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Analysis of the scientific production on feedback on teaching English as a foreign language using ERIC database

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ABSTRACT. Feedback is one of the most significant tools on learning, teaching, developing autonomy, self-efficacy and achievement in the educational environment. Its importance is emphasized in articles, dissertations and theses; however, a very little number of them have been published recently. This article intends to verify in what perspective feedback has been examined, in what ways it has been revealed to be effective for students and teachers to reach their goals and identify possible gaps of study that need to be fulfilled in future researches. In order to carry out this investigation, this study examined articles, papers and theses published from 2006 to 2015 about feedback in courses of English as a foreign language (EFL), using ERIC database. Our findings were organized into six categories: corrective feedback in oral interaction; effects of peer feedback; feedback expectancy; teachers' conceptions of intelligence and their relations in offering feedback; the effect of different types of feedback strategies on written texts; the use of feedback through technology. The results indicate that feedback is a crucial tool in the educational process and it plays a central role in learning a foreign language. Further investigations concerning feedback are suggested.

Keywords: EFL, feedback strategies, teaching and learning, education.

Análise da produção científica sobre *feedback* no ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira na base de dados ERIC

RESUMO. O *feedback* é uma das ferramentas mais influentes na aprendizagem, ensino, desenvolvimento da autonomia, autoeficácia e desempenho acadêmico. Apesar de ter a sua importância enfatizada por educadores, o que se observa é um número muito restrito de publicações recentemente. Este artigo objetiva verificar em que perspectiva o *feedback* tem sido estudado, de que forma a sua eficácia é demonstrada para que estudantes e professores alcancem os seus objetivos educacionais. Além disso pretendeu-se identificar possíveis lacunas de estudo e sugerir futuras pesquisas sobre o tema. Para tanto, foram analisados artigos e teses publicados entre 2006 e 2015 sobre o uso do *feedback* no ensino de inglês como língua estrangeira (EFL), utilizando o banco de dados ERIC. Os resultados foram organizados em seis categorias: o *feedback* por meio da tecnologia; as diferentes estratégias de *feedback* em textos escritos; o uso do *feedback* entre os pares; o *feedback* corretivo nas interações orais; a expectativa do uso do *feedback*; e as concepções dos professores acerca da inteligência e suas implicações no oferecimento do *feedback*. Os resultados revelam que o *feedback* é uma ferramenta indispensável no processo educativo e desempenha papel central na aprendizagem de uma língua estrangeira.

Palavras-chave: EFL, estratégias de *feedback*, ensino e aprendizagem, educação.

Análisis de la producción científica sobre *feedback* en la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera en la base de datos ERIC

RESUMEN. El *feedback* es una de las herramientas más influyentes en el aprendizaje, la enseñanza, el desarrollo de la autonomía, la autoeficacia y el desempeño académico. A pesar de tener su importancia enfatizada por educadores, lo que se observa es un número muy restricto de publicaciones recientemente. Este artículo tiene el objetivo de verificar en qué perspectiva el *feedback* ha sido estudiado, de qué forma su eficacia es demostrada para que estudiantes y profesores logren sus objetivos educacionales. Además, se pretendió identificar posibles lagunas de estudio y sugerir futuras investigaciones sobre el tema. Para tanto, fueron analizados artículos y tesis publicados entre 2006 y 2015 sobre el uso del *feedback* en la enseñanza de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE), utilizando el banco de datos ERIC. Los resultados fueron organizados en seis categorías: el *feedback* por medio de la tecnología; las diferentes estrategias de *feedback* en textos

escritos; el uso del *feedback* entre los pares; el *feedback* correctivo en las interacciones orales; la expectativa del uso del *feedback*; y las concepciones de los profesores acerca de la inteligencia y sus implicaciones en el ofrecimiento del *feedback*. Los resultados revelan que el *feedback* es una herramienta indispensable en el proceso educativo y desempeña papel central en el aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera.

Palabras-clave: ILE, estrategias de *feedback*, enseñanza y aprendizaje, educación.

Introduction

Incorporating feedback in English as a foreign language (EFL) classrooms is not a new trend. Such educational models are proving to be remarkably distinctive for both teachers and students. As Alavi and Kaivanpanah (2007, p. 182) suggest:

> […] the feedback teachers receive from students, tests, and observers is an invaluable source of information that enables them to find out to what extent they have been successful in their teaching and what they need to do to make their teaching more effective.

