

Palestinian University Writing Professors' Feedback Practices and their Students' Reactions towards them

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Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to identify feedback practices Palestinian university professors frequently use and the extent to which they are aware of the soundness or unsoundness of these practices. The study also investigates Palestinian university students' reactions towards their teachers' feedback practices. For this purpose the researchers prepared two questionnaires to gather the data; the first addresses teachers' use of feedback practices and their soundness or unsoundness and the other is assigned to collect information from students on the frequency of their teachers use of feedback practices and if they like or dislike them. Two different samples, i.e. 26 university professors and 310 English majoring students from different universities in Palestine are included. The results of the study showed that Palestinian university writing professors are aware of the educational soundness and unsoundness of the majority of feedback practices and use sound ones quite often. Their students mostly agreed with their teachers' responses; however some discrepancies occurred between teachers' responses and their students' reactions towards certain practices. Moreover, students indicated their liking of most of their teachers' practices, particularly the sound ones. Surprisingly, students sometimes showed their liking of certain unsound practices. Regarding students gender role in the students' preference or approval of teachers' feedback practices, a number of differences existed, particularly in nine items; five items were in favor of males and the other four items were in favor of female students.

Introduction

Feedback is generally defined as "the information given to someone about something s/he has done or made which tells him/ her how good or successful it is" (Oxford Word Power 1999: 272). Longman Dictionary for Contemporary English

(2001: 510) also defines it as "advice or criticism about how successful or useful something is". In the educational process, particularly in L2 or FL classes, feedback is best referred to as substantial comments the teacher feels he must provide on the students' work to make them improve and to justify the grade they have been given (Hyland, 2003). Feedback whose resources are either the teacher, the learners themselves or the machine can be positive or negative and may serve not only to let learners know how well they have performed but also to increase motivation and build classroom skills.

Feedback to writing is teacher's written or oral response to the students' writing in order to improve the contents of their writing. Traditionally, feedback to writing is given in a written form on the draft or orally. Providing the students with feedback about their written work is one of the essential tasks of English Language teachers in the classroom. Feedback, whether generated by the teacher, peer or learner has been given a respectful status in approaches to L2 writing pedagogy due to the important role it plays in developing the composing skills and self-confidence of L2 students. Teacher's awareness of the importance of feedback on the students' writing is arising for it provides supporting teaching environment (Hyland, 2006).

Feedback constitutes an essential part of process writing approach. So it has been widely and extensively studied by writing educators in all its aspects. It is studied under the rubric of responding to student writing. The significance and usefulness of feedback given to students on the writing tasks they attempt made writing scholars believe that it is highly important that pupils receive feedback as soon as possible on their writings (Kailani and Muqattash 2009).

The purpose of the current research is to highlight feedback practices used by Palestinian university professors on their students' writings and whether and to what extent the latter like these practices.

Problem Statement:

Being instructors at different universities in Gaza Strip, the researchers observed that their colleagues teaching writing courses though not specializing in writing, do not frequently

provide their students with feedback on their writings. Those are either specialized in linguistics, literature or ELT methodology, in general. The researchers also noticed that the instructors' feedback is sometimes negative either in the form of error identification, underlining, or error correction. It is worth noting that they rarely follow up students' work, checking whether they benefited from their comments or not.

Research Questions:

This study addresses the following major question:

What are the Palestinian university English writing professors' feedback practices and their students' reactions toward them?

The following minor questions emanated from the above major question:

1. What are the principles of feedback in education in general and in writing in particular?
2. What is the reality of Palestinian university writing teachers' feedback practices?
3. What are the educationally sound writing feedback practices as perceived by Palestinian university writing professors?
4. What are the educationally unsound writing feedback practices as perceived by Palestinian university writing professors?
5. What are the feedback practices students like?
6. What are the feedback practices students dislike?
7. Are there any statistically significant differences in Palestinian English majoring students' approval of their writing teachers' feedback due to gender?

Significance of the study:

The research may prove to be useful for the following parties:

1. University English writing professors as it may provide them with insights of the feedback practices and their students' reactions toward these practices. This may have the potentiality of creating a friendly understanding and promoting educational classroom environment.
2. Palestinian university administrations as the current research may motivate them to recruit a faculty that is

specialized in writing rather than assigning writing courses to professors specialized in linguistics and literature.

3. University writing courses designers as this research hopefully will raise their awareness of the points that concern the university English majors when receiving feedback from their professors on their writings.

Limitations:

The study findings should be interpreted in the light of the following limitations:

1. The researchers used a questionnaire as a data collection instrument where the respondents may take it lightly and respond to its items carelessly.
2. The sample of writing professors is so limited , i.e. 26 if compared with that of students, i.e. 310.
3. Some of the spaces provided for teachers to explore their awareness of the soundness or unsoundness of teachers' practices were left unanswered. This may be attributed to the fact that the questionnaire's form is new where there are seven columns or spaces beside each item.

Research Objectives:

The current research aims to achieve the following:

1. To design a list of writing feedback practices ,
2. To explore how far Palestinian university English writing professors make use of these practices when giving feedback to their students on their writings,
3. To investigate the Palestinian English writing professors' awareness of the educational soundness of these practices,
4. To inquire how far these practices are implemented by Palestinian English writing professors as perceived by their students,
5. To examine the university students' reactions toward these practices,
6. To assess how far these feedback practices conform to the principles or criteria of providing educational sound feedback as perceived by experts on educational psychology.

Procedures:

The following procedures were followed throughout the different stages of the current research:

1. Researching the related literature in order to gather the writing feedback practices,
2. Putting these practices in the form of a 5-point Likert scale,
3. Refereeing the scale,
4. Piloting the study: the instruments were distributed to six teachers and 30 students. Those were excluded from the sample,
5. Administering the scale to a group of Palestinian university English writing professors,
6. Requiring a group of educational psychology professors to judge the educational soundness of these practices,
7. Administering the scale to Palestinian University English writing teaching professors,
8. Comparing the students' responses with their professors' responses in order to draw a clear image of the amount of feedback the students receive, and accordingly
9. Providing suggestions and recommendations.

Literature Review:**Teacher feedback**

Teacher feedback is teachers' evaluation of the student response (Cook, 2000). Providing feedback to learners on their performance is an important aspect of teaching. It can be given by means of praise, by any relevant comment or action, or by silence (Richards and Lockhart, 2000). Weinstein (1989) elaborated that children learned how 'smart' they were mainly from teacher's feedback in the form of marks, comments, and the degree and type of praise and criticism. Children report differences in the frequencies of teacher interactions with different types of learners, with high achievers seen as receiving more positive feedback from the teacher, as well as being given more opportunities to perform, to be challenged and to serve as leaders. By contrast, low achievers are reported to receive more negative feedback, more direction, and help giving as well.

Teacher feedback is considered one of the most powerful instructional variables in terms of enhancing student achievement (Hattie 1993). Then, instructors will need to consider: the timelines of feedback, specifying the nature and extent of feedback, the effective use of comments on returned work, the role of oral feedback, either on group or individual basis as a means of supplementing written feedback and when feedback may not be appropriate (Quality Assurance Agency, 2000, cited in Lillis and Swan, 2003: 102 – 103).

Teachers provide feedback on their students' writing to: support students' writing development, teach specific academic writing conventions, indicate strengths and weaknesses of writing in relation to a group of standards, explain or justify a grade and to suggest how a student can improve in his next writing task (Lillis and Swan, 2003: 104).

Smittle (cited in Abdelraheem and Jahjough 2012) argues that prompt feedback is a principle of effective teaching. But this feedback should not include criticism because Hall (2011) maintained that lack of criticism is essential for effective teaching as avoiding embarrassment and maintaining learners' face is an important consideration for learners. Likewise, Iwanicki (1996) and Johnson (1997) cited in Stronge et. al (2004) assert that effective educators establish a climate of trust where praise is authentic and criticism is constructive.

