European Journal of English Language Teaching
ISSN: 2501-7136
ISSN-L: 2501-7136
Available on-line at: www.oapub.org/edu

DOI: 10.46827/ejel.v5i4.3140 Volume 5 | Issue 4 | 2020

EFFECTIVENESS OF DESCRIPTIVE PRAISE ON THE ENGLISH COMPOSITION SKILL OF BRIDGING STUDENTS

Lucille D. Saraspe[1],
Ferdinand T. Abocejo[2i]
[1]Tagbilaran City Science High School,
Tagbilaran City Division, Tagbilaran City,
Bohol, Philippines
[2]Eastern Visayas State University,
Main Campus, Tacloban City,
Leyte, Philippines

Abstract:
This study examined the effectiveness of teacher's descriptive praise on the English composition skill of bridging students in a privately run secondary education institution in Lapu-lapu City, Cebu, Philippines. It was carried out though a quasi-experimental research design with crossover. This research made use of two groups; one receiving detailed feedback through descriptive praise on a previously written essay, and another not receiving any. The first phase made use of one intact section acting as the control group and another intact section as the experimental group. The second phase was completed by crossing over the two groups. The intact section assigned to the control group during the first phase was assigned to the experimental group in the second phase, and the reverse for the other intact section group. The researchers employed descriptive and inferential statistics analyses of data collected from the students' outputs. Analyses were focused on the pre-test and post-test English composition skill level of bridging students, the significant difference in the English composition skill levels in the pre-test and post-test and the significant improvement in the English composition skill levels of the students from pre-test to the post-test. This study was anchored on Feedback Intervention Theory advocated by Kluger and DeNisi and from the Law of Recency by Thorndike. Findings revealed that a bridging student may improve his English composition skill even without the use of descriptive praise as this type of feedback intervention improved the bridging student's English compositions skill only as far as the basic level. It is concluded that the use of descriptive praise alone in effecting improvement on the students' English composition skill is not adequate. The authors hereby suggest the application of other forms of feedback interventions such as mediated

[i]Correspondence email: ferdinand.abocejo@evsu.edu.ph

learning opportunities, careful scaffolding, corrective information or even computer-provided feedback mechanism.

Keywords: descriptive praise, feedback intervention, English compositions skill, bridging students, feedback intervention theory, law of recency

1. Introduction

The academic community always affirms the innate connection between successful teaching and improved achievement of students (Rodriguez and Abocejo, 2018). Granted that performance feedback is a generally acknowledged teaching strategy geared towards student learning (Higgins, Hartley and Skelton, 2010; Sugai et al., 2010S; prick, Knight, Reinke, Skyles and Barnes, 2010), it is crucial to recognize the quality and scope impact of performance feedback, especially for students' academic behaviour (Jolejole-Caube, Dumlao and Abocejo, 2019) and motivation in learning (Helwa, 2014).

Sustainably, it should be noted that among the inherent tenets of basic education, aside from cognitive and social development of students (Abocejo and Padua, 2010), is to inculcate the young learners' life-long learning of self-esteem (Chan and Lam, 2010), responsible attitude and sincerity (Fernandez and Abocejo, 2014), accountability in the consequences of actions, value justice (Kimonis, Ogg and Fefer, 2014), respect of each person's rights, nurture human relationships based fairness and the common good, acceptance of other person the way they are (Moilanen, Shaw and Fitzpatrick, 2010), respect towards nature, the environment and society.

Chan and Lam (2010) and Schartel (2012) clarified how effective feedback enables learners to optimize their ability at various stages of the learning process, raise their knowledge, strengths and appreciation in areas which need improvement thereby recognize the steps to take for results enhancement. Good feedback provides students with better understanding about a topic and gives clearer guidance on how to improve it (Ferris, Liu, Sinha and Senna, 2013). Feedback brings about confidence to students, strengthen self-awareness and drives enthusiasm towards learning (University of Reading, 2010)

Feedback is the input that a student gets after completing a piece of work which can be given in a variety of formats (University of Reading, 2010). The students are given the opportunity to evaluate their outputs, assess where they did right or wrong and recognize the areas where they need to concentrate to enhance their learning and success (Schartel, 2012; Meerah and Halim, 2011; Higgins, Hartley and Skelton, 2010). Feedback is commonly regarded as an effective tool for enhancing the learning process crucial towards achieving the desired quality instruction. Hatziapostolou and Paraskakis (2010) explained that feedback is as influential factor in the students' learning development.

Nevertheless, some of the assumptions regarding the use of feedback were disturbing. First, Voerman, Meijer, Korthagen and Simons (2012) found out that about one-third of feedback interventions led to reduced learning. In essence, feedback bring

about varied effects on the learning process. Second, existing research (Akalin and Sucuoglu, 2015) reported that feedback in the classroom is seldom given, although the study focused on investigating the level of feedback in classroom interaction.

Feedback provision tends to be minimal in a classroom setting; at best, observable only in few cases per day (Spilt, Leflot, Onghena and Colpin, 2016). Moreover, Pauli (2010) noted a low level of feedback interventions that teachers often ask new questions or give more explanations without authentic review of students' responses. When feedback was received, it was often non-specific and in the form of praise: "*good*" or "*right*" or "*well done*!" Similar to Pauli (2010), Spilt, Leflot, Onghena and Colpin (2016) discovered that praise the most commonly used feedback approach by teachers.