In the same perspective, empirical studies have demonstrated a vast amount of benefits of providing feedback, including raising students' level of motivation, responsibility and enabling collaborative skills (Kamimura, 2006; Barnawi, 2010; Istifci, 2011; Vurdien, 2012; Arslan, 2014), decreasing students' anxiety and writing apprehension (Kurt & Atay, 2007; Jahin, 2012; Seliem & Ahmed, 2009) and impacting students' subsequent language acquisition (Esteban & Larios, 2010; Milla & Mayo, 2013; Pishghadam, Meidani & Khajavy, 2015; Wang, 2015).

In order to shed light on one of the most important factors influencing learning, this study aimed to verify in what perspective feedback has been examined in the context of teaching and learning EFL; in what ways it has been revealed to be effective for students and teachers to reach their goals and identify possible gaps of study that need to be fulfilled in future researches. To carry out such a research, 23 publications were selected from ERIC database and organized into six categories according to the objective each study indicated. Next, the categories were presented and the results were discussed in an analytical perspective.

Methodology

This study was based on a bibliographic research of scientific articles, papers and theses regarding feedback in the process of teaching and learning English a foreign language. The method used in this research consisted of three phases: the definition of the descriptors, the search for publications according to the descriptors on ERIC database and the categorization of the selected publications using the information obtained from the full text.

The data collection was carried out in 2015 on ERIC database. In order to reach the objective of this study, the search has concentrated on articles, papers and theses published in the past ten years. The descriptors used were: - Feedback in EFL (Full text available on ERIC). The search result showed 44 articles, papers and theses, among which 23 were selected, analyzed and categorized for this study. Afterwards, all the selected articles, papers and theses were thoroughly read and analyzed to identify the implications of feedback in the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language. Among the 44 articles, papers and theses found, 21 were excluded from this study because they do not discuss feedback in the context of teaching and learning English as a foreign language.

The reason why ERIC database was chosen is that the publications available are online and it offers free access of full text publications. Moreover, ERIC is an international database, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education and is the largest database of education research.

Results

The results are presented according to the technique of data categorization extracted from the 23 selected articles, papers and theses. Firstly, the period of publication given in Table 1 below shows the number of publications has increased in the past ten years.

Table 1. Period of publication.

Period	N	% of the total
2006 - 2008	4	17.39
2009 - 2011	9	39.13
2012 – 2015	10	43.47
Total	23	100

N = Number of publications.
Source: The authors.

The increase in the number of publications was observed for the period of 2009 to 2011, followed by the maintenance of the average of publications from 2012 to the present. The results indicated a rising interest in understanding the use and efficacy of feedback in EFL teaching and learning context.

The next data to be discussed is related to the countries where the selected scientific productions were published. Data in Table 2 indicate that 9

countries have published articles, papers and theses on the theme of feedback in EFL context in the past 10 years. Most publications are concentrated in Turkey, followed by Spain and the United States of America, totaling 14 scientific productions. Australia published 2 and Canada published 3 scientific productions. Colombia, Cyprus, Egypt and Japan published 1 study each. Although a scant number of countries have published on the theme, all the continents are represented by at least one country.

Table 2. Country of publication.

Countries	N	% of the total
Australia	2	8.69
Canada	3	13.04
Colombia	1	4.34
Cyprus	1	4.34
Egypt	1	4.34
Japan	1	4.34
Spain	5	21.73
Turkey	6	26.08
United States of America	3	13.04
Total	23	100

N = Number of publications.
Source: The authors.

As the country of publication is not always the same as the country where the author's institution is located, Table 3 was organized to identify the country of the author's institutional affiliation. The countries represented with more authors are Egypt, Iran and Spain, with four authors each, followed by Turkey with three authors. Argentina, China, Colombia, Cyprus, Japan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Mexico and Thailand are represented by one author each. In publications with more than one author, the first one was selected to indicate the country of the authors' institutional affiliation.

Table 4 lists the type of publication found in the search. It is possible to observe that the most frequent type of publication observed in the selected studies was *Article*, producing a total of 20 publications. The next type was *Paper* (2), closely followed by *Thesis* (1). The emphasis on publications in the format of articles characterizes the production found on ERIC database.

Table 4. Type of publication.

Type	N	% of the total
Article	20	86.95
Paper	2	8.69
Thesis	1	4.34
Total	23	100

N = Number of publications.
Source: The authors.

In order to assess the objective of the studies, the selected publications were categorized as shown in Figure 1. To follow this procedure, all the scientific productions were thoroughly read and grouped into six objectives. The results are presented below in order of number of occurrence, i.e., the objective that includes more publications is the first one in the figure.

The first category, in terms of number of occurrence, is 'the use of feedback through technology', representing a total of 7 publications. The second category is 'the effect of different types of feedback strategies on written texts', which corresponds to a total of 6 publications. 'Effects of peer feedback' is the third category, composed of 5 publications. 'Corrective feedback in oral interaction' and 'feedback expectancy' are the fourth and fifth categories respectively, corresponding to 2 publications each. The last category, 'teachers' conceptions of intelligence and their roles in teacher care and teacher feedback', is represented by one publication.

