

Original Paper

The Innovated Writing Process (IWP) Approach: A Rebuttal to Truscott's (1996, 1999, and 2007) and Ellis's (2009) View

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Abstract

The Innovated Writing Process Approach (IWP) is a rebuttal to Truscott's (1996, 1999, and 2007) claim, that corrective feedback does not help L2 learners in the acquiring a second language (SLA), and Ellis's (2009) concern about which type of feedback will work best with L2 learners. Is it direct or indirect, or metalinguistic feedback? The method used in this study indicates that metalinguistic feedback may be one of the most successful feedback types in helping L2 learners acquire second language linguistic items. The aim of this paper is to present a rebuttal to Truscott's (1996, 1999, and 2007) and Ellis's (2009) view.

Based on the shortcomings found in previous methods of teaching writing and following recent works in applied linguistics and second language acquisition on form-focused instruction, explicit teaching and learning, and types of feedback, the Innovated Writing Process (IWP) approach was designed. This is one of the findings of an empirical study in the context of Arab learners of English (ALEs). It is also an attempt to apply Sociocultural Theory in classroom settings and to show how input can be well-processed which, in turn, can develop the second language (L2) learners' internalized grammatical system.

Keywords

Innovated Writing Process, IWP, metalinguistic feedback, revising, redrafting and SLA

1. Introduction

The IWP approach is primarily based on the definition of method as it is essentially the level at which theory is put into practice and at which choices are made about particular skills, content and the order of which the content is presented. The IWP approach is therefore defined as a suggested method of teaching writing which involves both speaking and writing processes based on the learners' level. It aims at improving learners' accuracy as well as fluency. It is based on a full study on a sample of Arab Learners of English (ALEs).

One of the assumptions suggests that the implementation of the IWP approach on ALEs would help learners improve their writing and speaking skills. What distinguish the IWP approach is the procedures and tasks involved while teaching writing. These procedures and tasks include: the process of contrastive analysis and error analysis based on the sample mistakes; explicit grammar teaching; negotiation of *meaning* and *form* based on the sample level of interlanguage grammar; interaction between teacher-students and students-students in a form of communicative grammar language teaching; and finally, metalinguistic feedback, whether direct or indirect, based on the nature of the learners' errors/mistakes.

2. Related Literature

In this section, the rationale for designing the IWP approach, background of the IWP approach and theories of language and language learning in the IWP approach will be presented.

2.1 Rationale for the Design of the IWP Approach

While teaching writing, the author analyzed interlanguage grammar in L2 and contrasted the errors which appear to originate in L1 and L2 linguistic items, he discovered that this contrastive analysis shed considerable light on errors related to forming the simple past regular and irregular verbs e.g. *to wanted, was went*. He thought that there should be a method which could be implemented to narrow the gap between the L1 and the L2 learners' internalized grammar system and which would take into consideration the significant differences between the Arabic and English language. The researcher thought that this might be achieved by increasing the role of the teacher's interactions and instructions while concentrating on analyzing L2 learners' interlanguage grammar. Mourssi (2013a) indicated that the explanation and analysis of the learners' non-target-like forms should be performed using Ex-implicit grammar learning following *Meaning* negotiation and *Form* negotiation when necessary and using metalinguistic feedback (here defined as: explaining the nature of the learners' mistakes without providing the target-like forms). Implementing these stages might motivate L2 learners and give them the opportunity to revise and redraft their writing- most of learners feel that writing activity is a boring task and they do not wish to have to revise and redraft it as well- to develop their internalized grammar which will be reflected in their writing. After implementing the IWP with the subjects of the empirical study for a period of about four months, the researcher concluded that Ex-implicit grammar learning with teacher's instructions and interactions alongside metalinguistic feedback and L2 learners' communication with each other and with the teacher, might be more effective and more useful for acquiring the simple past tense forms in English (or any other linguistic data). This in turn, would result in improving the second language learners' internalized grammatical system, (Mourssi, 2012b). The IWP contributes to the field by integrating implicit grammar teaching/learning with explicit grammar teaching in a form termed as Ex-implicit grammar teaching, and also presenting metalinguistic feedback as a part of the teacher's role in writing, where he/she explains the nature of the mistakes rather than providing the target-like form of the learners' mistakes,

(Mourssi, 2013b).