Meanwhile, teacher praise becomes very effective when it is contingent, concise, specific and authentic (Partin et al., 2010; Cavanaugh, 2013; Hawkins and Heflin, 2011). Contingent praise takes place as a result of a behaviour; descriptive praise elicits description of the behaviour being praised. This statement is both contingent and descriptive. Nonetheless, years of research consistently showed low rates of praise giving by teachers and continue to be low (Rathel, Drasgow, Brown and Marshall, 2013), indicating that praises, even if seen being effective, are used and practiced by very few educators. Feedback bears substance in the enhancement of learning, such that there are considerable interests to determine whether a teacher praise is an effective feedback intervention (Pinter, East and Thrush, 2015) to enhance learning particularly on the students' English compositions skill.

The authors contend that providing descriptive praises motivate and strengthen positive behaviours among students. Arguably, the general tenets of praise are less understood by many educators, more specifically among classroom teachers. Effective praises done to students facilitate and reinforce the learning process. Giving constructive compliments and feedback enhance students' confidence and, at the same time, amplify pro-academic dispositions among young classroom learners. In fact, when effectively used, genuinely practiced and successfully implemented, descriptive praise can bring about a lasting impact on students' attitudes and morale leading to fortified relationship between teachers and student learners.

1.1 Study objectives

This study investigated the effectiveness of teachers' descriptive praise on the English composition skill of bridging students in a privately run secondary learning institution in Lapu-lapu City, Cebu, Philippines. Specifically, it determined and described the pre-test and post-test English composition skill level of bridging students, the significant difference in the English composition skill level of the bridging students between pre-tests and between post-tests, and the significant improvement in the English composition skill level of bridging students from pre-test to post-test.

2. Literature Review

Providing feedback as appreciation of students' good performance is a widely acknowledged intervention tool both for classroom management and student academic behaviour improvement (Sprick et al., 2010; Sugai et al., 2010). These academic interventions may be practiced with supplementary repeat, reinforced goal setting and regular feedback provision. Alternatively, behavioural mediations involve different timetables for reinforcement, redirection or augmented application of specific praise for favourable behavioural change (Solomon, Klein and Politylo, 2012). Teachers employ various strategies, techniques and procedures to oversee student behaviour thereby create conducive environments towards learning (Cuñado and Abocejo, 2018). Two of these techniques are giving of praise and providing opportunities for students to appropriately respond to the learning processes (Nelson, Young, Young and Cox, 2010; Cavanaugh, 2013; Partin et al., 2010).

A type of intervention that can be embedded into typically occurring classroom activities and routines involves the use of comments without an explicit instruction to respond (Graham, MacArthur, Fitzgerald, 2013; Nelson et al., 2010). This intervention may take the form of descriptive praises where students are given comments about their performance on a task through the use of praise statements while carefully avoiding corrective feedback (Westmacott, 2017).

While this type of approach has primarily been used to teach social and communication skill, it has been applied in a small number of studies to pre-academic skill development (Stout and Sorensen, 2015). Commenting interventions most often measured the effects of commenting procedures on language production skill, such as phonology (Trazo and Abocejo, 2019), social communication, or grammar (Bitchener and Knoch, 2010). However, a subset of these studies included a measure of vocabulary, which has been considered a pre-academic skill in research on early literacy development (Defazio, Jones, Tennant and Hook, 2010; Tom, 2013; Vyncke, 2012).

Teacher praise is implemented within and outside the classroom setting in view of improving the academic performance and social outcomes of student learners (Hawkins and Heflin, 2011). Praise is also described as verbal approval by the teacher to bring about the desired academic conduct and social behaviours of students (e.g., "*great job taking turns, class*!", "*Suzie, thank you for keeping your hands to yourself*,"). In particular, specific praise for behaviour, is considered by many to be one of the most effective school-based strategies in minimizing problem behaviour and enriching positive behaviour (Cavanaugh, 2013).

Teacher praise can be highly effective when it is contingent, descriptive, personal, and genuine (Partin, Robertson, Maggin, Oliver and Wehby, 2010; Myers, Simonsen and Sugai, (2011). There is contingent praise after and as a result of a commendable behaviour, descriptive praise defines the good conduct being appreciated (Dozier, Iwata, Thomason-Sassi, Worsdell and Wilson, 2012). For instance, after a student raises her hand, the teacher may say, "*Good job raising your hand*". This statement is both contingent

(occurring directly following and as a result of a behaviour) and descriptive (identifying the behaviour being praised).

To be personal, praise statements should be overtly addressed to the learner or learners who have earned them, either by name or gesture (Briere, Simonsen, Sugai and Myers, 2015). For example, a teacher could use a student's name (e.g., "*Excellent writing, Mary*") or could use a gesture (e.g., make eye contact or point toward a group before saying, "*I like how this group is on task*"). To make the praise realistic, a teacher need to construct statements of praise in natural manner as much as possible in a consistent regularity so that praise becomes a common attribute to the learning environment (Nelson et al., 2010; Polick et al., 2012).

Kimonis, Ogg and Fefer (2014) and Kinder (2010) cited descriptive praise as a form of intervention component to examine evidence-based interventions for children with conduct problems. McDuffie et al. (2016) employed onsite coaching sessions observing mothers' use of practice strategy with their children. Descriptive praise, as a reinforcement, encourage the children to give verbal prompts as their mentors demonstrated targeted strategy use (Moilanen, Shaw and Fitzpatrick, 2010).