The fact that the first category of objective studies the use of feedback through technology indicates the relevance of the theme in the context of teaching and learning a foreign language in a virtual environment. As technology is becoming a more and more indispensable part of life, the effectiveness of feedback in foreign language education has been attracting increasing attention.

Additionally, it has been crucial for teachers to be aware of different types of feedback and work on how to promote them efficiently. In this regard, the second and third categories have proven to be of relevant importance in the academic environment.

Table 3. Country of the authors' institutional affiliation.

Country	Authors	N	% of the total
Argentina	Morra and Asís (2009)	1	4.3
China	Wang (2015)	1	4.3
Colombia	Simpson (2006)	1	4.3
Cyprus	Degteva (2011)	1	4.3
Egypt	Ebyary and Windeatt (2010); Elashri (2013); Jahin (2012); Seliem and Ahmed (2009)	4	17.4
Iran	Alavi e Kaivanpanah (2007); Aliakbari and Toni (2009); Hosseini (2012); Pishghadam et al. (2015)	4	17.4
Japan	Kamimura (2006)	1	4.3
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia	Barnawi (2010)	1	4.3
Mexico	Méndez and Cruz (2012)	1	4.3
Spain	Esteban and Larios (2010); Milla and Mayo (2013); Santos, Serrano and Manchón (2010); Vurdien (2011)	4	17.4
Thailand	Lakarnchua and Wasanasomsithi (2013)	1	4.3
Turkey	Arslan (2014); Istifci (2011); Kurt and Atay (2007)	3	13.0
Total		23	100.0

N = Number of publications.
Source: The authors.

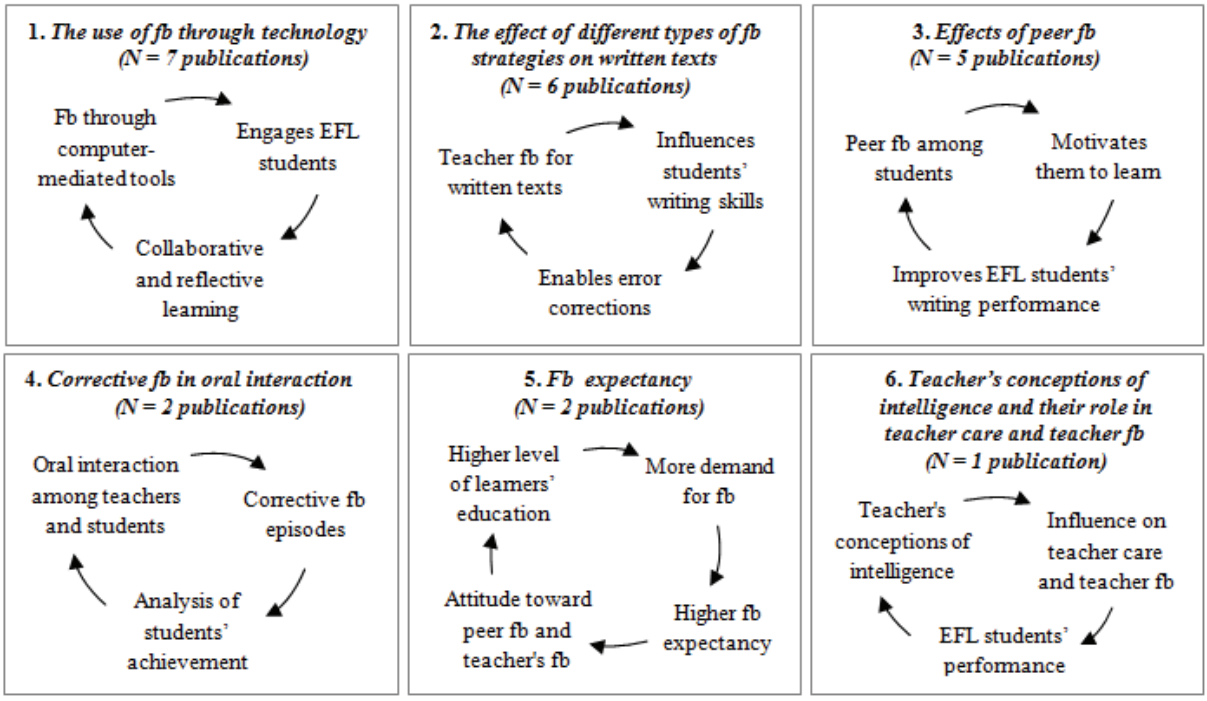

Figure 1. Objective of the studies distributed into six categories and dynamically shown based on the indicative terms.
Fb = Feedback; EFL = English as a Foreign Language; (N = number of publications involving the indicative term).
Source: The Authors

Although feedback in oral interaction occurs frequently in a foreign language course, it is noticeable that few studies have been conducted in the past ten years and the theme calls for more productions. Similarly, it is worth noting here that the last two categories also demand more research, as they discuss personal expectancies and concepts that both teachers and students form in their minds and directly influence their behavior in the classroom.

