırma, UFUK Üniversitesinin 22 üçüncü sınıf kadın ELT öğrencisi için yapılmıştır. Öğrencilerin yazma derslerinde geri bildirim kullanımının etkinliği hakkındaki düşüncelerini ortaya çıkarmak için bir tutum anketi uygulanmıştır. Anket aracılığıyla dile getirilen fikirler, ELT öğrencilerinin, önemli noktalardan faydalanma, bu noktalardan öğrenme, yazmadan önce düşünmelerini sağlama, motive etme ve yazılarında değişiklikler yapma gibi konularda öğretmen geribildirimde bulunma yönündeki tutumları olumlu yönde etkilediğini ortaya koymuştur

Anahtar sözcükler: Akademik yazı; sürekli değerlendirme; geri bildirim; eşler geribildirim

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