To assess the impact of the teaching program on life ability and problem behaviour, a multiple-probe method was used. During the research, descriptive praise was given to engage the pre-school life skills in both basic and teaching conditions, to document ample amount of learning which took place thereby extend beyond the initial teaching conditions (Dean-Rumsey, 2014; Hawkins and Heflin, 2011; Polick et al., 2012).

The use of the teaching strategies such as descriptive praise as a learning reinforcement is flexible such that teachers could use them singly, collectively or in a combination as they see appropriate (Luczynski, Hanley and Rodriguez, 2014). Previous researchers affirmed the use of praise as a favourably successful method in raising academic performance and improving behaviour (Hawkins and Heflin, 2011; Rathel et al., 2013). Accordingly, giving praise can be an effective practice towards improving academic performance. In the simulated work environment, descriptive praise and corrective feedback, when effectively used with young people, improve their work-related undertakings (Polick et al., 2012).

Feedback is as such instrumental in a student's learning experience where it promotes successful learning in a timely, personal, manageable, motivational and direct manner with direct linked to assessment criteria (Major, Harris, Zakrajsek, 2016). Notwithstanding the indisputable value of feedback with the clear and consistent research outcomes on its usefulness in the educational process and the advancement of learning, ample evidences (Baleghizadeh and Dadashi, 2011; Hyland, 2013; Peloghitis, 2010) indicated that students don't gather feedback. Students lost the courage to engage themselves in the feedback process mainly due to lack of motivation, difficulty and inconvenience with respect to reflecting on the given feedback comments (Hatziapostolou and Paraskakis, 2010).

However, years of research have also consistently revealed low rates of teacher's praise and continue to be low (Partine et al., 2010; Rathel et al., 2013) suggesting that very

few educators are using it even if confirmed to be a very effective practice. Accordingly, the circumstances under which descriptive praise would theoretically be more beneficial than general praise need to be examined. For instance, descriptive praise could be most effective for children with whom it is established as a reinforcement, necessitating the inclusion of reinforced appraisals in future praise research endeavours. It is also conceivable that to reap the benefits of concise affirmation, a stronger verbal descriptive praise (e.g., listener or tact) is required (Polick, Carr and Hanney, 2012). By better understanding optimal evaluation practices, educators can be better equipped towards meaningful learning process through feedback provision to students supportive to the desired improvement of the learning process.

2.1 Theoretical and conceptual framework

This study anchored its theoretical framework on the Feedback Intervention Theory (FIT) promoted by Kluger and DeNisi in 1996. The FIT is a behavioural theory in an attempt to "*explain the effects of feedback interventions on performance*". It draws upon individuals' use of feedback to assess what has been accomplished with respect to stated goals and objectives. This process results to a feedback sign which was either positive or negative. The giving of positive praise is termed as acknowledgement given to a learner for his or her performance which corresponds to the predetermined standard while the negative feedback is construed as information that individual's leaner falls short from the desired performance (Nematzadeh, and Siahpoosh, 2017).

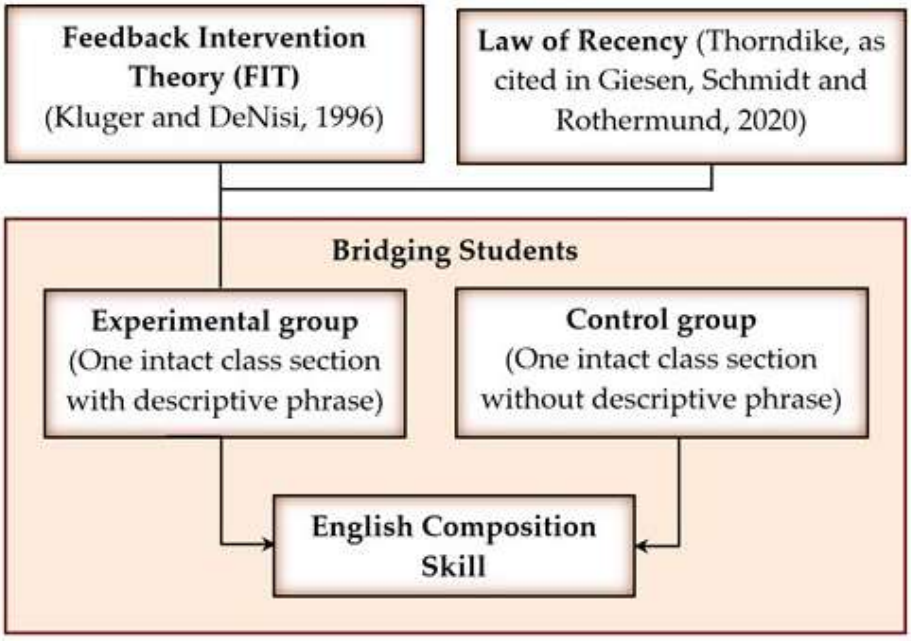

Figure 1: Theoretical and conceptual framework of the study

This study also anchored its framework from the Law of Recency put forward by Thorndike (as cited in Giesen, Schmidt and Rothermund, 2020). The Law of Recency claims that the most recent things learned are better remembered, whereas the things

learned in the past are more difficult to remember. This include appraisal, warm-ups and related exercises which, as the theory argues, the more recent the practice, the more successfully it is accomplished.