The importance of feedback in the learning process is well established. For example, in a meta-analysis of over 250 studies, Black and William (1998) cited in Nicole and Macfarlane-Dick (2010) examined a wide range of educational settings and the evidence suggests that significant benefits in learning are accrued from feedback.

More importantly, feedback interacts with motivation and self-beliefs. Research shows that feedback both regulates and is regulated by motivational beliefs. Educational feedback has been shown to influence how students feel about themselves

(positively or negatively), and what and how they can learn (Nicole and Macfarlane-Dick' 2006).

Sadler (1998:119-144) identified three conditions necessary for students to benefit from feedback in academic tasks. He argued that the student must know: (1) what good performance is (That is the student must possess a concept of the goal or standard being aimed for); (2) how current performance relates to good performance. This means that students must be able to compare current and good performance; (3) how to act to close the gap between current and good performance.

Forms of Teacher Feedback

To achieve the aforementioned purposes, writing teachers may provide feedback on their students' writing in different forms. In this study the researchers will be confined to presenting the most important ones, i.e. handwritten feedback, word-processed feedback, oral feedback, group feedback and individual feedback. It is important not to lose sight of the fact that what teacher feedback looks like will definitely have a bearing on how students receive it.

1. Written comments:

Giving students written comments about their writing is the most widely used system of responding to their written work. The following are the advantages of written comments:

1. They can be exhaustive and analytical.
2. They direct attention to specific problems and offer suggestions for eradicating the problems.
3. In correcting errors, they enable students better their understanding of the functions and limitations of various grammatical structures.
4. When acted upon and internalized, written comments can provide learners with a logical and pragmatic writing process.
5. They are logistically simple as the teacher can mark papers at almost any time or location.

2. Group feedback:

Teachers feel that there is need to include an element of group feedback. This type of feedback can be enhanced by producing and distributing guidance sheets based on common errors. In assessing a particular assignment, a group of general comments may be provided to the whole group with individual feedback focusing on specific issues related to a student's work. Lillis and Swan (2003:112) state that including an element of group feedback: (1) saves teachers' time by avoiding repetitions of similar points in individual feedback, (2) group discussion may also allow students to raise issues where there would be no time to consider individually; (3) students may feel comforted by seeing that others' experience is similar to theirs. (4) Byrne (1997: 101) asserts that group feedback enables writing instructors to remind their students of something covered in class but not implemented well in the writing assignment. Nevertheless, students may not be always able to link teachers' group feedback comments to their own writing because teachers comments by their very nature will tend to be expressed at a general level.

3. Conferences:

Conferencing with students individually or in groups is a major innovation in writing practice. This technique presupposes that students and teachers meet regularly. In typical conferences, a few students meet with their instructor for 15 – 30 minutes to discuss writing progress they have made. Research on writing conferences concentrates on two things: the evaluations of both teachers and students after conferences, and the nature of teacher-student interaction in teacher-student conferences.

Findings from research on teacher and student evaluations patronize the belief that students get more focused and comprehensible feedback during conferences than they do through written feedback. By the same token, the line of research on the nature of teacher-student interaction shows that conferences differ greatly in the extent to which they are beneficial in improving student written performance. Evidence suggests that conferences in which students share actively are more powerful than those in which students listen passively to teacher comments.

Conferences have certain obvious advantages. These are as follows:

1. The teacher is able to work with students intensively, on a one-to-one basis or in small groups.
2. The teacher gets a better personal knowledge of his students.
3. Students get a friendly atmosphere in which they can ask without feeling embarrassed.
4. Students get more immediate and more detailed feedback than they would through extensively written feedback comments .
5. Teachers and students can work carefully and thoroughly through important stages for furthering student performance at all stages of writing process .
6. Students feel they are better motivated by the personal attention they receive.
7. The instructor can help the students to set clear and effective goals for writing assignments and for overall writing improvement as well. (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996).
8. Students enjoy their peers' ideas because they can learn from others' problems.
9. Conferences help students improve in writing and speaking. (Brender, 1998, cited in Mourtaga 2010).
10. Conferences lessen the repetition of mistakes .
11. Conferences remove the need for the teacher to mark every paper completely or to deal with every error .
12. Conferences lead to more advanced class discussions on writing, with students displaying greater liking to volunteer constructive criticism about their writing and their peers' .
13. More feedback can be provided in the same amount of time it takes to write comments on students' papers .
14. Conferences promote active participation by the student allowing the instructor to identify precisely what the student understands and what he does not .
15. Conferences help students build their self-esteem, reassure them, and provide them with the confidence they need to write well. Quible (1997).

Types of teacher Feedback

Feedback on the students' written work has different types. Those are: teacher's underlining (identification of) errors, underlining of errors with correction, commentary, correction with comments, correction using prompts or students' self correction, peer correction, teacher- student conferencing.

1. **Error correction:** Teacher correction means that the teacher corrects all the surface (mainly grammatical) errors by crossing out perceived errors and providing correct answers. Teachers need not correct all the mistakes in learners' work. Total correction is not time-effective for the teacher and discouraging for the learners particularly when the latter see the papers full of red ink. Teachers sometimes need to indicate mistakes so that learners can correct them. Teacher's use of the same list of editing symbols makes learners attempt to identify and correct some if not all the mistakes for themselves. Learners believe that error correction is a key part of the teacher's role (Jonson cited in Hall 2011:17).

According to Van Lier (cited in Hall 2011:13), the activity that most characterizes language classroom is correction of errors. Yet, the issue of error and how errors are treated in the classroom provokes strong opinions from the teachers and learners alike.

2. **Commentary:** The teacher provides feedback by making written comments or questions on the margin or in between sentences. No error corrections are made.

3. **Error identification:** The teacher indicates the place where a perceived error occurs by underlining or circling it. But no corrections are made.

4. **Teacher-student conferencing:** The teacher and student discuss a piece of student writing individually during the writing of a composition, and after it is finished.

Advantages and disadvantages of teacher written feedback

A. Advantages:

1. They can be exhaustive and analytical.
2. They direct attention to specific problems, and offer suggestions, for eradicating the problems.
3. In correcting errors, they enable students better their understanding of the functions and limitations of various grammatical structures.
4. When acted upon and internalized, written comments can provide learners with a logical and pragmatic writing process.
5. They are logistically simple as the teacher can mark papers at almost any time or location.

B. Disadvantages:

1. Teachers find written comments not time-effective and discouraging.
2. Research points out that such feedback is either non-functional or actually counter-productive.
3. Students may perceive most instructive commentary as judgmental and punishing.
4. Teachers find it easier to recognize and mark violations of writing conventions and standards than to recognize and comment on the absence of these violations.
5. Students are not likely to make full use of the written feedback on their essays unless they are urged to revise their work.
6. Written comments are generally considered by students to be the least useful type of writing feedback.
7. Students often become confused, discouraged, and even overwhelmed by teachers' written feedback (Quible 1997).

Principles of good feedback:

The literature review is brimful of different principles of good feedback practice. However, the researchers will limit themselves to the most common ones. In accordance with Nicole and Macfarlane-Deck's 2006 self-regulation theory, those are sevenfold:

1- Helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards);

Students can attain learning goals if they understand these goals, undertake some ownership of them, and if they can assess progress. This, undoubtedly, requires teachers to set reasonable goals for students' learning, besides informing them of these goals and helping them, through various strategies, to work hard to achieve these goals. In case students do not have this information they will not be able to work to achieve these goals which ultimately makes the two parties involved in the teaching-learning process lack mutual understanding concerning the goals. This, unfortunately, undermines the whole process. This principle helps tutors and students have the same or similar conceptions about goals and criteria. One way of clarifying task requirements (goals, criteria, standards) is to provide students with writing documents containing statements describing assessment criteria and standards explicit via written document or through verbal description in class.

2- Facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning;

Students should be trained in self-assessment so that they can understand what they must do to achieve formative assessment. Revisiting the territory, *Assessment in Education*, maintains that self-assessment is an inescapable feature of feedback. In order for students to make sense of tutor feedback they must understand it and be able to evaluate its relationship to current performance. It is argued that we should therefore strengthen self-assessment early in students' education as it is a core skill in professional practice.

There are several approaches to developing self-assessment skills. One of these is to provide students with opportunities to evaluate and provide feedback on each other's work. These peer processes help develop the skills needed to make objective and well-informed judgments against standards which are skills that can be transferred when students turn to producing and regulating their own work.

3- Delivers high quality information to students about their learning;

Teachers are essential in developing their students' own capacity for self-regulation. Teacher's feedback is a source against which students can evaluate progress and check out their internal constructions of goals, criteria, and standards. Importantly, teachers are much more effective in identifying errors and misperception in students' work than peers or students themselves. Teacher feedback can help substantiate student self-regulation.

Good quality teacher feedback is defined as information that helps students troubleshoot their own performance so that they are able to take action to close the gap between intent and effect. Strategies that increase that quality of this type of feedback include;

- 1- Making sure that feedback is provided in relation to pre-defined criteria;
- 2- Providing feedback sooner after submission;
- 3- Providing corrective advice not just information on strengths and weaknesses;
- 4- Limiting amount of feedback so that it is used;
- 5- Prioritizing areas for improvement.

4- Encourages teacher and peer dialogue around learning;

A research finding shows that great deal of feedback given to students is not of good quality as much of it may be delayed, not relevant or informative or overwhelming in quantity or too critical or judgmental. In order for external feedback to be effective, it must be understood and internalized by the student before it can be used to make improvements. However, in the feedback literature there is a great deal of evidence that students do not understand the feedback given by tutors and are consequently not able to take action to reduce the disparity between their intentions and the effects they would wish to produce.

A way of increasing external feedback effectiveness and likelihood the information provided is understood by students is to conceptualize feedback more as dialogue rather than as an

information transmission which means that the student not only receives initial feedback information but also has the opportunity to engage the teacher in discussion about feedback. Discussions with the teacher help students to develop their understanding of expectations and standards to check out and correct misunderstanding and to get an immediate response to difficulties. Some useful strategies that make use of this principle include:

- 1- Providing feedback in class using one – minute papers.
- 2- Having students give each other feedback before submission.
- 3- Reviewing feedback in tutorials where students are asked to read the feedback comments, discuss with peers and develop strategies for improvement.
- 4- Asking students to find one or two examples of feedback comments they found helpful and explain how they helped.

5- Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem;

Motivation and self-esteem play an essential role in learning and assessment. Research has shown that feedback can have both positive or negative effects on students' motivational beliefs and self-esteem. Butler 1998 (cited in Nicole and Macfarlane-Deck 2011) has shown that feedback comments alone had more effect on students subsequent learning, compared to those situations where marks alone or feedback and marks were given. He argued that students paid less attention to the comments when giving marks and did not use them to make improvements. He also maintained that grading student performance had less effect than feedback comments because it lead students to compare themselves with others rather than focus on where they were having difficulty.

Useful strategies belonging to this principle might include: 1- providing marks on written work only after students have responded to feedback comments; 2- allocating time for students to rewrite selected pieces of work as this would help change students' expectations about purpose; 3- automated testing with feedback; 4- drafts and resubmissions.

6- Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance;

Two questions might be asked regarding external feedback. First, is the feedback of the best quality, and the second, does it lead to changes in student behavior? External feedback provides an opportunity to close the gap between current performance and the performance expected by the teacher. Unfortunately, in reality, most students in higher education have little opportunity to directly use the feedback they receive to close the gap. The most directly use would be where they resubmit assignments after feedback has been given but this is unusual as students normally move on to the next task. The result, quite expectedly, is that students may not actually read or use feedback.

The following are useful strategies: 1- providing feedback on work in progress and increasing opportunities for resubmission; 2- introducing two- stage assignments where feedback on stage one helps improve stage two; 3- teachers might model strategies they would use to close a performance gap in class; 4- specifically providing some action points alongside the normal feedback provision; 5- involving students in groups in identifying their own action points in class after they have read the feedback on their assignments.

7- Provides information that can be used to help shape teaching to teachers.

To produce relevant and informative feedback, teachers themselves need good data about how students are progressing. They, moreover, need to be involved in reviewing and reflecting on this data in taking actions to help close the gap. Good feedback practice does not only provide accessible and usable information that helps students improve their learning, but also provides good information for the teachers. Yorke 2003 (cited in Nicole and Macfarlane 2006) says the act of assessing has an effect on the assessor as well as the student. Assessors learn about the extent to which students have developed expertise and can tailor their teaching, accordingly.

Previous Studies:

Whether students like or dislike teacher's comments or feedback on their writings or not seems to be a controversial issue since this depends on many different factors. Those will be highlighted in the following section.

Zacharias (2007) revealed that generally teachers and students have a marked preference for teacher feedback; the high preference for teacher feedback was mainly the result of the respondents' positive attitudes towards teacher feedback. In addition, student preferences of teacher feedback stemmed from their awareness that teachers control grades. Student also preferred teacher feedback that was specific since this kind of feedback would facilitate students' revision process. Ferris (1997) found that 76% of teacher's suggestions were incorporated into students' revisions and that students showed a high preference for feedback which focused on language. Compared to feedback on content, feedback on form was considered to be more helpful. Students often complained that teacher feedback on content tended to be general and sometimes, contributed to students' ideas. Moreover, the interview data illustrated that teacher feedback contributed greatly to students' emotional states particularly their motivation and attitudes towards writing (Zacharias 2007). Similarly, Ashwell (2000) found that content feedback followed by form feedback is not superior to the reverse pattern or to a pattern of mixed form and content feedback. To students, it did not matter which order they received form or content feedback, nor did it matter to them whether the form and content feedback were separated. The results also showed that giving feedback assisted the subjects to improve the accuracy of their writing more than if they got no feedback. The post-hoc analysis of changes made by the students demonstrated that three-quarters of the form feedback and a smaller proportion of the content feedback was acted upon.

Regarding the effect of teacher's written comments on the students' revision of the first or pre-final versions of their writings, Hyland's (1998) results showed that the students not only said they valued feedback, but also demonstrated this

through their action in response to it, therefore they attempted to use between 86% to 94% of the total usable feedback offered. Nonetheless, some revisions appeared to be not related to the written feedback at all. The motive for such revision might have come from the students themselves. Chandler (2003) found that the students' writing improved significantly over the semester in terms of both accuracy and fluency. Students made significantly fewer errors on their revisions if the teacher had written in corrections. However, the next most explicit method of teacher response is underlining with description which produced the next fewest errors on revision.