2.2 Background of the IWP Approach

Based on many years' experience of teaching English to ALEs, it is clear to the researcher that writing was not considered as a skill which should be taught in the classroom. The reason for this was the fact that the emphasis was on teaching grammar, extensive vocabulary and reading. This method was followed by adapting Product/Guided Writing method in the 1990s, where foreign language learners were taught short phrases/phrasal verbs and were asked to form sentences and short paragraphs by adding a subject or an object to the parts of speech given. There was no oral/written or direct/indirect/metalinguistic feedback given by the teacher. Marking was based on ticking and very short comments (Seen/Good/Well done/Bad or Thank you).

In commenting on the birth of process writing in the 1990s, Hedge (2003) mentions that in the 1990s the methodology of teaching writing in ELT classrooms made dramatic departure from traditional approaches and she designed seven stages of process writing (p.300), while Richards, Platt & Weber (1999) define process writing as an approach which emphasizes the composing process where the writer makes use of tools such as planning, drafting and revising (p.290). On the other hand Atwell (1987) introduces "a five step system of writing process" prewriting/ drafting/ revising / editing/and publishing (p.3). In real context, Pennington, Brock & Yue (1996) conducted a study based on two groups. The first practised process writing and the second practised traditional language exercises and grammatical accuracy with very little integration of elements of process writing. The first group achieved higher progress in writing.

In an evaluation of adopting and adapting process writing in the 2000s, Ferris (2002/2003/2004) and Bitchener (2005) point out that in recent years there has been an increasing awareness amongst L2 writing researchers and teachers that classroom-based instruction can play a significant role in helping L2 learners improve the accuracy of their writing texts.

Mourssi (2006), in his MA dissertation concluded that motivation and learning strategies can play a remarkable role in improving foreign language learners' writing. The emphasis was on the role of three main elements inside the classroom, namely: teacher/ learner/ the course book, as well as three sub-elements outside the classroom, namely: school/ home/ and society. In addition, it was conducted that the IWP approach participate improving ALEs' accuracy and fluency as well, (Mourssi, 2012d)

Mourssi (2012b) argues that each method / approach has its own theory of language and theory of language learning. The IWP approach is based on integrating three different theoretical views of language. The first one is the *structural view* where language is considered as a system of structurally related elements for the coding of meaning. The mastery of these elements in this system is the target of language learning. The elements of this system are defined as: phonological units, grammatical units, grammatical operations and lexical items. The second view is the *functional view* where language is viewed as a vehicle for the expression of functional meaning, and where the emphasis is on semantic and communicative dimension rather than on grammatical characteristics of language teaching content

by categories of meaning and function rather than elements of grammar and structure. The third view is the *interactional view* where language is seen as a tool for the creation and maintenance of social relations. This view has been added since "interaction" has been central to theories of second/foreign language learning and pedagogy for more than thirty years, when Rivers (1987) defines the interactive perspective in language education:

"Students achieve facility in using a language when their attention is focused on conveying and receiving authentic messages that contain information of interest to both speaker and listener in a situation of importance to both" (p. 4).

In other words, the IWP can represent implications of the Sociocultural Theory in SLA, and presenting Ex-implicit grammar teaching which match with the low and high level of learners, and finally, presenting metalinguistic feedback as the proper type of feedback in teaching/learning writing, (Mourssi, 2012b, 2013b).

According to the theory of language learning in the IWP approach, Mourssi (2012d) mentions, in general, the IWP approach is derived from adapting three common and well known theories in the field of SLA, aiming at changing the theoretical frameworks of these theories into a pedagogical framework to be implemented and activated inside the classroom context. In particular, the IWP method is based on integrating three well known theoretical approaches in explaining second language learning namely: Behaviourism, Innatism, and Interactionism, which reflect the theory of language of the IWP.