Efficient performance by the learners can be ensured by practicing a skill or a new concept is done just prior to its application. Teachers acknowledge the Law of Recency when planning a summary of the lesson or a reading conclusion. Repeat, restate or re-emphasize important topics towards the end of a lesson ensure learners to remember them, rather than retain inconsistent details. It is in this law of learning that establishes validity and reliability on the results of the participants' responses on their essays given that the process of learning took place in only five days' time for each phase.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research design

This study was carried in two phases utilising a quasi-experimental research design with a crossover of the control and experimental groups preceding phase 2 of the experimentation. The control and experimental groups were selected observing intact grouping and both were exposed to all treatment conditions with descriptive praise as the treatment variable. It involved measurements of both groups carefully comparing the effects of treatments.

The experiment occurred within the context of a 20-day bridging program. The dependent measure included an authentic writing task with students working on one type of essay per phase and then revising it based on descriptive praise. The writing activity was part of the module used for the grade 7 bridging program and is evaluated and scored, and therefore, was expected to be taken seriously by the respondents.

The research was accomplished for the duration of ten days involving two sections – one receiving detailed feedback through descriptive praise on a previously written essay, another not receiving any. The first phase made use of one intact section acting as the control group and another intact section as the experimental group. The second phase was carried out by crossing over the two groups' assignments wherein the experimental group was now assigned as the control group and vice-versa, hence the crossover of treatment groups. Prior to the intervention in each phase, the two groups were given the pre-tests and after intervention, both groups were given the post-tests.

3.2 Research locale

This research was conducted in privately run secondary education institution in Lapu-lapu City, Cebu, Philippines. The school offers programs in the preparatory, elementary and secondary levels. The school enrolment for grade 7 was around 400 students with about 15 percent enrolled in the Bridging Program which runs for 20 days in April and May of each school year. At the time of the study, there were sixty (60) licensed teachers who taught in the basic learning institution.

3.3 Research participants

Respondents for the experiment were the thirty-nine (39) two class-section students enrolled in the English Bridging Program of the privately run secondary education institution under study. The bridging students were taught by the same teacher who is the first author of this paper. They belonged to section Accuracy with 19 students and section Efficiency with 20 students. These two intact group sections were selected as the control and experimental groups for the study. They comprised the entire participants for this quasi-experimental research endeavour.

A two-hour English bridging session for twenty days is provided to students whose scores did not reach the passing rate in the entrance exam for incoming Grade 7 students of the school. One part of the bridging program module is teaching the students basic English composition skill such as writing expositions including the different types of essay.

3.4 Ethical considerations

Written permission from the schools' administration was sought prior to conducting the study. The study was only carried out upon approval. With the full consent of the parents of the learners in the participating Grade 7 classes, voluntary participation by the research participants was ensured.

The purpose of the research was explained clearly to the school administrators and the participants in the study. Measures were conducted to ensure that the participants in the research were not affected in any way during the course of the analysis. The research data generated were handled with utmost confidentiality and were used for study purposes only. Upon completion of the study, the obtained results in the form of project terminal report were presented to the school administrators, research participants and their parents.

3.5 Research instruments

The study employed an essay examination written during an initial 2-hour session which were then revised after a 2-day interval taking into consideration the teacher's descriptive praise. A 5-level 7th Grade Informative/ Explanatory Writing Rubric was also utilized for the scoring of the students' essays.

3.6 Experimental procedure

The experiment was divided into two phases with each phase running for five days in ten hours. Each day of the phase ran for two hours. The respondents were from two different intact group sections: section Accuracy and section Efficiency. On the first phase, random assignments were carried out with sections Accuracy and Efficiency assigned to the control and experimental groups, respectively.

The first phase began with the teacher's 2-hour discussion on basic technical writing aspects such as the format of a deductive essay, where to put the introduction,

body and conclusion, how many paragraphs are found in each paragraph, capitalization, indentions, punctuations and other technical writing conventions.

It was assumed that a lecture before the pre-test is crucial since knowledge on these aspects does not directly relate to the quality of the students' English composition skills considering that the study only collects data of the students' ability to compose or write and not including their technical writing know-how. Furthermore, the study objective was intended to determine the student's pre-test English composition skill with writing conventions already embedded in their writings.