Thus, teacher correction of students errors is viewed to play a role in the students' writing. Bitchener (2008) revealed that written corrective feedback had a significant impact on improving accuracy in the two functional uses of the English article system, and that this level of accuracy was retained for two months without additional feedback or instruction. Japanese learners' of English exposure to written corrective feedback helped them to use articles with greater consistency in subsequent writing and, in most cases, to show durable gains in accuracy. The effects of corrective feedback did not differ according to whether the feedback was focused or unfocused though there is more evidence to suggest that focused corrective feedback, i.e. giving corrective feedback to correct all the errors in learners' written work may be more effective in the long run (Ellis et al. 2008). Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) found that combination of full explicit written corrective feedback and one-to-one conference feedback enabled student to correct the past simple tense and the definite article with significantly greater accuracy in new pieces of writing than was the case with their use of prepositions. They did not only find that direct oral feedback in combination with written feedback had a great impact more than direct written feedback alone on improved accuracy over time, but also found that the combined feedback option facilitates improvement in the more "treatable" rule-governed features, the past simple tense and the definite article than the less "treatable" feature "prepositions". However, Guenette (2007) who reviewed a number of studies of the effect of corrective feedback on the students' writing viewed that the

debate continues between those who believe in giving corrective feedback to students to improve their written accuracy and those who do not. He added that the results of the many experimental studies on written corrective feedback carried out over the last 20 years have been so contradictory that second language teachers looking to support their pedagogical options to correct, or not correct, the grammar of their students' written production are left in the midst of controversy.

Some writing teachers prefer involving students themselves in giving feedback on the latter's work. Pedagogically, this can be seen from different angles since there are supporters of such teacher's practices as well as critics. Min (2006) viewed that peer response/ review had been found to help both college and secondary students get more understanding of their writing and revising processes, foster a feeling of ownership of the text, generate more positive attitudes toward writing, enhance awareness of audience, and easifying their second language acquisition. Nevertheless, students' lack of knowledge of skills for peer review and inability to provide concrete and useful feedback results in the fact that the majority of peer comments fail to be utilized in students' subsequent revisions. In this regard, Min's (2006) results demonstrated that 77% of the trained peer review feedback was incorporated into the students revision and this constituted 90% of the total revisions. This high percentage of peer feedback incorporation was in sharp contrast to that before their students received peer view training which was 39% which suggested that student writers found trained peer feedback helpful, so they were willing to incorporate it in their subsequent revision. The interviews with the group writers revealed that most of them found the trained peer review feedback helpful, especially in focusing their ideas and enriching the content by viewing things from different angles. Furthermore, some attributed their revision improvement to their peers' helpful feedback. Likewise, Miao, Badger, and Zhen (2006) revealed that peer feedback plays an essential role in Chinese EFL students' revision while writing. Most of the teacher feedback and more than half of peer feedback was incorporated, leading to successful revision in most cases, with the results that the final drafts being better than

the initial ones. In addition, the impact of teacher and peer feedback is different. More teacher feedback was incorporated than peer feedback and lead to greater improvements, but peer feedback seemed to bring about a higher percentage of meaning change revisions whereas most teacher-influenced revision happen at the surface level. Likewise, teacher initiated revisions are less successful than peer initiated ones. Moreover, the subjects valued teacher feedback more highly than peer feedback, but at the same time they recognized the importance of peer feedback. Most importantly, although peer feedback had less impact than teacher feedback, it did lead to improvements and appeared to encourage student independence. Therefore, it can be viewed as a useful adjunct to teacher feedback, even in cultures supposed to give great authority to the teacher.

Kurt and Atay (2007) found that the majority of their study subjects said that they liked peer feedback. In addition, fifteen of them reported that they found peer feedback helpful for revision while the remaining five found it useless. And when they were asked whether or not their peers were reliable feedback givers, fifteen responded positively ,whereas five responded negatively.

Methodology

Participants:

The current study's population comprises all Gaza Strip university students majoring in English as well as writing teachers at the Palestinian universities. However, the study instruments were distributed to a convenient sample, consisting of 310 male and female students from Al-Aqsa University, Al-Quds Open University , Islamic University of Gaza, and Alazhar University-Gaza in addition to 26 writing teachers.

Concerning the students' sex, the majority were females, i.e. (No=211, %= 67); whereas only 99, i.e. (33%) were males. Table (1) below shows the distribution of the students according to university and sex.

Table (1): Distribution of Students Sample According to University and Sex

<i>University</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>AL-AQSA UNIVERSITY</i>	<i>105</i>	<i>42</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>58</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>AL-AZHAR UNIVERSITY GAZA</i>	<i>81</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>26</i>	<i>60</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>AL-QUDS OPEN UNIVERSITY</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>34</i>	<i>25</i>	<i>66</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF GAZA</i>	<i>86</i>	<i>23</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>63</i>	<i>73</i>	<i>100</i>
<i>Total</i>	<i>310</i>	<i>99</i>	<i>33</i>	<i>211</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>100</i>

As for teachers sample, they were 26 from seven different Palestinian universities in Gaza Strip and the West Bank. Those were 18, i.e. (69 %) male and 8, i.e. (31%) female teachers.

Instrumentation:

Two questionnaires following the taxonomy of Likert scale in which opinions were graded {strongly agree (5), agree (4), neutral (3), disagree (2) and strongly disagree (1)} have been used to collect the data for the present study. The first one which addresses students' views towards their writing teachers' feedback comprises 42 items and the second dealing with Palestinian university writing teachers' practices also includes 42 items. It is worth mentioning, students questionnaire includes two other columns beside each item inquiring about their liking or disliking of their writing teachers' feedback practices to test their reactions towards teachers' feedback practices. Furthermore, teachers questionnaire embraces two other

variables beside each item to identify to what extent teachers are aware of educationally sound and unsound feedback practices.

Validity and reliability:

Adopting Alpha Chronbach statistical method, both teachers and students questionnaires proved reliable, i.e. (Sig.= 0.872, 0.834 respectively). To assure the previous results, the researchers also used Mann-Whetny, Kolmogrov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk to test efficiency and normality of both questionnaires items. Those were strongly correlated with each other, which is evidence that the study instruments were valid .

Analysis, Results and Discussion:

This section deals with analysis of data, presentation of results and discussion and interpretation of these results. It attempts to answer the research questions. The statistical tests adopted in this study are the percentages and frequencies. Results will be presented and discussed in the light of the research questions.

Research question 1: What are the principles of feedback in education in general and in writing in particular?

To answer this question, there are seven common principles which make teacher's feedback fruitful. Those are previously presented in the literature review.

Research question 2: What is the reality of Palestinian university writing teachers' feedback practices?

In this section, the researchers intend to know to what extent Palestinian university writing teachers use feedback practices. This can be achieved through comparing teachers' responses to

the frequency of using such practices with students' responses to the frequency of receiving these practices. To answer this question, frequencies and percentages were calculated. Table (2) provides the answer to the research question.

A thorough look on table (2) reveals that there are big differences between the writing teachers' responses and those of their students in 9 items. The teachers' estimates of their feedback practices are very much higher than the students'. These items are five where the teachers' estimates are as high as (84.44) whereas the students' are (66.64) with a difference of 17.8%. Likewise, the teachers' responses on item (17) scored as high as 71.78%, and the students' were 31.3% with discrepancy of 20.84%. Here the teachers denied that they were sarcastic of their students' writing but, unfortunately, nearly half of the subjects asserted that their teachers were sarcastic. Regarding item no (18), the majority of the respondents, i.e. (70.3) asserted that teachers used a red pen when providing comments; nearly 60% of the students' responses asserted the use of red pen. Additionally 19 writing teachers claimed that they devoted an exctenusive amount of time for giving feedback to their students. They assigned 87.34% to this practice. However, the students viewed things unsurprisingly, differently as they assigned only 62.32% to this item with difference of 24.82%. Regarding item (27), the teachers asserted that they used mitigated language when they provided feedback to their students. They gave themselves 86.68% on this item. Conversely, the students assigned 69.48% to this item with a difference of (16.86) which is, indeed, a big difference. This meant that students did not feel that language of feedback they received was mitigated.