In what follows the efficacy of analyzing L2 learners' errors/mistakes in SLA through the IWP approach and replying on Truscott's and Ellis's views

3. Discussion

3.1 *The Efficacy of Analyzing L2 Learners' Errors/Mistakes in SLA through the IWP Method: A Response to Ellis's (2009) and Truscott's (1996, 1999, 2007)*

Ellis (2009) claims that both SLA researchers and language educators have paid careful attention to corrective feedback, but they have disagreed about whether to correct errors, what errors to correct, how to correct errors, and when to correct these errors (p. 3), see e.g. Hendrickson (1987) and Hyland & Hyland (2006).

The efficacy of analyzing L2 learners' errors/mistakes and giving corrective feedback in language pedagogy varies according to the methods used during the learning process. For example, Audiolingualism states that negative "assessment" is to be avoided as far as possible since corrective feedback functions as "punishment" and may inhibit or discourage learning, while Ur (1996) suggests that "assessment should be positive" in order to promote the positive self-image of the learner as a person and language learner," (p. 243). On the other hand, skill-learning theory states that "the learner needs feedback on how well he/she is doing," but the question here is what kind of feedback is the most effective? Is it direct, indirect or metalinguistic feedback? In designing the IWP method, all three types were implemented but the last type (metalinguistic feedback) was the basic type followed with the

subjects of the study. It was indicated that metalinguistic feedback can well work in SLA.

Ur (1996) recognizes that there is certainly a space for correcting learners' errors/mistakes, but she claimed that this contribution should not be over-estimated. She concluded that time should be invested in avoiding errors rather than in correcting them. Other methodologists, for example, Harmer (1991) distinguishes between "accuracy" and "fluency". Harmer mentions that corrective feedback has a place in the former but not in the latter. However, SLA researchers, especially those working within an Interactionist framework take a different view; they argue that corrective feedback works best when it occurs in context at the time the learners make the error. I can claim that this is one of the main aims behind designing the IWP approach and presenting the Communicative Grammar Language Teaching Approach (Mourssi, 2012c) through the IWP in the ALEs' context, where the process of error/contrastive analysis (metalinguistic feedback) can develop L2 learners' internalized grammar system which results in promoting L2 grammar acquisition and improving learners' written accuracy.

Truscott (1996, 1999, and 2007) claims that correcting learners' errors in a written composition may enable the learners to eliminate the errors in a subsequent draft but correcting errors has no effect on grammatical accuracy in a new piece of writing. In other words, correcting errors does not result in acquisition. The researcher thinks that when the error analysis and the correction of learners' errors are clear, consistently and explicitly presented, it will work well for the acquisition of the target linguistic data. Similar to my claims, Sheen (2007), Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2009) produce evidence to show that written feedback can result in SLA however; I prefer to give the learners oral metalinguistic feedback, as most of them do not seem to read the teacher's written feedback or take it on board. It is worth mentioning that some researchers such as Krashen (1982, p. 74) and Van Patten (1992, p. 24) suggest that correcting errors in learner output has a negligible effect on language learners' developing language system. However, other SLA researchers, especially those working within the Interactionist framework, have found that correcting learners' errors facilitated language acquisition. After more than ten years, Van Patten (2003) changed his mind and acknowledged that feedback (error correction) in the form of negotiating meaning can help learners notice their errors and create form-meaning connections, thus aiding SLA. Recent studies, such as; Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005), Sheen (2007), and Ellis et al. (2008) have shown that when corrective feedback is "focused" it is effective in promoting acquisition.

3.2 Evaluation and Implementation of the IWP Approach

The IWP argues that learning occurs when there is explicit grammar teaching and student-student, student-teacher and teacher-student interaction. Students make successive hypotheses about forms and these are discussed in "negotiated interaction" which is based on negotiating the mistakes and creating a space for that to happen, following the process of error/contrastive analysis in which the teacher discusses the errors explaining their nature (metalinguistic feedback). This section evaluates the theoretical underpinnings which support this approach. 3.2.1 presents the rationale for Form-Focused Instruction, with a sub-section dealing with corrective feedback in 3.2.2; 3.2.3 recapitulates the

arguments for Interactional Methods which are outlined in Sociocultural Theory. Finally, 3.2.4 presents Autonomous Induction Theory which highlights that learning results from a coalition of resources and not from a single specific one.

