Students' Self-Correction: A Strategy for Writing Improvement

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Abstract

The purpose of this action research is to find out why students are disinterested in writing and implement self-correction technique to motivate them in writing. I purposively selected the participants for this study consisting of 35 students of grade six studying in one of the schools in Surkhet valley. The study was based on Exploratory Action Research (EAR) with mixed-method approach in which I employed questionnaire, discussion and note-copy observation as the tools for data collection. After reviewing the data self-correction technique was taken into action. The result indicates that self-correction technique enables the students' writing along with motivating and developing their interest in writing. This study encourages the teachers and ELT practitioners to conduct similar studies in other skills of language learning to explore and implement student-centered teaching strategies in the classrooms.

Background of the study

At present, I'm working as a graduate teacher of English at Sainik Awasiya Mahavidyalaya Surkhet. I teach English subject from grade six to ten. Having experience of teaching students of elementary level to university level for thirteen years, my interests focus on teaching English with student-centered techniques and researching different issues and challenges faced by the instructors and the learners in English as a foreign language context. In the beginning of the academic session (2079 BS), I decided to conduct this research as I felt my students did careless while doing writing assignments. While writing answers to reading comprehension, they copied the whole sentence in which they found the word included in the question. They also took help from talented friends. They just wrote for the sake of completing assignment doing minor mistakes like: using verb forms, spellings, sentence structure, etc. Then, I shared this issue in my department; my colleagues also raised the same issue. I started reading different books and research articles related to teaching writing to identify how the students

could write creatively with full participation and what activities could be done in the classroom for improving students' writing skill. Although the students were also delivered the classes of other subjects in English as a medium of instruction, the students seemed to have fear of writing in English with proper cohesion and coherence. Students could write but they did not write smoothly and speak fluently and accurately. The same problem existed in almost all classes but I selected Six (Deutibajai) class for this study. This study only focused on improving the writing skills of the students. I wanted to make my students write what they thought. Similarly, I wanted to enable them to identify the errors in their writings. Before starting this research, I made them write themselves and I correct them many times. I suggested them write again according to the correction. Again, they wrote, even then, I had to correct them repeatedly. However, the students' work remained same, and the students did not show much interest in writing. This issue became urgent to make my learners identify their writing and errors in their writing to make corrections themselves.

Exploratory action research

Exploratory Action Research (EAR) introduced by Richard Smith in 2013 (Smith, 2015) is regarded as one of the most appropriate approaches to understand classroom issues and to implement effective strategies to overcome those challenges (Mertler, 2009). To address real-world problems, the EAR is a research approach that incorporates components of both exploration and action (Smith & Rebolledo, 2018). It helps to explore, understand and improve the existing teaching-learning activities and drives self-solutions from the teacher him/her self. EAR focuses on gaining new knowledge and understanding for taking action to consider effective change or betterment in teaching-learning activities.

EAR is a research approach that combines elements of both exploration and action to address real-world problems. The main objective of EAR is to generate new knowledge and understanding while also taking practical action to bring about change or improvement (Koshy, 2005). This method enables a dynamic and iterative process (Burns & McPherson, 2017) in which researchers and participants learn from one another and adjust their behaviors in response to new information and insights. Because it combines rigorous research methods with practical implementation of findings (Ivankova, 2015), it can be an effective way to handle complex and tough situations (Smith & Rebolledo, 2018). It also entails planning, exploring, analyzing and reflecting on the data. The Action research stage involves preparing for intervention, carrying out the plan, observing the consequences of intervention, and commenting on the changes that occurred as a result of intervention.

Self-correction technique

Self-correction technique is one of the student-centred techniques in which the students are allowed to revise and edit their writing themselves. When students correct themselves rather than having a teacher do it, this is called self-correction (Makino, 1993). Makino (1993) further states that the learners who are able to correct their own errors can activate their linguistic competence. It also encourages the learners to be more autonomous and process oriented (Ungureanu & Georgescu, 2012) in teaching English as a second language situation. By providing students with varying degrees of direction regarding the location and nature of their errors as well as models of effective language use to contrast their own with teachers can encourage students to engage in self-correction. The students can monitor, evaluate and adjust their writing process if they got self-correcting opportunity (Yang, 2010). After all, I realized to embed self-correction technique in my class while teaching writing to the students.

Therefore, I want to conduct this EAR to enhance my teaching strategy in the English classroom.

Objective of the study

The objectives of this research are as follows:
1. To identified the causes of unwillingness of students' in free writing activities and

2. To explore the appropriate implications to increase students' interest in writing activities

Methodology

Researcher employed exploratory action research approach to accomplish this study. The study area was Sainik Awasiya Mahavidyalaya Surkhet. There were altogether 105 students were studying in class six among them 35 students were selected for the study in grade six. Researcher used to make a list about those students who frequently unwilling to submit their assignment specially in English class. Those students were selected through purposive sampling method on the basis of regular class observation. This study embedded need assessment, observation, action (intervention), and reflection.