Table (2): Teachers and students' responses to the frequency of the use of feedback practices

No.	Item	Teachers' Responses			Students' Responses		
		%	Educ.sound	Educ. unsound	%	like	dislike
1	I provide oral as well as written feedback on student's composition.	84.46	85.2	14.8	78.8	85.7	10.4
2	I always tend to have a good rapport with the students which improves their abilities in writing.	83.62	77.8	7.4	75.14	86	9.8
3	I read the entire composition the student makes, then I make my comments on it.	77.7	70.4	14.8	67.54	56	37.8
4	My comments focus mainly on how to write.	73.26	63.0	18.5	78.22	69.5	24.4
5	I offer specific suggestions or strategies for revision.	84.44	81.5	18.5	66.64	70.6	19
6	My feedback is very short (fewer than 10 words).	62.16	51.9	29.6	62.88	38.9	51
7	I evaluate the ideas covered and evidence given in students' writings.	82.98	70.4	14.8	75.96	75.6	18.5
8	I focus on the negative aspects in the student's writing.	47.94	29.6	51.9	55.46	37.3	57.4
9	I pay attention to theme development.	74.82	74.1	7.4	73.84	76.8	17.9
10	I compare a student's writing with others'	53.28	37	48.1	54.94	53.5	38.9

	writing.						
11	I give the student chance for second and third revisions after getting my feedback.	74.74	81.5	18.5	64.98	68.6	24.1
12	I give them feedback on a separate sheet.	45.14	48.1	37	50.06	55.7	36.4
13	I make sure that they implement the feedback I have given them in their subsequent writing tasks.	73.26	77.8	7.4	65.68	66.4	23.8
14	My comments ask how ideas are related.	70.3	66.7	14.8	73.16	82.1	11.2
15	I ask about the importance of some statements.	59.2	55.6	22.2	70	68.3	22.4
16	I ask for an explanation if something the student stated was not clear.	74.6	74.1	11.1	73.7	73.1	22.1
17	I am never sarcastic when I provide feedback on the student's writing.	71.78	66.7	14.8	51.3	34.5	59.7
18	I use a red pen to provide students with comments on their writing.	70.3	51.9	29.6	59.78	45.9	46.2
19	I devote an extensive amount of time to writing comments on students' compositions.	87.34	51.9	33.3	62.52.	56.3	35
20	I give marks on students' drafts.	50.32	51.9	29.6	59.08	56.3	35
21	I personalize feedback, i.e. I compare the learner with himself -not with others.	66.6	63	22.2	58.92	59.9	31.1
22	I provide them with corrective feedback on	77.04	66.7	18.5	77.2	80.1	14.8

	their writings.						
23	My feedback is informative, i.e. I tell students what to do then.	75.48	70.4	14.8	73.54	79	16
24	I give students specific directions on what to do concerning the writing task at hand.	76.96	77.8	7.4	70.3	70.6	24.4
25	The feedback I give on students' writings is honest.	85.94	66.7	14.8	80.62	81.8	12
26	My comments are factual, i.e. I avoid mere differences of opinion and focuses on content, organization and purpose.	82.88	77.8	7.4	76.3	64.4	30.3
27	I Provide mitigated commentary, i.e. I provide commentary in such a way that doesn't disappoint my students.	86.68	81.5	3.7	69.48	66.9	25.2
28	My feedback on students' papers improves their writing.	84.44	33.3	51.9	69.48	79	14.4
29	My feedback on their paper makes them feel angry with themselves.	66.6	40.7	44.4	81.64	36.7	56.9
30	My comments show dissatisfaction with student's work.	51.06	22.2	63	51.52	52.9	39.2
31	My comments on the student's writing do not allow space for him to think on his own to improve his writing.	40.7	74.1	7.4	58.76	80.7	14.3
32	I discuss common errors made by the	81.5	44.4	37	78.02	70	24.4

	students.						
33	I concern myself with underlining students' errors without giving correction.	58.46	66.7	18.5	76.62	38.4	57.4
34	I use a mixture of correction with commentary and error identification.	77.7	29.6	55.6	53.6	57.4	36.1
35	I underline all students' errors in the composition not paying attention to their reactions.	45.14	29.6	55.6	65.22	40.3	52.7
36	I correct every single mistake the student makes in his writing.	46.62	25.9	55.6	60.3	61.6	33.9
37	I ignore many of students' errors and fallacies in their writings to maintain their self-confidence.	74	70.4	11.1	66.06	51.3	44
38	I concentrate on their grammar and spelling mistakes.	68.82	51.9	33.3	55.36	74.8	21
39	I praise and encourage students as a reaction to their improvement in writing.	90.38	81.5	3.7	73.8	79	16
40	I adopt teacher- student conferencing, i.e. discuss students' writings in the class.	77.7	74.1	11.1	72.94	72.2	20.2
41	I train students to give feedback on their peers' writings.	76.96	85.2	14.8	68.52	67.5	26.9
42	I involve students in peer evaluation.	78.44	74.1	11.1	65.74	63.9	30.8

Regarding item (28) the teachers believed that the feedback they gave to their students improved the students' writing. So they assigned 84.44% to this feedback practice. Nonetheless, the students did not believe the case was so and they assigned this item 69.48% with difference of 14.96%. Concerning item (34), the teachers claimed that they used a mixture of correction with commentary and error identification and they assigned 77.7% to this item whereas their students did not recognize this claim and assigned only 53.6% to this item with a difference of 24.1%. As for item (38) which investigates whether writing teachers concentrated on the students' grammar errors and spelling mistakes, the writing teachers gave this practice 68.28 while the students gave only 55.36 with difference of 13.46%. Finally, item (42) which inquires if writing teachers involved students in peer correction, the teachers assigned 77.7% to this feedback practice while the students assigned only 65.74%. However, there are 6 items in which there were big different estimates when students gave higher values to the items than those of the teachers.

Interestingly, concerning item 29, the teachers gave it 66.6% whereas the students gave it 81.64%. This result is neither strange nor surprising if we know that the item inquires whether the feedback the teachers gave made the students angry. It is quite obvious the teachers denied such an accusation whereas the students felt that the feedback they received made them feel angry. Differently, Zakharias's (2007) subjects found their teachers' feedback comments motivating. The result obtained in the present study do not differ to the fifth principal of good feedback which states that teacher's feedback should encourage positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem. Similarly, item (31) which inquires whether teachers' feedback comments left students with a space to think on their own to improve their writing, the majority of the writing teachers declined such practice as they assigned it only 40.7% while the students assigned the same practice 58.76% with a disparity of 18.06%. Regarding, item (33) which investigates whether writing teachers contented themselves with only underlining students' errors, the teacher gave the item 58.46% which means more or less they did not content themselves with error

underlining. However, the students assigned 76.62% to the same item which means that teachers content, to a large extent, themselves with underlining. The difference is 18.16%. Concerning, item (35) which investigate whether writing teachers underlined all the students' errors without heeding their emotional reaction, the writing teachers did not confess that they did so and assigned only 45.14% to this item while the students assigned 65.22% to this item with a difference of 20.08%, which means that students felt that teachers did not care about students' feelings.

Regarding item (36) which enquires whether writing teachers corrected every single mistake a student made, they assigned 46.62% which means, from the teachers' viewpoint, that they abstained from correcting every single mistake. However, the students assigned 60.3% with a difference of 13.68%. This means that the majority of the students felt differently and saw that teachers did so.

Perusal of the table uncovers an interesting fact which is namely that writing teachers' estimates of their writing feedback practices and those of their students were identical or nearly identical on 9 items where the difference did not exceed 5%. The items are no 6 ,8, 9, 10, 14, 16, 22, 23 and 30. This, undoubtedly, highlights students' relative objectivity when appraising their teachers and made the researchers trust the students' estimates.