3.2.1 The IWP and Form-Focused Instruction

The IWP approach was designed as a programme for teaching writing, and was implemented in the classroom settings to investigate the impact of Revising and Redrafting on improving ALEs' written accuracy. The IWP focuses on the role of both the teacher and the learner and gives detailed guidelines for instructors to follow. In designing the IWP, a variety of teaching methods were integrated bearing in mind the L2 learners' level and the types of error/mistake which emerge as they prepare their written work. Corrective feedback is provided to the learners by analyzing their errors/mistakes and explaining the nature of the errors/mistakes produced during writing, and how L2 learners produce the target-like forms themselves following metalinguistic feedback. One clear aspect of the course is form-focused instruction (FFI).

Norris & Ortega (2001), in Fotos & Nassaji (2007, p. 11) postulate that FFI produces substantial gains in terms of the acquisition of the target structure. Over the course of their study, the effects of FFI were observed to have been sustained over time and the study showed that explicit instructional techniques yielded more positive effects than those involving implicit techniques. Thus, the effectiveness of the instructional treatments depends on the methodological approaches adopted. In evaluating the tasks achieved following FFI, Fotos & Ellis (1991), Fotos (1993), and Leow (2001) noticed that some of the FFI tasks were incorporated more explicitly and that "raising grammar consciousness" is one of these tasks, whereby, the task objective given to learners is to solve a grammar problem using the target structure or to generate grammar rules. That is, the aim behind not giving the target-like forms directly to the L2 learners, but providing them with corrective feedback and allowing them to analyze their errors/mistakes is that it gives them the space to interact, negotiate and work out the rules for themselves which makes them more memorable. Both Lyster (2004) and Ferris (2006) suggest that corrective feedback prods the learners to self-correct and that this is effective in promoting SLA.

With the IWP approach, every stage of the development is built following a previous one. In investigating the role of the learner and the role of the teacher, for example, there is a link between the reaction of the learner at each stage and the teacher's behaviour and his instructions, from the beginning to the end of the process, in negotiating the mistakes, and giving direct/indirect and metalinguistic feedback. Myles et al. (1998; 1999) have illustrated that varying strategies in SLA could be built one after another, in the same fashion as with the staged process in the IWP.

3.2.2 Feedback in the IWP Approach

The reader should be reminded that in the IWP approach, metalinguistic feedback refers to the process of error/contrastive analysis presented in the IWP. It is worth mentioning that this feedback is presented to the L2 learners by explaining the nature of their mistakes/errors without giving the target-like forms. Current theoretical and empirical works have suggested that feedback which comes in the form of

reactive information that learners receive regarding the linguistic and communicative success or failure of their utterances is very beneficial. Mackey (2007, p.14) adds that research has recently shifted to a focus on understanding the specific contributions of not only the types, but also the components of feedback, that may also consist of more explicit corrections and metalinguistic explanation.

Adams (2007, in Mackey 2007, p. 30) asserts that in learner-learner interactions, as in native speaker-learner interactions, feedback can take many forms, from implicit feedback such as recasts or negotiation for meaning signals to relatively explicit feedback moves such as overt focus on form. She adds that the use of feedback has been documented in learner-learner interactions between adults as well as children. Similarly, Oliver (1995) and Mackey et al. (2003) provide empirical evidence that learners are able to provide and respond to feedback moves from other learners. Gass and Varonis (1994) describe multiple incidents of learners calling other learners' attention to their errors. They also found that learners have very rarely replaced their interlocutors' target-like forms with non-target-like forms. Based on these observations, which occur, too, with ALEs, there was a need to create an approach which persuaded them to interact, ask, get feedback and cooperate actively with the teacher inside the classroom. This approach referred to in the CGLTA occurs when the teacher attracts the learners' attention and motivates them to be aware of their mistakes/errors. In turn, this approach leads to an increased degree of awareness as a result of noticing the forms they use. Consequently, students interact when they receive the intake from the teacher -metalinguistic feedback - related to the target-like forms they use in their oral or written answer to the target question. Furthermore, this tends to promote their accuracy and to help add more fixed rules to students' internalized grammatical system and be transferred to long-term memory. Schmidt (2001) mentions that learners must be consciously aware of linguistic input. In order for it to be internalized, learning should not be dissociated from awareness.