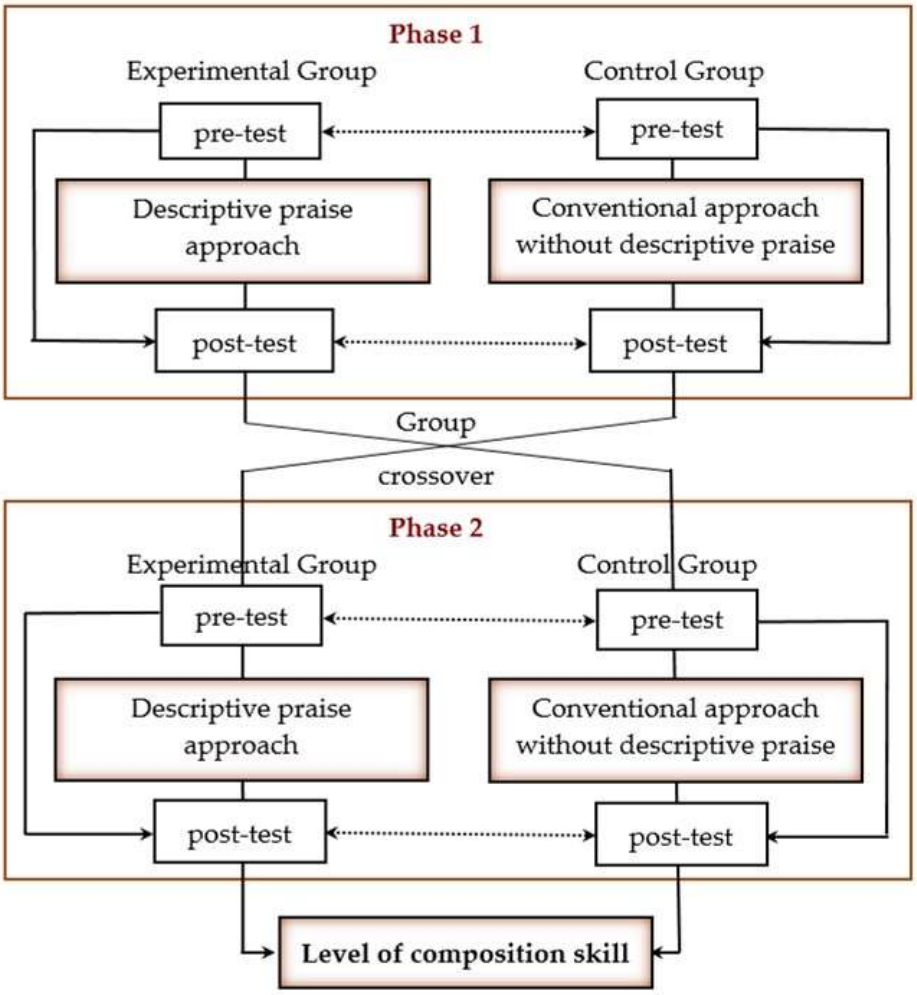

Figure 2: The study flow by phase with group crossover

The only variable that the researchers intended to investigate in this study is the English composition skill of the students, their adeptness at the way they use written words to express their ideas and opinions in view of deepening of these ideas toward style or quality. Essentially, giving the respondents a lecture before the pre-test neither provided any influence nor improved their English composition skill. Either way, the results of the study was focused only on their ability to do English composition regardless of their conventional writing skill.

A pre-test was given to both groups on the second day of the first phase. The research participants were asked to write a deductive essay using the same topic (Table 1). The respondents composed their deductive essays by answering the question "*Why am I excited to be a Grade-7 Student in SACS*?". On the third and fourth day, the experimental group was given feedback on the quality of their essays through the use of descriptive praise where the teacher communicated with each student for about 12 minutes.

The control group, on the other hand, was given back their essays without any provision of neither descriptive praise nor any form of intervention except the rating of their essays which was obtained using the rubrics set for this study. They rewrote their essays based on their scores as indicated in the rubrics. Both groups took the post-test on the fifth day of each phase.

Table 1: Activity flow of the study

Phase	Day	Control Group	Experimental Group
		Class Section Accuracy	**Class Section Efficiency**
1	1	Lecture on "*Writing a deductive essay*"	
	2	Pre-test (Writing a deductive essay)	
	3	Returning of the students' essays	Giving of feedback through descriptive praise
	4	Listening Activities as reflected in the Module	
	5	Post-test (Rewriting their deductive essays)	Post-test (Rewriting their deductive essays)
		Class Section Efficiency	**Class Section Accuracy**
2	1	Lecture on "*Writing a cause and effect essay*"	
	2	Pre-test (Writing a cause and effect essay)	
	3	Returning of the students' essays	Giving of feedback through descriptive praise
	4	Listening Activities as reflected in the Module	
	5	Post-test (Rewriting their cause and effect essays)	Post-test (Rewriting their cause and effect essays)

On the fifth day, the experimental group were tasked to rewrite their essays in the light of the intervention the teacher gave during the last two days. The control group, tackled a listening lesson as indicated in the bridging program module, listening being completely different and independent from writing.

The following week after the first phase was completely executed, the second phase commenced with the same procedures but with the sections subjected to crossover. This time, section Accuracy was assigned to the experimental group while section Efficiency was assigned to the control group. The same thing happened at the onset of the second phase. A lecture was given to both of the groups on the technical aspects and writing conventions as well as the definition of a cause and effect essay.

On the second day, a pre-test was administered to both of the sections. They wrote their essays following the given topic "*The Effects of Social Media to Grade 7 Students*". The experimental group was given feedback through descriptive praise on the third and fourth day. In contrast, essays of the control group were returned on the third day

without descriptive praise. The control group again rewrote their cause and effect essay on the fourth day while the experimental group on the fifth day by means of the intervention provided by the teacher on their third and fourth day. Listening activities were given to the control group to fill the void and not affect the results of the study.

3.7 Gathering of data

To obtain and gather the needed data, an approval duly signed by the school principal was secured. Upon obtaining the needed approval from school officials, the researchers requested permission to conduct the study with the bridging students as research respondents. A pre-test and a post-test essay examinations were given to the participants for both the control and experimental groups during the two phases of the study which ran for two weeks, after which the effectiveness of descriptive praise as a feedback intervention was assessed. These essays were then checked and scored using a 5-level 7th grade informative/explanatory writing rubric. The scores were collected and tallied to compare the effects of the intervention or treatments on the participants' performance.

3.8 Treatment of data

Upon collection and consolidation of the gathered data, thee were collated and encoded to a data template using a spreadsheet for data analysis. Measures of central tendency were computed such as the mean and the mode. Derivation of the standard deviation (SD) was also done to determine the spread of data set with respect to the mean. T-test of two independent samples and two correlated samples were used to compare significant differences and improvement in the mean scores from both control and experimental groups using the Minitab software version 17 free trial version. The resulting analyses were then interpreted in the light of the study objectives.