Discussion

Feedback is commonly described in the educational context as "[…] information that is given to the learner about his/her performance of a learning task, usually with the objective of improving this performance" (Ur, 1996, p. 242). The term feedback was originally coined in biology to refer to the process of response from the organism after interacting with the environment (Rinvolucri, 1994). According to the author, it is an essentially a neutral process, a response in the chain of action and reaction.

Several researchers in the educational field proposed different definitions for the term feedback in the context of teaching and learning. According to Vrasidas and McIsaac (1999), feedback is a set of answers offered by the teacher about the correction of the different required tasks, such as, homework, extra class activities and contributions in the classroom. This definition can be applied both in-class and on-line courses. However, the authors restrict feedback to the correction of homework and to the students' contributions.

Another contribution for the term feedback was proposed by Hattie (1992), who defined it as a tool to guide students in their academic development, by using information concerning their ability or inability to understand what it is being studied. Mason and Bruning (2001) define feedback as any action that is expressed in response to the student's act. The authors, as well as Vrasidas and McIsaac (1999), refer to feedback in in-class and on-line settings. Nevertheless, this definition is broader, as it does not restrict the term feedback to the student's homework and contributions, but it considers feedback as a response to any act taken by the student.

According to Shute (2007), feedback should have a formative role in the educational context. The author affirms that feedback is any information that is communicated to the student intended to modify his/her thoughts or behavior in order to foster learning. Also, according to the author, formative feedback aims to increase knowledge, abilities and the students' comprehension of the subject being

studied. In the on-line context, the same author considers that formative feedback is all the information offered to the student, through message, display, video, audio, among others, in response to the students' attitude (contributions, guided tasks, questions etc.) that aims to mould their perception, action and cognition, in order to facilitate learning and favor development. However, when the author treats feedback as a tool to modify the student's thought or behavior, there is a backlash against the comprehension of the term feedback that goes back to a behaviorist conception of teaching and learning.

Considering that communication goes beyond the function of translating and externalizing a thought or transmitting information, Pishghadam et al. (2015, p. 74) associated teacher care and teacher feedback and concluded that "[…] teachers who pay more attention to their students provide more feedback to them".

In this regard, when feedback is considered an act of communication, it makes the teacher always 'present', providing not only pedagogical intention to the activity, but also, and more importantly, assuring the students are assisted, which is crucial to reach their potential development (Elashri, 2013; Milla & Mayo, 2013). In this respect, it is possible to affirm that feedback is an important pedagogical resource in the teaching and learning processes, both in in-class as in on-line settings. However, besides the fact that the teacher is not totally aware of the importance and efficacy of using feedback, Flores (2009) and Cardoso (2011) point out that today there are not mechanisms supported by the educational institutions that encourage and even incorporate the feedback as a pedagogical instrument in the teaching plans.

The relation among receiving feedback, motivation and quality of learning in language classes has been regarded as one of the most important factors leading to the interpersonal relations (Hosseini, 2012; Milla & Mayo, 2013; Pishghadam et al., 2015; Wang, 2015). Moreover, feedback is essential to perceive how people think, what they feel, how they react towards others and, to a large extent, it is what determines how people face their every day responsibilities (Simpson, 2006; Alavi & Kaivanpanah, 2007; Wang, 2015).

For the purposes of this study, as aforementioned, the selected publications were grouped into six categories: i) the use of feedback through technology, whose indicative term is 'how a blog as a computer-mediated tool engages a group of EFL learners in reflective and collaborative learning'; ii) the effect of different types of feedback strategies on written texts, with the indicative term 'effects of two types of teacher feedback and the absence of feedback on students' error correction'; iii) effects of peer feedback, whose indicative term is 'nature and effectiveness of peer feedback in EFL writing classrooms'; iv) corrective feedback in oral interaction, represented by its indicative term 'corrective feedback episodes (CFEs) that occur in oral interaction between the teacher and his/her learners as the unit of analysis'; v) feedback expectancy, using the indicative term 'relationship between feedback expectancy of learners and their level of education, achievement in English, and attitude toward peer and teacher feedback'; and vi) teachers' conceptions of intelligence and their roles in teacher care and teacher feedback, whose indicative term is 'relationships among teachers' conceptions of intelligence, teacher care, and teacher feedback in the realm of English Language Teaching (ELT)'. The criterion used to group the information into these categories was the objective of study each publication presented.