Explicit and implicit are the two types of corrective feedback. Ellis et al. (2008, p. 339) states that implicit feedback provides no obvious indicator that an error has been committed, but explicit feedback does indicate that an error has been committed. Explicit feedback takes several forms based on the source of the problem indicated. Ellis et al. (2008, p. 339) talks of a number of studies that have investigated the effects of implicit and explicit feedback on SLA. He adds that both types of corrective feedback are effective in promoting acquisition of the grammatical structures. For example, Carroll and Swain (1993); Nagata (1993); Carroll (2001), Rosa and Leow (2004), demonstrate that explicit feedback was more effective than implicit feedback. Similarly, Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam's (2006) study of the effects of recasts and metalinguistic feedback on the acquisition of English past tense *-ed* also found that explicit feedback is more effective than implicit feedback. On the contrary, Leeman (2003) found out that implicit feedback is more effective than explicit feedback. From the point of view of pre-intermediate and intermediate ALEs, I think that it is better to employ both types (Ex-implicit) in the classroom context, where explicit feedback can be more effective with low level language learners, while implicit feedback can be more effective with higher level language learners. However, the

findings of the current study reveal that metalinguistic feedback explaining the nature of the learners' mistakes/errors without giving them the target-like forms seems to be the effective type of corrective feedback with both low and high level second language learners.

There are two very important factors which have to be taken into consideration in implementing a certain type of corrective feedback whether it is implicit or explicit or integrates both. These are: the nature of the target structure - simple or complex - and the level of the language learners, taking individual differences into consideration. From my own experience, and based on the findings of the current study, using both explicit and implicit feedback is more effective with simple rules with beginner learners of English, and using implicit feedback can be more effective with complex rules with higher level of learners.

In a study focusing on the acquisition of regular simple past tense forms, Ellis (2009) concluded that typical learner errors in the simple past *-ed* involve either omission or misformation only. This current study focused on investigating how the simple past is acquired using both regular and irregular simple past verbs. ALEs produced a variety of types of non-target-like simple past tense forms while acquiring the simple past tense in English. Ellis (2009) concluded that the most effective feedback in promoting the acquisition of the *-ed* simple past form is explicit feedback. One of my hypotheses is to develop a methodology which integrates focus-on-form in a communicative approach, presenting the different types of feedback in which each type of feedback depends on the learner's level and the type of the mistake. At the end of the experiment, the results seem to indicate that metalinguistic feedback in the form of error/contrastive analyses is the most effective way to help ALEs improve their accuracy.

On the contrary, Doughty & Varela (1998) and Han (2002, p. 357) did not find a positive effect for recasts on the acquisition of grammar. In the case of both Doughty and Varela and Han, the recast treatment was provided over several weeks and the recasts were repeated for the same error. Thus, the recasts became salient to the learners, and it was extremely brief - consisting of a single word. It seems that recasts will have only a limited effect on the acquisition of grammatical structure. It may be that the combination of focus on form, recasts, elicitation of the correct form and a combination of both speaking and writing helps reinforce the target-like forms.

In conclusion, after the second language learners have been exposed to the different stages of the CGLTA, they are ready to revise and redraft their written work. In the following section, I will present the relationship between the IWP and Sociocultural Theory (SCT)

3.2.3 The IWP and Sociocultural Theory (SCT): The Importance of Interaction

One of the SLA theories on which the IWP is based is the Interactionist view, having in consideration that the IWP aims to facilitate the learning process by activating L2 learners' internal processes such as attention, noticing, and rehearsal which, in turn, makes the acquisition of the target linguistic data possible. To clarify the relationship between the IWP and Sociocultural Theory, Lantolf & Thorne (2006) mention that "SCT has its origins in the writings of the Russian psychologist L.S. Vygotsky and his colleagues" (p. 197). They add that the most important forms of human cognitive activity develop

through interaction. With regard to SLA, Sociocultural Theory believes learning is dialogically based which means that the acquisition of the language occurs *in* the process of interaction rather than *as a result of* the interaction. Based on this perspective, SLA cannot be treated as a purely individual-based process, but rather as one shared between the individual and other persons (teacher/learners and learners/learners).