Exploration

Before I began this study, I got consent from the school principal about the Exploratory Action Research (EAR) project. I wanted to explore the reasons that deterred the students of grade six from writing with their teacher and what strategies I applied to make them develop interest in their writing. I used questionnaire, informal discussion with the students, students' note copies observation and self-reflective notes to explore the data. I prepared my reflection as well as collected students' self-reflective notes.

I employed a whole week on a writing campaign. The students were given the writing assignment with clear instructions. And, I suggested them to read their writings and find out their mistakes. If they did not find mistakes themselves, they gave their writing to their friends. I observed at last and gave necessary feedback and they had to rewrite their writing assignments. The data obtained from the questionnaire were tabulated and analyzed, and the observation and reflection data were presented with analytical interpretation.

Plan for action

To improve students' writing, I decided to bring some changes in copy correction techniques while teaching writing and assigning writing. I got feedback and suggestions from the students after exploring the reasons of the problem. I plan to authorize the concerned students to have self-correction after they write their writing assignments. I also ensured them to make their writings for reviewing by their friends. Moreover, the students would be rewriting after their corrections, friends' suggestions and the teacher's feedback which were not done previously. There are different techniques of improving students' writing such as peer editing, scaffolding, technology integration, journal writing, sharing writing, providing more instructions, reading to writing, self-correction, and many moreover. To enable the learners' autonomy, I selected 'Self Correction' technique in my classroom.

Result and Discussion

This section comprised the analysis and interpretation of the data carried out before and after the intervention including the result of group discussion, students' perspectives, note-copy observation and students' reflection. The data collected from the participants were discussed and compared based on before intervention and after intervention.

Group discussion with students before intervention

I discussed with my students informally in the classroom to find out why they were not interested to focus on writing seriously. Language had no barrier during the discussion. I also wrote some sentences on the board and replaced some words and sentence patterns for two/three times. One of the students said with another friend, "*Sir also made error. He rubbed and wrote, rubbed and wrote many times.*" After some time, I replied telling, "*Sometimes, I make such mistakes, but I correct until they become errorless.*" I wanted to be more familiar with them in order to make me find the actual reasons underlying within them about their unwilling to write perfectly. I heard an unknown voice, "*I wait for my friend if I got assignment for writing*", next supported. But I kept such things in my mind and then later took note but I did not respond this matter to them. One said in Nepali, "*bhanna āucha, lekhnakhojdā bigrincha, bigārnu bhandā arukai sāryo*", "*I can tell but it gets mistakes while writing, so it is better to copy other's writing than making mistakes.*" One of them said, "*Ma ta khararalekhchu. Mistake bhayo bhane sir le sachchyāi dinuhuncha.*" "*I write with speed. If there is mistake found, my teacher corrects.*" In such ways, students lessened their creativity. They relayed on others rather than starting writing themselves. After implementing self-correction technique students were conscious for revising their writing before submission. They did not try to copy other's writing being encouraged and motivated to revise and update their own writing. So, the study reveals that self-correction is one of the applicable techniques to improve students' writing.

Students' perspectives on writing before implementing self-correction technique

After I collected the data, prepared the following questionnaire and I tabulated the responses systematically.

Table 1
Survey result of the exploration

SN	Questions	Findings
1	Why don't you give interest in writing in English?	Fear of mistakes: 80%
		Lack of knowledge: 2%
		Lack of time: 8%
		Lack of motivation: 5%
		Lack of confidence: 5%
2	How do you feel when your writing is corrected by your teacher?	I get confused: 69%
		I get motivated: 11%
		I get frustrated: 20%
3	Do you rewrite after your teachers make correction in your copy?	Yes: 10%
		No:90%

| 4 | What do you think about continuing teachers' correction or self-correction in your writing? | Teacher's correction: 15%
Self-correction: 85% |

The table above shows the questions asked to the students to find out the reasons for students disinterest in their writing. The analysis of the data illustrated that the majority 80% of students do not give an interest in writing in English. However, most of the students have sufficient knowledge, time, motivation and confidence they fear of making mistakes. Hence, it has been found that fear is one of the major problems of the students in terms of having interests in writing.

Similarly, more than two third students i.e. 69% students get confused when their writing is corrected by their teacher. They are also unknown what things they should replace within the teacher's correction.

20% students felt frustrated with the teacher's correction in their copies. However, only a few students i.e. 11% students get motivated with the correction made by the teacher. It shows that when the students see more corrections made by the teacher, they get confused and cannot change their writing as the teacher expects.

While enquiring their habit of rewriting their writing, only a few 10% of them do it whereas most of the students 90% do not make rewriting. The result shows that one of the major reasons of their poor writing is that they lack rewriting. Finally, majority of the students i.e. 85% of them support to implement self-correction strategies in their writing.

Students' perspectives on writing after implementing self-correction technique

After completing self-correction technique, the students were found more interested rather than implementing this technique. The result of post action data has been interpreted below.