The first category to be analyzed is the one that included more publications: the use of feedback through technology. The use of feedback mediated by electronic media has called the attention of numerous researchers in the past few years. A bulk of research studies have shown that computer-delivered feedback can be synchronous, asynchronous, self-paced, peer or instructor centered and it is suited to in or out of the classroom boundaries, both in distance learning, face-to-face education or blended learning (Seliem & Ahmed, 2009; Ebyary & Windeatt, 2010; Istifci, 2011; Hosseini, 2012; Vurdien, 2012; Lakarnchua & Wasanasomsithi, 2013; Arslan, 2014).

Due to globalization and the increasing presence of technology in teaching and learning worldwide, the provision of electronic feedback or e-feedback has been adopted by educators of a varied school settings: from k-12 to adult students (Luskin, 2010). In this perspective, this author broadens the definition of the 'e' in e-learning by stating that other meanings should be added to the 'e', such as "[…] exciting, empirical, empathetic, extra, emerging, energetic, exceptional, early, eloquent, everywhere, ephemeral, extended, effortless, epic, evangelistic, eclectic, engaging, extended" (Luskin, 2010, p. 6).

In order to investigate to what extent receiving feedback from the teacher and peers favored ownership in writing as well as to what extent giving feedback to peers' writing work through blogging and portfolios added academic achievement to a

group of pre-service English language teachers' writing skill, Arslan (2014) conducted a study with two groups, identified as portfolio group and blog group. Both groups received feedback from their instructor and also provided feedback to their peers' writing work.

The author claimed that blog and portfolio integrated writing instruction significantly contributed to students' enhancement of writing skills. In addition, the study showed that both groups noticeably improved their writing skill after the treatment. However, the study suggested that receiving feedback from the professor was more valued by participants when compared to receiving peer feedback. In compliance with the author, Seliem and Ahmed (2009) maintained that student teachers considered e-feedback from their professors in the form of email more effective than oral feedback. Nonetheless, e-feedback offered by their peers was perceived as artificial and not as useful.

Ebyary and Windeatt (2010) investigated the impact of automatic computer-based feedback in higher education using a computer program named Criterion. The authors collected data from 31 instructors and 549 Egyptian trainee EFL teachers using pre-treatment questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. The findings suggested that a positive effect on the quality of students' subsequent writings as well as on the students' attitudes related to feedback. However, a question concerning the nature of advances remained unanswered, due to the fact that some students seem to have used avoidance strategies to achieve better score.

Considering that learning occurs in and beyond the walls of the classroom, Istifci (2011) carried out a case study to find the opinions of elementary EFL students on using weblogs and distance education. Ten native English university students living in London and fifteen Turkish EFL students who were learning English in a school of foreign languages exchanged written texts using weblogs created by the latter. The Turkish students gave and received comments on their weblog entries. However, the native English speakers only contributed with comments about the EFL entries. The results revealed that the students found writing a weblog motivating, enjoyable and useful to monitor their progress. In addition, students were more willing to practice English outside the class in a non-threatening, relaxing environment and they tried to put into practice what they had learned in class.

Similarly, in order to investigate how blogs can contribute toward the development of writing skills, Vurdien (2012) conducted a study with a group of eleven EFL learners with varied writing levels. All the participants performed specific writing tasks every two weeks. Before submitting the tasks to the tutor, the students discussed the appropriateness of the plan employed to write them and edited them according to their peers contributions. The findings revealed that personal blogs can motivate students to enhance their writing skills through collaborative discussions, peer feedback and self-reflection.

Also using blogs as a means for reflection, Lakarnchua and Wasanasomsithi (2013) explored the extent of students' awareness of the peer feedback and their review practices. The authors pointed out that although students seemed to enjoy the use of technology as a platform for sharing their writings, giving and receiving comments on their tasks, the majority of the comments (65.4%) the participants made could not be considered peer feedback. Despite receiving peer feedback reviewing training, most comments were related to non-revision aspects, i. e., students did not contribute to their peers' improvement in their writing skills.

The second category to be discussed is the effect of different types of feedback strategies on written work. The relevance of the studies grouped in this category remains in the fact that the written word plays an important role in the world today. Especially because of the advance of technology, a vast amount of communication is performed by written texts. In this regard, the best way of enhancing students' performance in writing is to give them opportunity to write lengthily and frequently, and offer them an ample amount of response to their work.