In designing the IWP, the dialogic interaction between learners themselves and the teacher is basic in performing the writing task. Having that space for interaction can create a context in which learners can participate actively. This interaction can demonstrate for the teacher what the L2 learners can do and what they cannot do, this in turn, gives the opportunity to the teacher to allocate time and a suitable type of feedback to the learners.

Hulstijn (2006) and Ellis (2006) suggested that attention, consciousness and awareness play a role in the implicit learning process, and this argument, supported by Dekeyser (2003), Ellis (1994) and Schmidt (1994), is also in line with the point of views of Schmidt & Frota (1986), Alanen (1995), Ellis(1996), Ellis & Sinclair (1996), Ellis& Schmidt (1997), Grabe & Stoller (1997), Leow (1997); Miyke & Friedman (1998), Rosa & O' Neil (1999), Mackey (2002)and Swain & Lapkin (2002), who examined cognitive processes in second language learning; their conclusion was also supported by Gass & Varonis (1994), Robinson (1995, 2001and 2003), Long (1996), Gass (1997), Mackey et al (2000) and Philip (2003). They all agree that attention and awareness in particular have been identified as two cognitive processes that mediate input and L2 development through interaction.

3.2.4 The IWP and a Coalition of Resources

Autonomous Induction Theory (Carroll, 1999 and 2001) posits that, SLA is facilitated by a coalition of sources that create input to learning. As defined and explained by Herschensohn (2003, p. 26), this theory brings together spontaneous input and form-focused guidance as two complementary components of the learning process. Carroll (1999, 2001) argues that the proposed input of learning is not simply processing input but can be considered as a restructuring of interlanguage grammar due to parsing failure on the part of the learner. In other words, Carroll made a distinction between processing for parsing and processing for acquisition. She mentioned that when the parsers fail, the acquisitional mechanisms are triggered, and added that during successful parsing, rules are activated in each processor, and failure occurs when the rules are inadequate or missing.

Carroll (1999, p. 365) defines learning in the context of Autonomous Induction Theory as a process which takes place whenever a parse fails (which results from incomprehensible input) and thereby, the process of learning takes place at several levels of analysis such as acoustic-phonetic, phonological, morpho-syntactic and semantic. Similarly, Herschensohn (2000, p. 203) suggests that learners use a coalition of resources such as Universal Grammar, constrained hypothesis space, primary linguistic data, instruction and feedback. This coalition of resources is visible in the IWP method, Mourssi (2012d).

The interactional process, whether it is negotiated interaction, interactional feedback, noticing gaps in

knowledge by learners as well as by the teacher, while speaking or while writing in general, can direct the learners' attention to many things which might have been stored in their memory (implicit knowledge) but that they have temporarily forgotten. The teacher's role is to activate this knowledge which can relate to lexical items, grammatical constructions, phrasal verbs, prepositions, collocations, and so on. Different types of interaction promote development and lead to an actual improvement in learners' knowledge in the long term.

4. Conclusion

The IWP approach presents an innovated method for teaching writing, based on the literature review on L2 writing and the background to revising and redrafting. The IWP approach was presented (including explicit grammar learning/teaching, feedback, negotiation and interaction) as a form of Form-Focused-Instruction which integrates a strong interactional component. This provides a rationale for the IWP and the CGLTA and how they can help improve the ALEs' written accuracy and fluency as well.

Based on the evaluation and implementation of the IWP in the classroom settings, Mourssi (2012a, 2012b, 2012c, 2012d, 2013a, and 2013b), and based on the progress the L2 learners achieved in their internalized grammatical system, I can claim that the IWP can be a rebuttal to Truscott's (1996, 1999, and 2007) and Ellis's (2009) views.

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