

Exploring Student Perception of Written Feedback in the Context of Syrian ESL Classrooms

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Feedback

Feedback is ‘a *fundamental element of a process approach to writing. It can be defined as input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision. In other words, it is the comments, questions, and suggestions a reader gives a writer to produce 'reader-based prose' ’* (Flower 1979 in Keh 1990: 294)

Research Questions



- 1. Why do Syrian ESL Baccalaureate students feel inclined to have teacher feedback on their writing?**
- 2. How do they view other types of feedback to their writing?**
- 3. What alternative forms of feedback could improve their writing?**
- 4. Are the suggested alternatives feasible and applicable with regard to the Syrian context?**

Students' Profile

Level	Baccalaureate
Number	120 students
Years of Studying English	10 yrs
Major	Scientific, Literary, Vocational
Age	$20 \geq \text{age} \geq 18$
Gender	M/ F
L₁	Arabic
L₂	English

Methodology

- Research Paradigm
- Research Instruments
- Time of the Research
- Anticipated Problems

Features of ESL Syrian Classrooms

- Following traditional teaching methodologies, mainly GTM₁ /Aural-Oral approach/ situational language teaching.
- Occasional implementation of CLT₂
- Total Absence of C-bA₃
- English is a subject to pass and not a language to learn
- Strong dedication to teacher-centred approach to learning
- Lack of language laboratories, projectors, DVDs, Computers, etc.

1 Grammar Translation Method

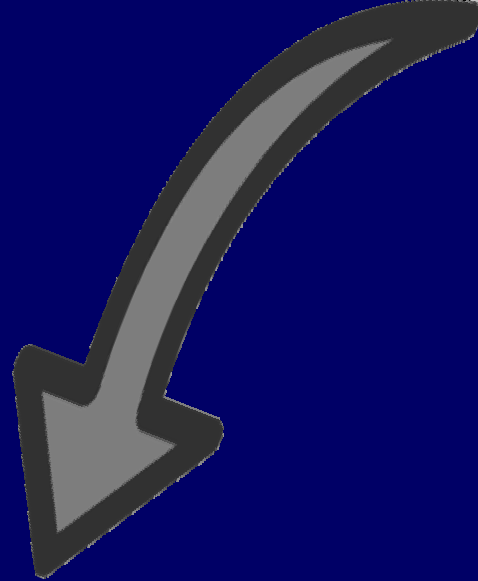
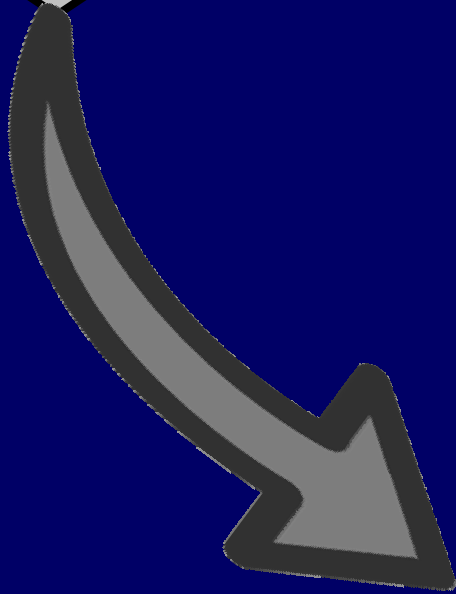
2 Communicative Language Teaching

3 Context-based Approach

**External
Factors**

Influential Factors

**Internal
Factors**



**Written Feedback in
ESL Syrian
Classrooms**

Assessment

Poor assessment has worse influence on students than poor teaching.

Assessment is 'a mechanism to control students that is far more pervasive and insidious than most staff would be prepared to acknowledge. [...] Assessment certainly aids or inhibits our endeavours in improving teaching and learning'

(Boud, 1995: 35)

Types of Written Feedback in the ESL Syrian Context

- **Prevalence of unseen written exams**
- **Dominance of teacher feedback**
- **Peer and self- assessment are practised occasionally; at certain times and in particular settings**
- **Obsession with marks**
- **Authority of summative assessment and almost absence of formative assessment**
- **Assessment or written feedback has turned to be correction of errors in the Syrian ESL classrooms**

Assessment in the Syrian context

Social Perception; comedy; tragedy; or tragic-comedy?
Who is the victim?!

*The Baccalaureate Course goes
off-track when students look after
marks rather than information*

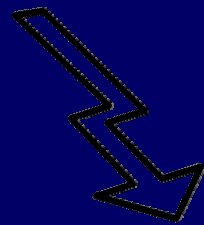
(Sa'ed, 2009)



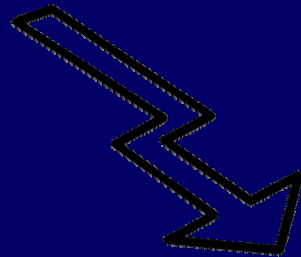
Students' Reactions

ESL Syrian students at the Baccalaureate level have various responses towards the outcomes of the Final Formal Exam:

It ranges from



normal stress



undue anxiety



committing suicide

(Ali 2008)