Regarding the remaining items, the disparity in the estimates of the teachers and the students ranges between 6% and 10%. This perusal, once more again, convinced the researchers of trustworthiness of the students' responses.

Research Question 3: What are the educationally sound writing feedback practices as perceived by Palestinian university writing professors?

A study of table (2) shows that the educationally sound writing feedback practices are (19) practices if we consider the sound feedback practice is the one that gets 70% and more of the writing teachers' estimates of the soundness of the practice.

These are items 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 16, 23, 24, 26, 27, 31, 37, 39, 40, 41 and 42.

Expectedly, the writing teachers' judgments of the feedback practice are extremely accurate if we assess these evaluations against the seven principles of good feedback and the literature written on writing feedback practices. Teachers' responses on items 31 and 37 uncover their lack of knowledge concerning the soundness of the practice. To elaborate, teachers' comments on the students' writing should leave a chance for them to think and improve as teachers are not expected to spoonfeed them and give them everything. We mean writing professors should leave students with something to do on their own. Similarly, writing professor must ignore many of the errors but not fallacies of the students only to maintain the students' self confidence. This response is specifically mistaken because the item asks about two contradictory things namely not correcting all the mistakes in order not to frustrate learners, which is an educationally sound practice and leaving students' fallacies without correction which is unsound. This analysis, definitely, shows the Palestinian university writing professors are highly aware of the literature on feedback. More importantly, it reveals that they are very qualified and knowledgeable as well. Their case is so because most of them hold M.A. or Ph.D. degrees which they mostly got from European universities.

Research Question 4: What are the educationally unsound writing feedback practices as perceived by Palestinian university writing professors?

Table (2) shows that the number of the educationally unsound writing feedback practices which got less than 70% of the writing professors estimates are 23. They are items: 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 25, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, and 38. The researchers will divide these items which got lower than 70% into two groups: the first includes the feedback practices on which there is a consensus by educators and writing literature that they are not educationally sound; the second involves the practices which are sound but got less than 70%. The first group includes the following items: item (6) which

states that teachers' feedback is short, which is not an advantage. This item got 51.9%. Item (8) which inquires whether teachers focus on the negative aspects of students' writing which got 51.9% from the responses of professors who consider it unsound and 29.6% deem it sound. Item (10) which investigates whether the professor compares a student writing with his colleague's was considered sound by 37% and unsound by 48.1%. Similarly, item (18) on which 51.9% of the writing teachers admitted using the red pen and believed that this practice is educationally sound while 29.6% saw it unsound. Item (20) inquires whether teachers give marks on their students' drafts which is definitely unsound. 51.9% of the sample, i.e. teachers considered it acceptable while 29.6% deemed it unsound.

Item (29) investigates whether teachers' feedback irritates their students. 40.7% believed that this practice is sound while 44.4% believed that it is unsound. Item (30) inquires whether writing teachers showed dissatisfaction with their students' writing. 63% of the sample rightly considered it unacceptable while 22.2% saw it acceptable. Item (35) inquires whether writing teachers contented themselves with underlining all students' errors regardless of students' reaction. 55.6% considered it unsound whereas 29.6% considered it sound. Item (36) inquires whether all students' errors got corrected. 55.6% rightly believed that this practice is unsound because error correction is selective whereas 25.9% saw it sound. Item (38) investigates whether teachers concentrated on students' grammar and spelling errors. 51.9% of the respondents erroneously considered it sound while 33.3% considered it unsound.

The second group involves a set of items which are considered educationally sound but got less than 70% of the respondents views due to the fact that about 20% of the respondents, due to inattention, did not respond which ultimately, we believe, adversely affected the result. These items will be discussed as follows: item (4) which inquires whether teachers' comments focused on how to write, 63% considered it sound whereas a minority of 18.5% judged it as being unsound. Item (14) asks whether the comments asked how ideas were related. 66.7% saw it educationally sound which is

true whereas 14.8% saw it unsound. Item (15) inquires whether writing teachers asked their students about why a certain sentence was there and why it was important. This is related to coherence which is essential in writing. 55.6% agreed that this practice was sound where 22.2% did not recognize its significance. Item (17) inquires whether teachers were sarcastic 59.7% saw it acceptable, while 34.5% saw things differently. Item (19) examines whether teacher devoted extensive time for giving feedback. 51.9% deemed it, undoubtedly, educationally sound while, surprisingly, fairly high percentage of 33.3 saw it unsound. Item (21) tests whether teachers personalized feedback. 63% perceived it sound and 22.2% saw it unsound. Item (22) inquires whether teachers provided corrective feedback, 66.7% saw it sound but 18.5% viewed it unsound. Bitchener (2008) stated that written corrective feedback had a significant impact on improving accuracy in the two functional uses of the English article system. However, Guenette (2007) who reviewed a number of studies of the effect of corrective feedback on the students' writing viewed that the debate continues between those who believe in giving corrective feedback to students to improve their written accuracy and those who do not. He added that the results of the many experimental studies on written corrective feedback carried out over the last 20 years had been so contradictory that second language teachers looking to support their pedagogical options to correct, or not correct, the grammar of their students' written production are left in the midst of controversy.

Item (25) inquires about the honesty of feedback given. 66.7% correctly perceived it sound while a minority of 14.8% saw it otherwise. Item (32) investigates whether teachers discussed common errors made by students, which is a normal and sound practice though it is not enough. 44.4% considered it sound while 37% considered it not sound. Item (34) investigates whether writing professors use a mixture of underlining and correction. 29.6% considered it sound while 55.6% saw it unsound.

Research Question 5: What are the feedback practices students like?

A thorough look at tables (2 and 3) reveals that students like 17 writing feedback practices if we take 70% as a criterion against which liking or disliking can be assessed. These are item 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 14, 16, 22, 23, 24, 25, 28, 31, 32, 38, 39, and 40. There is a match between some practices students liked and those teachers considered educationally sound. This match appeared on 11 items namely item 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 16, 23, 24, 31, 39, and 40.

To illustrate more, item (1) examines whether writing professors provided oral and written feedback. Regarding this item, 85.2% of the teachers viewed it as being sound and an equal percentage of students expressed their liking of this practice. Similarly, item (2) tests whether writing professors were concerned with creating rapport between them and their students. 77.5% of the respondents saw it sound and 86% of the students liked it. Concerning item (5) which inquires whether writing professors gave specific suggestions and strategies for revision to their students, 81.5% asserted it as educationally sound and 70.6% of the students responded favorably. The result here agrees with Zakharias's (2007) who found that student preferences for teacher feedback stemmed from their awareness that teachers control grades. Zacharias also added that students preferred teacher feedback that was specific since this kind of feedback would facilitate it for students in the revision process. Item (7) is concerned with evaluating students' ideas and evidence they cited in their writing. 70.4% of the professors took it to be sound and 75.6% of the students liked it. Item (9) explores whether teachers paid attention to theme development 74.1% of the professors believed it was sound and almost an equal percentage, i.e. 76.8 of the students liked it. Item (16) asks whether teachers asked for clarification from the students in case some of what they wrote was unclear. 74.1% perceived it sound and 73.1% of the students responded positively.