4. Results and Discussions

4.1 Pre-test and post-test English composition skill levels of control and experimental groups

Table 1 shows that the level of English composition skill of the bridging students for both in control and experimental groups was, more or less, on the same "*below basic*" level as they garnered scores of 6.436 by the control group and 6.718 by the experimental group. This really confirms that without any intervention done on the class, their English composition skill would not be enhanced, in fact the students would manifest below expected English composition writing performance.

Their scores in the pre-test were distributed just around the mean of below basic level owing to the small value of the resulting standard deviation (SD) suggesting less variability (Table 1). These indicate that the bridging students' scores did not vary much from one another and were relatively closer to the attained mean values in each of the control and experimental group. Essentially, most of the students' scores closely fall within four (4) to eight (8) with the majority registering scores of 6 out of 20 points.

Table 1: Pre-test and post-test English composition skill levels of bridging students (N=39)

Student group	**Mean**	**SD**	**Level of** English **composition skill**
Pre-test			
Control group	6.436	2.113	Below basic
Experimental group	6.718	2.790	Below basic
Post–test			
Control group	8.564	2.137	Basic
Experimental group	9.051	2.492	Basic

Ranges for English composition skill level

Range		**Skill level**
00.00 – 03.99	-	Far below basic
04.00 – 07.99	-	Below basic
08.00 – 11.99	-	Basic
12.00 – 15.99	-	Proficient
16.00 – 20.00	-	Advanced

On the positive note, both the control and experimental groups obtained a mean gain scores from the pre-test to the post-test. The control group's mean score rose from 6.436 to 8.564 with a standard deviation of 2.137 points, even without receiving descriptive praise (Figure 3). Likewise, the experimental group's mean score increased from 6.718 to 9.051 with the standard deviation of 2.492 points. Their respective post-test performances allowed them to reach basic English composition skill level, a one-step higher on the English composition level than their pre-test group attained performance.

The experimental group registered higher post-test scores than the control group, though both groups fall on the same English composition skill level. Somehow, this result may indicate that the experimental group, exposed to the descriptive praise as intervention, displayed a higher mean gain scores as compared with the control group not receiving which feedback intervention.

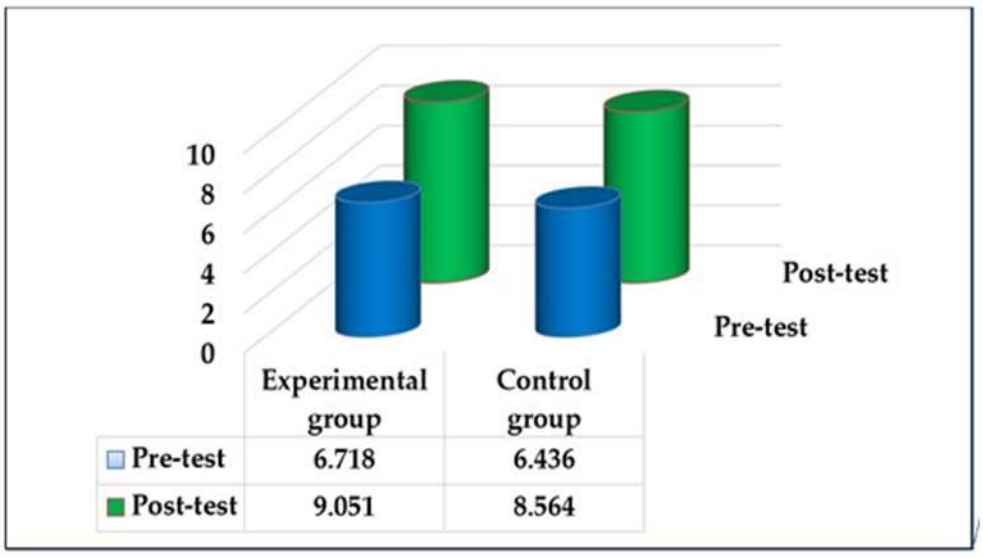

Figure 3: English composition skill levels of bridging students by group

4.2 Significant difference in English composition skill between control and experimental groups

Inherent to the study was to determine if significant difference in the English composition skill levels exists between the control and experimental groups. Taking into account both the mean scores and standard deviation of the two groups in the two phases, the computed t-value was -0.50 in the pre-test with a resulting p-value of 0.616 which was higher than the level of significance set at 0.05.

This result signifies no significant difference in the English compositions skill levels between the control and experimental groups in the pre-test such that the null hypothesis was not rejected. This implies that both groups were at the same level of learning ability prior to the conduct of the experiment. On the average, both groups did not reach the passing score required by the secondary learning institution with the entrance test conducted prior to the bridging program.

Table 2: Difference in the English composition skill levels of bridging students between control and experimental groups in the pre-test and post-test (N=39)

Group	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value
Pre-test				
Control group	6.436	2.113	-0.50^{ns}	0.616
Experimental group	6.718	2.790		
Post–test				
Control group	8.564	2.137	-0.93^{ns}	0.357
Experimental group	9.051	2.492		

Note: ns - not significant

In the post-test, the achievement of both groups exhibited the same result. The computed t-value was posted at -0.93 with a p-value of 0.357. This result indicated that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected such that there is no significant difference in the English composition skills registered by both the control and experimental group in the post test. Numerically however, the experimental group registered higher post test result at 9.051 points than those in the control group of 8.564 points. This deduces that even when the experimental group was given a feedback intervention through descriptive praise, there was still no significant difference in the group's English composition skill level from the control group. Their English composition skill in the post-test was not affected by the given intervention of descriptive praise such that the two groups posted the same level of English composition skill.