Evidence

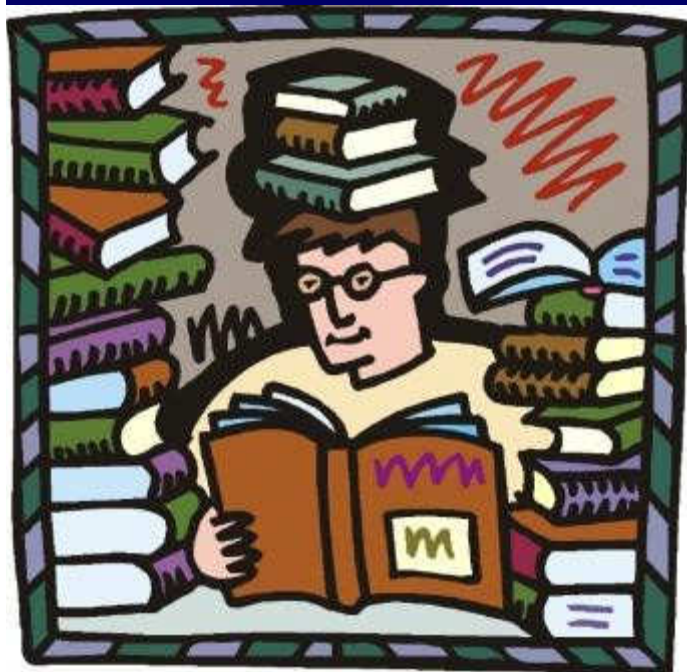
- Students' face-to-face daily conversations as well as social networks (blogs, forums, etc.) include various references to their fear of the exam, either by words, figures or caricature
- Statistics of the victims of the final result announcements leads us to think for serious steps to be done in this regard

(Ali 2008)

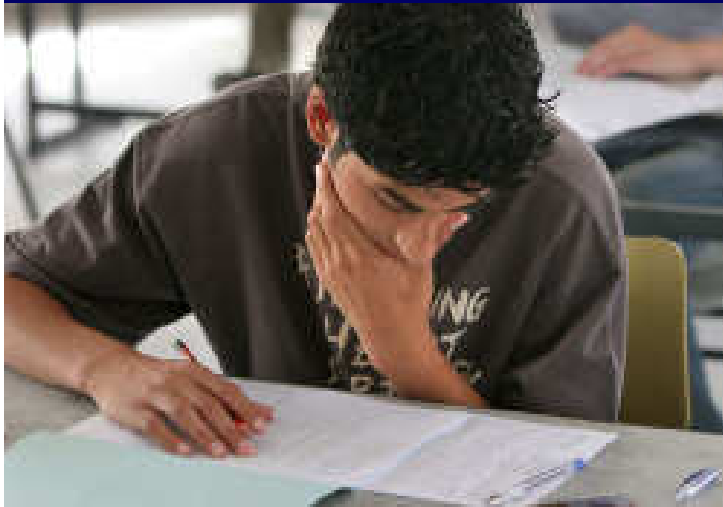
Examples



www.forums.syriaroom.com



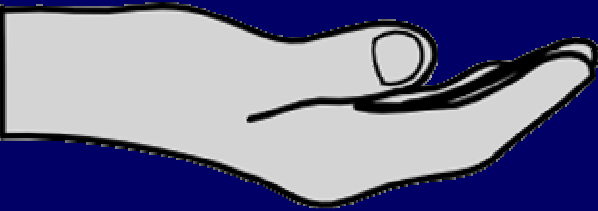
Examples



www.nobles-news.com



Give me a hand !



Tell me and I'll forget




Show me and I'll remember

Engage me and I'll understand

Teacher Feedback vs. Peer and self-assessment

'students need to be able to look with new eyes at the work they have undertaken, to understand the reasons by which assessment decisions have been made and to look to ways of remedying defects and supplying omissions' (Brown,1999:7)

Some Reflections

<i>Students' Experiences in other contexts</i>			
Teacher Feedback			
Self-correction			
Peer / Group Feedback			
e-Assessment			

Addressing Ethical Issues

- **Informed consent**
- **Privacy**
- **Confidentiality**
- **Anonymity**

(Cohen *et al.*2000)

Videos

The classic way of assessment (frightening teacher)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrSWWhH5fCj8&feature=related>

GTM <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4digTl55x-U>

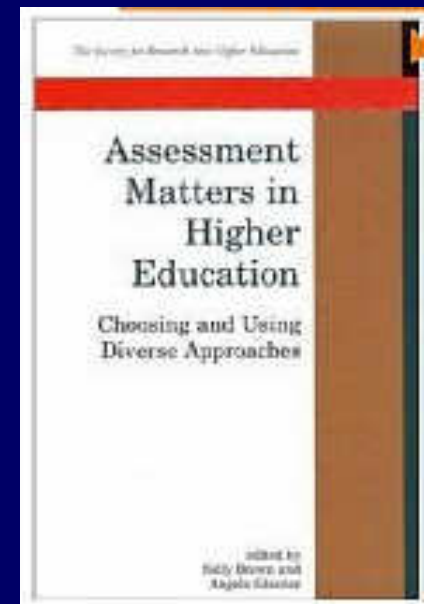
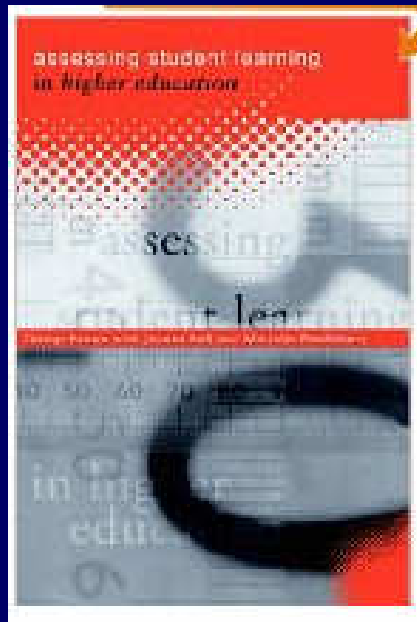
Formative vs. Summative assessment

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g4ogt0yI8xA&feature=related>

Recommended Readings

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Questions



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