Item (23) examines whether teachers' feedback is informative and tells students what to do then. 70.4% said that the practice is sound. By the same token, 79 of the students expressed their liking of this practice. Concerning item (24)

which enquires if the writing professors give specific directions on the writing task at hand, 77.8% perceived it as sound and likewise 70.6% of the students liked it. Regarding item (31) which states that teacher's the comments do not allow space for the student to think on his own to improve his writing, strangely, 80.7% of the students liked it though it is not a sound practice. Here students might have understood this item differently or responded to it carelessly. With item (39) which investigates whether teachers praise and encourage students as a result of their improvement, 81.5% of the professors valued this practice and 79% of the students looked at it favorably. Finally, item (40) concerning conferencing with students and discussing their errors inside class, 74.1 considered it educationally sound and 72.2% of the students liked it.

Regarding the remaining item, the researchers discuss them as follows: item (14) which enquires if the teachers comments ask how ideas are related, 66.7% of the professors considered it sound but 82.1% of the students liked it. Item (22) explores whether teachers give corrective feedback, 66.7% of the professors perceived it sound and 80.1 of the learners liked it. Item (25) enquires about the honesty of feedback given. 66.7% of the professors viewed it sound whereas 81.8 of the students liked it. Additionally, item (32) which investigates whether the discussion of common errors is a sound practice, 44.4% said it is unsound while 70% of the students liked it. Item (38) which assesses the educational soundness of concentrating on students' grammar and spelling mistakes, 51.9% said it is sound and 33.3% said it is unsound; however, 74% of the students liked it.

Research Question 6: What are the feedback practice students dislike?

Table (2) clearly shows that students disliked (25) writing feedback practices given by writing professors. These are items No.3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 27, 29, 30, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 41 and 42. To elaborate, a perusal of the table shows that students disliked 8 practices considered educationally sound by the writing professors. They are

discussed as follows: item (3) which enquires about the soundness of reading the entire composition the student makes before starting writing comments on writing tasks, 70.4% of the teachers assessed it as sound while 56% of the students liked it and 37.8% disliked it. Item (11) assesses the soundness of giving the student chance for second and third revision of getting feedback. 81.5% of the writing instructors perceived it as educationally sound whereas 68.6% of the students liked it and 24.1% disliked it. Regarding item (13) which assesses whether teachers made sure that the students implemented the feedback they received, 77.8% of the instructors asserted it as educationally sound whereas 66.4% of the students liked it and 23.8% disliked it. Hyland's (1998) results, however, showed that the students not only said they valued feedback, but also demonstrated this through their action in response to it; therefore, they attempted to use between 86% to 94% of the total usable feedback offered. In this regard, Min's (2006) results demonstrated that 77% of the trained peer review feedback was incorporated into the students revision and this constituted 90% of the total revisions. Item (26) appraises the educational soundness of providing factual commentary and avoiding mere differences of opinion besides focusing on content, organization and purpose, 77.8% of the instructors approved its soundness; conversely, 64.4% of the students disliked it and 30.3% liked it.

Item (27) is related to giving mitigated commentary that does not disappoint the students. 81.5% of the professors approved of its soundness. Yet, 66.9% of the students expressed their liking of it. Item (37) assesses the educational soundness of ignoring the students' fallacies and errors for maintaining the students' self confidence. 70.4% of the instructors judged it as being sound and only 51.3% of the students expressed their liking of it. Item (41) assesses the soundness of training students to give feedback to their peers. 85.2% of the professors, judiciously, considered it sound; however, 67.5% of the students liked it. Finally, item (42) inquires about the validity of involving students in peer evaluation. 74.1% of the instructors perceived it as sound but 63.9% liked it. Miao, Badger, and Zhen (2006) revealed that peer feedback plays an essential role in Chinese EFL students'

revision while writing. Most of the teacher feedback and more than half of peer feedback is incorporated, leading to successful revision in most cases, with the results that the final drafts being better than the initial ones. Furthermore, Kurt and Atay (2007) found that the majority of their study subjects said that they liked peer feedback. In addition, fifteen of them reported that they found peer feedback helpful for revision while the remaining five found it useless. And when they were asked whether or not their peers were reliable feedback givers, fifteen responded positively, whereas five responded negatively. Besides, the students expressed their disliking of 16 writing feedback practices provided by writing professors. These were assigned low percentages of educational soundness by writing professors. These items are: 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 29, 30, 33, 35 and 36.

Research question 7: Are there any statistically significant differences in Palestinian English majoring students' approval of their writing teachers' feedback due to gender?

This question will be answered with reference to tables (2) above and (3) below.

A profound look at table (3) reveals that there are some differences between male and female students in their preference of their teachers' feedback practices. The differences mainly existed in items 7, 8, 10, 12, 15, 18, 26, 35 and 41 and can be attributed to a number of reasons and justifications which will be explained below. Those were as follows: five in favor of males, namely items 8, 10, 12, 18 and 35 and the rest are in favor of females, i.e. items 7, 15, 26 and 41.

In their reaction towards item (7) whether the teacher evaluates the ideas covered and evidence given in their writing, female students liked such a practice with a percentage of 71.75 with a difference of over than 14%. The result here shows that both males and females liked evaluative feedback. With reference to table (2) teachers' estimates of this item were 82.98% and those

of students were about 76%. It is worth mentioning this feedback practice which was estimated by teachers to be educationally sound got a percentage of 70.4 and matches with the standards of soundness in the literature review.

For item (8) whether the teacher focuses on the negative aspects in the students' writing, the teachers whose estimates were 54% judged it as educationally sound, i.e. % = 51.9. Though such a practice does not match with soundness standards, it is usually frequented by teachers. In the students' reactions towards this practice, 55.46% mentioned that their teachers frequently adopt it (see table 2). For the students' responses whether they like this practice or not, there were differences due to their sex in favor of males. That is to say, 52.98% of males liked this practice whereas only 30.39% of female students liked it. The discrepancy here could be attributed to some psychological considerations where females are more sensitive than males and hence do not like to be criticized or their errors to be revealed. Strangely enough, the majority of male students liked this practice though it emphasizes the negative aspects in the students' product. This may be due to the fact that male students due to their low levels of achievement want to learn more or found nothing unusual about this practice.

Similarly, item (10) which inquires about the teachers' practice of comparing the student's writings with one another's, which is, of course, a negative practice and unsound according to Nicole's seven principles of good feedback. This is sometimes frequented by Palestinian university professors with a percentage of 55.28%. In the students' reactions towards this practice nearly 55% of the students showed their approval. Differences were found between students' reactions towards this practice. Whereas 70.07% of male students asserted that they like this practice, only 50.24% of female students showed their liking of it. The result here may be justified by the assumption that male students like to learn from their peers more than girls do.

Table (3): Gender differences in students' preference of feedback practices

No.	Item Writing teacher	Male		Female	
		% Like	% Dislike	% Like	% Dislike
1	provides oral as well as written feedback on my composition.	88.97	11.03	89.37	10.63
2	tends to improve our writing abilities through developing his relationship with us.	89.70	10.30	89.80	10.20
3	Makes his comments on the entire composition as a whole – not on its parts.	61.76	38.24	58.29	41.71
4	comments focus mainly on how to write.	72.38	27.62	77.11	22.89
5	offers specific suggestions or strategies for revision.	80.8	19.2	77.43	22.57
6	feedback is very short (fewer than 10 words).	47.2	52.8	40.81	59.19
7	evaluates the ideas covered and evidence given in my writing.	71.75	28.25	85.85	14.15
8	Focuses on the negative aspects and sees nothing promising in my writing accordingly.	52.98	47.02	30.39	69.61
9	pays attention to theme development.	76.47	23.53	84.16	15.84
10	compares my writing with others' writings.	70.07	29.93	50.24	49.76
11	gives me chance for second and third revisions after getting his feedback.	71.21	28.79	75.88	24.12
12	gives us feedback on a separate sheet.	74.80	25.20	51.48	48.52
13	makes sure that we implement the feedback he has given us	68	32	77.15	22.85