4.3 Significant improvement in English composition skill levels from the pre-test to the post-test of both control and experimental groups

As shown in Table 3, both the control and experimental groups posted increases in their level of English composition skill from the pre-test to the post-test. The experimental group registered higher increase of 2.333 mean points than the 2.128 mean points achieved by the control group. The computed t-values were recorded at 7.80 for the

control group and 6.96 for the experimental group. The resulting p-values of 0.000 signified a highly significant improvement in the level of English composition skill by both groups. Accordingly, there is sufficient evidence that the descriptive praise was an effective intervention towards improving the English composition skill of students.

It should be noted however, that the control group, not receiving the descriptive praise as feedback intervention, also posted highly significant improvement in the English composition skill level from the pre-test to the post-test, although it registered mean gain was lower than the experimental group. This result implies that students in the control groups from both phases are able to improve in their English composition skill even without providing them descriptive praise as a form of feedback intervention.

Table 3: Significant improvement in the English composition skill levels of bridging students from pre-test to post-test by group (N=39)

Group	SD	Mean	Mean gain	t-value	p-value
Control group					
Pre-test	2.113	6.436	2.128	7.80**	0.000
Post-test	2.137	8.564			
Experimental group					
Pre-test	2.790	6.718	2.333	6.96**	0.000
Post-test	2.492	9.051			

Note: ** - highly significant at $\alpha < 0.01$.

In this study, the fact that descriptive praise improved the bridging students' English composition skill in English runs parallel with what Hawkins and Heflin (2011) found in their study on visual performance feedback intervention. Also, current study findings affirmed the arguments of Cavanaugh (2013) that teacher praise elicits positive behaviour among students, and descriptive praise and corrective feedback when put to effective use to students stimulate work setting and augment learners' performance.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In the light of the study findings, it is concluded that praise is effective in improving the English composition skill of the bridging students. Descriptive praise is useful and meaningful in the way students write and revise their work improving the experimental group's English composition skill level from below basic to basic. Considerably, the bridging students may still improve their English composition skill even without the use of descriptive praise grounded on the findings that both the control and experimental groups manifested increased scores in their English compositions' skill. Descriptive praise may facilitate at improving students' English composition skill as long as provided with other forms of feedback interventions like mediated learning opportunities.

While it is advantageous for a students' English composition skill that teachers provide descriptive praise, it is as well equally important that they use carefully-prepared and comprehensive rubrics which effectively rate the aspects of a skill they want to

develop among the students. In addition, teachers must also carefully a student's work when checking as written corrections are a form of feedback intervention. This research study has proven that descriptive praise is as useful as any form of feedback intervention given the right combination of teaching tools and reinforcement opportunities.

About the Authors

Lucille D. Saraspe is a high school teacher at Tagbilaran City Science High School in Bohol, Philippines. She finished Master of Arts in Education major in English Language Teaching (MAED-ELT) from the Cebu Normal University (CNU), Cebu City, Philippines. At present, she is pursuing her Doctorate in Philosophy (PhD) in Language with concentration in English at the University of San Jose-Recoletos (USJR), Cebu City, Philippines. She is the current English Coordinator of the school where she teaches English, French and Research. Her research interests include teaching pedagogies, applied linguistics, language variations, dialectology, speech and language processing, language acquisition, foreign language learning, and discourse studies. Her current research focuses on the significance of teachers' feedback messages in the development of students' writing performance.

Ferdinand T. Abocejo is an Associate Professor V of Eastern Visayas State University (EVSU) in Tacloban City, Leyte, Philippines. He is currently completing his dissertation leading to PhD in Research and Evaluation from the Cebu Normal University (CNU), Cebu City, Philippines. He obtained his Master in Public Policy (MPP) specializing in International Policy (*with merit*) from the Australian National University (ANU) in Canberra City, Australian Capital Territory (ACT), Australia. His research interests include data modelling and forecasting in the fields of public policy, applied economics, econometrics, education, political science, public administration, public health, statistics, tourism and social sciences. All of his published papers in national and international peer reviewed research journals are traceable on "*Harzing's Publish or Perish*" and on Google scholar citations. Moreover, professor Abocejo serves as external peer reviewer to various research journals within and outside the Philippines.

References

Abocejo, F. T., & Padua, R. N. (2010). An econometric model for determining sustainability of basic education development. *CNU Journal of Higher Education*. 4(1), 40-53. Retrieved from http://www.jhe.cnu.edu.ph/index.php/cnujhe/article/view/39.

Akalin, S., & Sucuoglu, B. (2015). Effects of classroom management intervention based on teacher training and performance feedback on outcomes of teacher-student dyads in inclusive classrooms. *Educational Sciences: Theory & Practice*, 15(3), 739-758. doi: 10.12738/estp.2015.3.2543.

Baleghizadeh, S., & Dadashi, M. (2011). The effect of direct and indirect corrective feedback on students' spelling errors. Profile, 13(1), 129-137. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1677626694?accountid=141440.

Bitchener, J. & Knoch, U. (2010). The contribution of written corrective feedback to language development: a ten-month investigation. *Applied linguistics*, 31: 193–214. Retrieved from https://academic.oup.com/applij/article-abstract/31/2/193/177926/The-Contribution-of-Written-Corrective-Feedback-to.

Briere, D. E., Simonsen, B., Sugai, G., & Myers, D. (2015). Increasing new teachers' specific praise using a within-school consultation intervention. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions,* 17(1), 50-60. doi: 10.1177/1098300713497098.

