

Direct or indirect teacher written corrective feedback: Zimbabwe junior secondary school English composition learners' preferences beyond Covid-19 era.

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Abstract

The 'new normal' caused by the outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic has changed the way school learners can be taught and assessed. What used to work in the recent past may have currently ceased to be effective and there is no turning back. This qualitative study examines the Zimbabwe Junior Secondary School English teachers' beliefs and learners' preferences on teachers' written corrective feedback in composition writing. The choice was made between direct and indirect feedback. The study is underpinned by Vygotsky Social-cultural Theory of Cognitive Development. This is a suitable theory for this study because the feedback interaction between the teacher and the learner is social, while valuing teacher's feedback by the student, is a culture. The study employed a case study research design focusing on one school in Gweru District, Zimbabwe. The researchers used the purposive sampling technique to select four Zimbabwe Junior Secondary School English teachers and 48 learners, in order to pick on the rightful participants who were able to give relevant information, thus, achieving the objectives of this study. Open-ended questionnaires and face-to-face interviews were used for data gathering. The researchers reduced large volumes of data from the questionnaires and interviews by coding and drawing themes from these codes. Findings showed that both students and teachers viewed direct feedback as more effective in improving learners' English composition writing skills than indirect feedback, especially during the Covid-19 era, and beyond, where technology can be effectively manipulated for teaching and learning purposes. The study concluded that, for improvement to take place on learners' composition writing skills, teachers need to know, and provide the preferred type of written corrective feedback regularly. They also see to it that learners attend to the given feedback. This study recommends for effective communication between the teachers and the learners so that learners' feedback preferences and teachers' expectations are shared, understood and applied by the involved parties. Local teacher-workshops are also recommended for they can aid teachers in this written corrective feedback issue as well as related learning theories for the smooth teaching of composition writing in the schools.