Many types of feedback strategies are described in the literature, among them the following are: the ones according to the provider of feedback, i.e., teacher, peer, self and computer-delivered or -mediated feedback; the timing of feedback (immediate or delayed feedback); the mode of feedback (direct and indirect feedback); the delivery method of feedback (oral, written, in conference or group section); feedback according to the interest on a particular field of the language (grammar, lexis, organization, structure, among others); feedback in different phases of the writing process (preparing, revising, reformulating steps) (Degteva, 2011; Istifci, 2011; Hosseini, 2012; Elashri, 2013; Esteban & Larios, 2010; Lakarnchua & Wasanasomsithi, 2013; Arslan, 2014; Wang, 2015; Pishghadam et al., 2015).

In order to shed light to the discussion, Morra and Asís (2009) investigated the effects of two different modes of teacher feedback to written essays: taped commentary and written notes on the margins. They also analyzed a control group, which received no teacher response. All the three groups were given the opportunity to revise their

compositions before the final draft. The study revealed a positive effect on learners' written work irrespective of the means of feedback employed (written or taped) as well as a significant reduction of the number of errors of the control group. This finding emphasizes the importance of encouraging students to reread and rewrite their own papers, even when no feedback is provided or regardless the means of delivery.

Also investigating different types of feedback strategies on written work, Aliakbari and Toni (2009) conducted a study to search the influence of different feedback approaches adopted by an EFL teacher on the grammatical accuracy of Iranian English learners. The authors evaluated the effects of two different indirect error correction strategies (indirect coded and indirect uncoded correction) and compared their efficiency to direct teacher feedback, which is widely used in the educational setting. The authors concluded the indirect coded correction group significantly improved its accuracy when compared to the two other groups, and recommended English teachers to adopt such a strategy in their teaching practice.

Regardless of the means, type or objective of feedback offered to learners during the writing process, the majority of the studies agreed that students value and welcome feedback, for it allows them to notice, review and incorporate corrections to their subsequent written work (Degteva, 2011; Elashri, 2013; Esteban, & Larios, 2010; Santos, Serrano & Manchón, 2010).

It is relevant to observe, though, that teachers need to get more familiar with feedback strategies and its effectiveness in order to adopt it to their regular pedagogic practice (Aliakbari & Toni, 2009; Elashri, 2013). Likewise, it is important to assure students feel assisted and supported in the educational setting so that they can improve their writing. In compliance with this, Elashri (2013) states that providing a safe, comfortable, non-threatening and relaxing environment positively affects students' writing achievements. In other words, students who feel they are supported and accepted by their teachers seem to be more engaged and enthusiastic about writing. As a consequence, the classroom environment becomes a relaxing and encouraging writing atmosphere.

The effects of peer feedback, the third category according to the number of publications, have been recognized as a fundamental tool in the process of a foreign language acquisition. Its relevance has been extensively discussed in the literature. Kamimura (2006), for example, investigated the nature and the effectiveness of peer feedback with high- and low-proficient Japanese EFL students writing classrooms and discovered that this component brought overall significant improvements to both groups.

By the same token, Kurt and Atay (2007) studied the effects of peer feedback on prospective Turkish EFL teachers' writing anxiety. The study revealed that most participants experienced significant less writing anxiety and they were more motivated and encouraged to look at their essays from a different perspective when they shared their writings and their feelings with their peers. In this regard, Barnawi (2010) discussed the interrelation of noticing and collaborative feedback. The author argued that when they are "[…] implemented together, they potentially complement one another in facilitating second or foreign language writing learning" (Barnawi, 2010, p. 211).

This is consistent with the results of another study carried out by Jahin (2012) with 40 male student teachers enrolled at the English Language Department at a University in Saudi Arabia. The findings emphasized the positive impacts of peer feedback practices in the process of a foreign language acquisition, such as lowering anxiety levels among EFL students, increasing their motivation and confidence in their writing, learning new ideas and vocabulary and internalizing criteria of good writing.

One of the reasons why peer feedback has been recommended as an effective tool in EFL teaching and learning is that it gives the writers a genuine sense that their writings will reach authentic readers or audience, which motivates them to make more effort in their writing performance (Kamimura, 2006; Barnawi, 2010; Jahin, 2012).

It has been observed that the positive results verified in the peer feedback provision are attributed to the offering of preliminary training to the participants on how to promote feedback to their peers (Kamimura, 2006; Kurt & Atay, 2007; Barnawi, 2010; Jahin, 2012). This procedure intends not only to teach students what is relevant to comment and how to give suggestions actively, but also "[…] to develop mutual rapport as a pair" (Kamimura, 2006, p. 33).