	in our subsequent writing tasks.				
14	comments ask how ideas are related.	86.15	13.85	89.16	10.84
15	asks about the importance of some statements.	64.56	35.44	82.23	17.77
16	asks for an explanation if something I stated was not clear.	77.94	22.06	76	24
17	is sarcastic when he provides feedback on my writing.	38.34	61.66	34.78	65.22
18	uses a red pen to provide me with comments on my writing.	57.25	42.75	47.08	52.92
19	devotes an extensive amount of time to writing comments on my composition.	56.25	43.75	65.15	34.85
20	gives marks on our drafts.	63.07	34.93	60.71	39.29
21	Personalizes the feedback he provides, i.e. he compares me with myself- not with others.	62	38	68.36	31.64
22	provides us with corrective feedback on our writings.	82.22	17.78	85.78	14.22
23	feedback is informative , i.e. teacher tells me what to do then.	77.77	22.23	86.76	13.24
24	uses directive commentary, i.e. he gives us specific directions on what to do concerning the writing task at hand.	71.85	28.15	76	24
25	feedback he gives on my writing is honest.	82.57	17.43	90.14	9.86
26	comments are factual, i.e. he avoids mere differences of opinion and focuses on content, organization and purpose.	52.67	47.33	77.77	22.23
27	Provides mitigated commentary, i.e. he provides his commentary in such a way that doesn't disappoint or	68.25	31.75	75.37	24.63

	frustrate me.				
28	feedback on my paper improves my writing.	83.46	16.54	85.07	14.93
29	feedback on my paper makes me feel angry with myself.	35.33	64.67	41.80	58.20
30	comments show his dissatisfaction with my work.	62	38	54.35	45.65
31	comments on my writing allow space for me to think on my own to improve my writing.	82.35	17.65	86.70	13.30
32	discusses common errors made by the students.	70.60	29.40	76.60	23.40
33	concerns himself with underlining my errors without giving correction.	43.80	56.20	37.56	62.44
34	uses a mixture of correction with commentary and error identification.	56	44	65	35
35	underline all students' errors in the composition, not paying attention to our reactions.	52.27	47.73	37.5	62.5
36	corrects every single mistake I make in my writing.	69.56	30.44	61.08	38.92
37	ignores many of our errors and fallacies in our writings to maintain our self-confidence.	54.74	45.26	53.20	46.80
38	concentrates on my grammar and spelling mistakes.	81.88	18.12	75.49	24.51
39	Praises and encourages me as a reaction to my improvement in writing.	81.75	19.25	84.15	15.85
40	adopts teacher- student conferencing, i.e. discusses our writings in the class.	76.74	23.26	79.31	20.69
41	trains us to give feedback on our peers' writings.	65.21	34.79	75.88	24.12
42	involves my colleagues in peer evaluation.	67.40	32.60	67.48	32.51

By the same reasoning, male students' reactions towards item (12) inquiring whether writing teachers give feedback on a separate sheet were more positive than those of females. The former approved it with a percentage of 74.80 and the latter's estimates was 51.48%. No doubt, providing feedback on a separate sheet is an educationally sound practice, but frequented by teachers with a percentage of 45.14. It is apparent that females do not prefer receiving feedback on another sheet.

Item (35) inquires whether teachers underline all students' errors in the composition, a minority of teachers, i.e. 45.41 confessed doing so. The same percentage of students agreed with their teachers. No doubt, this practice is educationally unsound since it misleads and frustrates students. An interesting point here is that 52.74% of males showed their liking of this practice while only 37.5 of females approved it. Boys seem to be interested in some practices in spite of being unsound. This may be attributed to the nature of boys who prefer challenging things.

Finally, item (41) which asks teachers if they train their students to give feedback on their peers' writings and which conforms to soundness is frequented by teachers with a percentage of 76.96. Students' reactions towards this practice were positive in favor of their teachers' use of this strategy, i.e. %= 68.52. Both males and females assured that they like this practice whereas we find that females like it with a percentage of 75.88 and males' liking was estimated 67.40%. It can be concluded that females have more positive tendency towards collaborative or group learning than towards individual learning.

Pedagogical Implications:

There are a number of implications needed to be discussed and considered:

Firstly: The educational soundness of a writing feedback practice is to be judged as such if the target group of learners like it. This is important because feedback, by its very nature, is influenced by the social, educational, and cultural context. This means that a feedback practice is not inherently sound or unsound and what makes it so is the student's emotional reaction

towards such a practice. Pennycook (2000: 89) rightly notes that "Classrooms ,both in themselves and in their relationship to the world beyond their walls, are complex social and cultural spaces." This is a Fact of which some writing tutors are, unfortunately, not aware as the study revealed. Moreover, the gender of the learner is to be considered when giving feedback as females are more tender and sensitive particularly when it comes to Palestinian university female students majoring in English as a foreign language and a demanding skill such as writing. Educators recognize that learning a foreign language is a difficult task that requires both time and energy. It is well known that in the context of hard learning tasks, feedback should be administered reasonably, understandingly and carefully as well.

Secondly, writing teachers are unable to provide timely feedback to their learners as the analysis of the findings has already shown. Undoubtedly, the case is so even if the writing tutors declined admitting that. They are overburdened and overwhelmed by hundreds of students enrolled in writing courses. A tutor cannot give feedback to them on weekly and biweekly bases as a detailed and informative feedback on hundreds of scripts is not that easy. That is why the top management of Palestinian universities should reconsider their attitudes concerning the overcrowded writing classes. A class of more than fifty students is far from being an ideal learning setting to teach writing in a foreign language context.

Thirdly, Palestinian universities need to establish writing centres as is the case in European universities. Those help students to learn writing via giving and receiving feedback to and from their peers. These writing centres relieve writing tutors from some of their burdens.

A fourth implication of the study is to train writing tutors to give electronic feedback on the writings of their students. This practice has the potentiality of making personal conferences with individual learners and the virtual classes where writing teachers can dedicate extra time for giving feedback to their students. Here, writing tutors can comfortably allocate

additional time for helping, via electronic feedback, their learners to develop writing skills. Without adopting this kind of feedback, the researchers strongly believe that the Picture of writing and feedback on students' writings will remain gloomy in Palestine and the Arab World as well.

Conclusion:

The current study investigated a variety of issues pertaining to teachers' feedback. It was concerned with feedback practices Palestinian university professors frequently use and the extent to which they are aware of the soundness or unsoundness of these practices. The study also investigated Palestinian university students' reactions towards their teachers' feedback practices.

The results of the present study showed that Palestinian university writing professors are aware of the educational soundness and unsoundness of the majority of feedback practices and use sound ones quite often. Their students mostly agreed with their teachers' responses; however some discrepancies occurred between teachers' responses and their students' reactions towards certain practices, (see table 2). Moreover, students indicated their liking of most of their teachers' practices, particularly the sound ones. Surprisingly, students sometimes showed their liking of certain unsound practices.

Regarding students gender role in the students' preference or approval of teachers' feedback practices, a number of differences existed, particularly in nine items; five items were in favor of males and the other four items were in favor of female students. For the rest of teachers' practices male and female students agreed on their liking or disliking. Strange enough, male students revealed their liking of certain unsound practices such as teacher's use of red pen, focusing on the negative aspects in their writings, comparing their writings with those of their colleagues and underlining of all their errors. It is worth mentioning, differences in favor of female students' liking of teachers' feedback practices were all in those conforming to soundness.

The findings of the current study may have implications for FL teaching theory. The study mainly concentrated on 42 practices-not all, hence further research is still needed to investigate other teacher's feedback practices in writing (such as the effect of peer and group feedback) as well as in other language skills.

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