Table 2
Survey result of the exploration

SN	Questions	Findings
1	Do you have interest in writing?	Yes: 92% No: 8%
2	Do you feel fear of making mistakes?	Yes: 70% No: 30%
3	What are the benefits of self-correction?	Develop knowledge: 89% Develop confidence: 96%
4	How do you feel when your writing is corrected by your teacher?	I get confused: 15% I get motivated: 75% I get frustrated: 10%
5	Do you rewrite after your teachers make correction in your copy?	Yes: 100% No: 0%
6	Do you want to continue the technique of self-correction?	Yes: 89% No: 11%

The table shows the post action result of the survey. Majority of the students developed their interest in writing led by 92% of the respondents. Similarly, 70% of the students avoid their fear of making mistakes. Likewise, Majority of the students got benefit of developing their knowledge of content and their confidence. Most of the students got motivated from the technique of self-correction which was led by 75%. After the technique implemented, all of the students started reviewing and rewriting their writing assignments. The results show that self-correction has played vital role to increase their interest and to improve their writing skills. So, they want to continue this technique in further classes as well.

Students' performance in writing

After completing the survey, I collected and observed the students' note copies. In most of the students, they were found missing some spellings in words. They also missed some spellings and words in sentences with inappropriate words. They used some of the words but they were not contextual. Some sentences were not in well format. They also used punctuation marks improperly. They just counted the words and separated the paragraphs which had no any meaning. Overall, most of the writings seemed to be carelessly written.

The students could improve their writing after implementing self-correction technique while teaching writing. After implementing self-correction techniques, the students' final assignments seemed smarter than earlier. They thoroughly corrected themselves and submitted their finest write ups. I showed their compared writing before the action and after the action which fostered them to develop their interest and confidence in writing.

Students' reflection after intervention

The students finally wrote a reflection note where they realized their carelessness and their inspiring words of success in writing. The students' reflections show that self-correction develops their creativity and critical view about their own writing. Self-correction technique has supported them to avoid their unwillingness in writing developing confidence within them. The students reflect that it lessens the repeated mistakes they used to make in their writing and got grammatical knowledge and awareness of writing mechanisms. This action research provided an opportunity to give better platform to improve students' behavior in writing and made me get new lesson as well in terms of teaching writing. In order to motivate my students, I recommended their final write ups to be published in school's annual magazine.

Conclusion and Implications

Action research helps teachers in understanding and exploring the classroom problem, rapport building with the students, developing plans and implementing in order to make positive changes in the classroom teaching techniques. Moreover, Ear is a form of teachers' research for teachers and is grounded in nature (Gnawali et al., 2021; Smith & Rebolledo, 2018). It also scaffolds to enhance professional knowledge and behavior of teachers making dedication in teaching with appropriate solution against the most challenges seen in teaching learning activities. Békés (2019) states as the findings of exploratory action research plays significant role to change the classroom teaching

techniques. It also helps both students and teachers for reflecting their teaching strategies (Sowa, 2009). Similarly, this study finds that self-correction technique enhances the learners' autonomy in which the students get opportunity to identify their errors and rewrite. The study showed that self-correction played prominent role in improving students' write ups along with positive reinforcement for them as the students could develop their writing perfectly.

Likewise, this technique helps to engage the students being concentration in their task. After applying this technique, the students were motivated and interested to develop their own creativity in writing. They also increased their level of confidence in writing. This action research inspires the learners to develop their confidence through self-correction and the teachers to find the best way of shifting ongoing technique into new dimension of teaching.

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Appendix – I (Sample Students' Reflections)

Reflection

_____ is our English teacher. He teaches us very well. One day, He gave us a creativity work. He told that write the story, essay, or poem. I wrote the essay. Before writing that essay. I flelt weak myself because I made many mistakes in Grammar. I thought that I couldn't wrote anything. He motivated us.

After writing that story. I think I am strong. I can do anything. I think I do mistakes. But don't repent that mistakes.

Before doing this activity, I had problem in Grammar. Problem related to tense. I felt problem to write something. We did this activity in 2079-8-11) (2m12- -) There is plot of option like to write poem, story, essay. I choosed moral story. I did mistake in Grammar. He motivate us and He teach Grammar. Second day (2079-8-13) We did self collet conection ☞. After doing this activity. We are perfect in tense. ~~~~~~~~~~ Now, We haven't problem in Grammar specially in tense. Now, We can write anything, anytime, any way. Now, We have ~~~~~ confidence to write anything. Now, We write freely. He cannt feel any fear.

I would like to thanks Our English sir ▇▇▇▇ to teach us writing without any Grammar problem. Thank you sir to teach us English subjects.

Reflection

_____ is our English teacher. He teaches us very well. One day, He gave us a creativity work. He told that write the story, essay or poem. I wrote the story.

Before writing that story. I felt weak myself. I made many Grammar mistakes because I was weak in Grammar. I thought that I couldn't wrote anything. He motivated us and made us confident. He teaches us Grammar.

After writing that story. I think I am strong. I can do everything. I think I do mistakes but I don't repeat that mistakes. Nowdays. I am confident myself and I am perfect in Tense than Past time.