Nevertheless, researchers have not yet reached agreement as to whether peer feedback is significantly useful for EFL writers. Opponents of peer feedback have argued that 1) EFL writers are still in the process of learning a foreign language and facing the difficulties of solving the language peculiarities, therefore, they may lack enough writing knowledge to contribute to their peers' language enhancement; 2) students from a non-

western cultural background demonstrate noticeable struggle involving themselves in peer feedback activities due to the fact that participants' active discussion, debate, mediation, high level of response, interaction and intervention are demanded (Mangelsdorf, 1992; Zhang, 1995; Arslan, 2014).

This finding echoes findings of Kamimura (2006). Although the author's study emphasized the overall benefits of promoting peer feedback, the research revealed that the participants who did not enjoy the peer feedback sessions affirmed that their peers did not take it seriously, they did not have effective discussions, they received general comments on their essays, such as 'good' and 'well-written' and they felt bored during the activity. In order to diminish or solve these difficulties, Kamimura (2006) suggested that the participants who revealed to have difficulties in the process of offering peer feedback should be given longer and possibly more individualized pre-training instructions.

Although receiving pre-training on how to promote peer feedback plays a crucial role in offering effective and useful feedback, Wang (2015) reported a case study in which, more than pre training instructions, the proficiency level of the students who work together revealed to be more relevant. The author carried out a research with three students of an EFL writing course at a Chinese university, who paired with peers. The study aimed to investigate how proficiency-pairing affected "[…] individual students' peer-mediated draft revisions […]" and how individual students perceived "[…] their peers' feedback on EFL writing when paired with students of similar or different English proficiency" (Wang, 2015, p. 23-24). The results showed that different ways of pairing up students according to their proficiency levels would interfere with the peer feedback effects on their drafts revision. When students of similar proficiency levels are paired together, they perceived more positive aspects of the peer feedback received. However, when students of different proficiency levels formed a pair, the higher proficiency students held mostly negative perceptions of feedback received from their low-proficiency partners, mistrusting their peers' competence and tending to be less dependable on their peer for writing improvement.

Most literature discusses feedback in EFL context in written activities. Out of 23 articles selected for this research, two aimed to verify the effectiveness of corrective feedback in the oral interaction context. Such publications are grouped in the fourth category of this study. In this respect, Méndez and Cruz (2012) conducted a study with the objective of identifying the perceptions of teachers of EFL about corrective feedback and its real practice during their classes. The authors concluded that although teachers have a positive perception of oral corrective feedback, they also demonstrated to lack knowledge concerning how to put into practice new and more effective strategies on this type of correction. The authors pointed out that the study identified some problems in promoting corrective feedback, such as, inconsistency, ambiguity, random and unsystematic feedback provided by teachers, acceptance of error for fear of breaking the communication flow, and a large range of error types considered to be corrective feedback. In this respect, the authors suggest teachers should learn more about correction feedback, organize and systematize correction feedback and establish feasible goals for this practice.

Similarly, Milla and Mayo (2013) investigated the occurrence of corrective feedback episodes in oral interaction in two educational settings: a traditional form-oriented EFL classroom and a meaning-oriented Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) classroom. The authors observed that the EFL teacher used several correction techniques, in a more explicit manner and in a larger frequency when compared to the CLIL teacher. As a result, the study revealed that the teachers' attitude toward corrective feedback plays a crucial role in the subsequent learner uptake.

The fifth category to be discussed investigates the students' expectation toward feedback. There is a consensus in the literature that providing language learners with clear feedback is essential in developing communicative competence (Elashri, 2013; Arslan, 2014). Interaction, involvement and expectancy that learners develop towards their learning process are crucial (Alavi & Kaivanpanah, 2007; Istifci, 2011). In this regard, one question that remains in discussion among educators is to what extent students' expectancy toward feedback influences their educational development.

To shed light on this issue, Simpson (2006) carried out a study attempting to change the attitudes and expectancy of three groups of students toward their teacher's feedback on written work. The participants, who were Spanish native speakers, were explained that there were various ways of marking students' essays. Next, they were asked to answer two questions: the first one was related to their previous experiences on receiving feedback on their written assignments and the second one referred to their preferences on how they would like their teachers to assess their essays. The findings

revealed that when students were used to receiving feedback focused only on extensive grammar corrections, they felt that such feedback approach was appropriate even though it did not motivate them to write better. In other words, students expected to receive feedback concentrated on grammar errors and, as a result, they accepted it as suitable and sufficient.

Nonetheless, when the participants experienced an alternative provision of feedback, most of them grew to learn and to expect a novel kind of response from their teachers. Most students revealed that a combination of comments on content along with grammatical correction and other communicative topics were more beneficial, effective and motivating. Simpson (2006) suggested that both teachers and students change their paradigm concerning feedback expectancy in order to accept and offer a feedback style that not only covers issues related to content, organization and other aspects of the language, but also motivates the students to improve their writing skills.

Also investigating students' expectancy toward feedback, Alavi and Kaivanpanah (2007) conducted a study aiming to explore the relationship between feedback expectancy of EFL students and their level of education, achievement in English and attitude toward peer and teacher feedback. The participants were 158 junior high school and 375 high school Iranian students. A sixteen-item questionnaire was developed by the authors in order to investigate how students perceived feedback expectancy, peer feedback, teacher feedback and cultural aspects. The results of the study indicated that students in higher levels of education expect more feedback, female students expect more feedback from their teachers and peers, feedback is more expected from high achievers of English and students prefer teacher feedback to peer feedback. As a result, the authors suggest language developers and teachers motivate their students to seek feedback from several sources.

The last category to be examined is the teachers' conceptions of intelligence and their roles in teacher care and teacher feedback. Aiming to explore the relationships among the three aforementioned constructs, Pishghadam et al. (2015) developed three scales to measure them. The participants were 81 EFL teachers and their 426 students. The research was held in private language institutes in Iran. The findings suggested that the concepts that teachers bear in their minds about intelligence significantly affect the amount and quality of care and feedback that they provide their students with. Moreover, the study revealed that teachers who believe that intelligence can be increased by the environment demonstrate to have more expectations towards their students than those teachers who consider intelligence as a fixed and stable trait.

By the same token, Pishghadam et al. (2015) stated that teachers who pay more attention to their students offer more feedback to them. Likewise, teachers who are more conscious of providing feedback to their students distribute their attention more evenly in the classroom, and avoid favoring the high-ability students over the low-ability ones. As teacher care and teacher feedback are considered to be two highly significant constructs in the field of foreign language teaching, the authors suggested that teachers should work on their concept of intelligence in order to "[…] have a modular, malleable and incremental view of the construct" (Pishghadam et al., 2015, p. 75). This attitude would promote a more relaxing and comfortable environment in the educational system. As a result, Pishghadam et al.'s (2015) study demonstrated that student achievement can be influenced by their teachers' expectations towards their own concept of intelligence.

Final considerations

This study sought to investigate in what perspective feedback has been examined in the context of EFL teaching and learning and in what ways it has been revealed to be effective for students and teachers. Findings of the study revealed several issues which pave the way for future studies.

Consistent with earlier research on feedback in EFL settings, the findings on feedback in this study contribute to indicate that there is not one 'best' way of providing feedback in EFL for all learners and learning challenges. This investigation demonstrated that regardless the means of delivery, the strategy adopted by the teacher or the learners' level of education, what must be taken into account is the pedagogical objective of the task and the individual characteristics of the students and the teachers (Mason & Bruning, 2001; Pishghadam et al., 2015; Wang, 2015). This study also revealed that the provision of ample feedback on a regular basis offers more individualized attention to the learner, a feature that would rarely be possible under regular classroom conditions. In conclusion, while lack of feedback leads to frustration, providing appropriate feedback leads to more fruitful outcomes for EFL learners (Ebyary & Windeatt, 2010).

Although feedback is believed to bring benefits in various ways, the authors still argue that in order to benefit from feedback strategies, students should

receive pre-training instructions and be closely accompanied by their instructors during the whole process (Kamimura, 2006; Kurt & Atay, 2007; Barnawi, 2010; Jahin, 2012, Méndez & Cruz, 2012). Likewise, the authors recommend teachers should learn more about the strategies of offering effective and valuable feedback, as it is a key element in the students' subsequent uptake.

Due to the scarce number of publications that analyzed feedback in oral interactions, this research points that further investigation on the theme should be carried out in order to shed light to one of the most frequent aspect of the class: the oral communication. This study also reveals that feedback has been studied in an immediate perspective, as a consequence, investigations have revealed overall benefits to the learners in reaching their goals in a short period of time. However, long-term benefits should be investigated to assess how feedback can impact students' educational performance in their subsequent learning experiences. A third implication brought by this study is one that has been acknowledged by educators and researchers of EFL contexts in Brazil: there has been no publication addressing feedback in EFL classroom settings in the past ten years in this country published on ERIC database. This study suggests future investigations in Brazil in order to have a clear picture of the theme in the Brazilian context, considering the peculiarities of its people, as well as the particular challenges faced by the educational system in the country.

However, some limitations are attributed to this study. This is a small-scale investigation which used only one database. The results, therefore, may not be generalized to contexts other than the ones aforementioned. It is likely that if more databases had been included, statistics would have been more robust. A second limitation is that this study selected publications which made full text available on ERIC database. A number of other publications would have been included in this investigation if more studies had permitted access to their full texts.

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