Cavanaugh, B. (2013). Performance feedback and teachers' use of praise and opportunities to respond: A review of the literature. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 36(1), 111-137. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1312445557?accountid =141440.

Chan, J. C. Y., & Lam, S. (2010). Effects of different evaluative feedback on students 'self-efficacy in learning. *Instructional Science*, 38(1), 37-58. doi: 10.1.1.981.3103&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

Cuñado, A. G., & Abocejo, F. T. (2018). Lesson planning competency of English major university sophomore students. *European Journal of Education Studies*. 5(8), 395-409. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.2538422.

Dean-Rumsey, Theresa A. (2014). Improving the writing skills of at-risk students through the use of writing across the curriculum and writing process instruction. Retrieved from https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=&httpsredir=1&article=1487&context=theses.

Defazio, J., Jones, J., Tennant, F., & Hook, S. A. (2010). Academic literacy: The importance and impact of writing across the curriculum – a case study. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 10(2), 34-47. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ890711.pdf.

Dozier, C. L., Iwata, B. A., Thomason-Sassi, J., Worsdell, A. S., & Wilson, D. M. (2012). A comparison of two pairing procedures to establish praise as a reinforcer. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 45(4), 721-735. doi: 10.1901/jaba.2012.45-721.

Fernandez, R. C. C., & Abocejo, F. T. (2014). Child labor, poverty and school attendance: Evidences from the Philippines by region. *CNU Journal of Higher Education*. 8(1), 114-127. Retrieved from http://www.jhe.cnu.edu.ph/index.php/cnujhe/article/view/151.

Ferris, D., Liu, H., Sinha, A. & Senna, M. (2013). Written corrective feedback for individual L2 writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 2, 307–29. Retrieved from https://sites.grenadine.uqam.ca/sites/melt/fr/edition2017/items/44.

Giesen, C. G., Schmidt, J. R., & Rothermund, K. (2020). The law of recency: An episodic stimulus-response retrieval account of habit acquisition. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10(2927), 1-17. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02927.

Graham, S., MacArthur, C. A., & Fitzgerald, J. (Eds.). (2013). *Best practices in writing instruction.* New York: Guilford Press. Retrieved from https://www.guilford.com/excerpts/graham.pdf.

Hatziapostolou, T., & Paraskakis, I. (2010). Enhancing the impact of formative feedback on student learning through an online feedback system. *Electronic Journal of e-Learning*, 8(2), 111-122. Retrieved from https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ895699.

Hawkins, S. M., & Heflin, J. L. (2011). Increasing secondary teachers' behavior-specific praise using a video self-modeling and visual performance feedback intervention. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 13(2), 97–108. Retrieved from http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.904.717&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

Helwa, H. S. A. A. (2014). The effectiveness of a program based on the combination of relevance and confidence motivational strategies in developing EFL argumentative writing skills and overcoming writing apprehension among students' teachers at faculty of education. *Online Submission.* Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED545646.pdf.

Higgins, R., Hartley, P. & Skelton, A. (2010). The conscientious consumer: reconsidering the role of assessment feedback in student learning, *Studies in Higher Education*, 27(1), 53-64. Retrieved from http://nitromart.co.uk/jem/docs/tt/assessment%20feedback%20on%20 student%20learning%20journal%20article.pdf.

Hyland, K. (2013). Student perceptions of hidden messages in teacher written feedback. *Studies in Educational Evaluation*, 39(3): 180–187. Retrieved from https://hub.hku.hk/bitstream/10722/199627/1/Content.pdf.

Jolejole-Caube, C., Dumlao, A. B., & Abocejo, F. T. (2019). Anxiety Towards Mathematics and Mathematics Performance of Grade 7 Learners. *European Journal of Education Studies*. 6(1), 334-360 doi: 10.5281/zenodo.2694050.

Kimonis, E. R., Ogg, J., & Fefer, S. (2014). The relevance of callous-unemotional traits to working with youth with conduct problems. *Bethesda*. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1510294267?accountid=141440.

Kinder, K. A. (2010). Comparing the effects of descriptive comments versus descriptive comments plus prompted trials on children's letter naming (Order No. 3442189). Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/851890231?accountid= 141440.

Kluger, A. N., & DeNisi, A. (1996). The effects of feedback interventions on performance: A historical review, a meta-analysis, and a preliminary feedback intervention theory. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(2), 254–284. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.119.2.254.

Luczynski, K. C., Hanley, G. P., & Rodriguez, N. M. (2014). An evaluation of the generalization and maintenance of functional communication and self-control skills with preschoolers. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 47*(2), 246-63. doi: 10.1002/jaba.128.

Major, Claire Howell, Harris, Michael S., Zakrajsek, Todd. (2016). *Teaching for learning: 101 intentionally designed educational activities to put students on the path to success.* New York: Taylor & Francis. Retrieved from https://www.amazon.com/Teaching-Learning-Intentionally-EducationalActivities/dp/0415699363.

McDuffie, A., Oakes, A., Machalicek, W., Ma, M., Bullard, L., Nelson, S., & Abbeduto, L. (2016). Early language intervention using distance video-teleconferencing: A pilot study of young boys with fragile X syndrome and their mothers. *American Journal of Speech - Language Pathology (Online), 25*(1), 46-66. doi: 10.1044/2015_AJSLP14-0137.

Meerah, T. S. M., & Halim, L. (2011). Improve feedback on teaching and learning at the university through peer group. *Procedia – Social and Behavioural Sciences*, 18, 633-637. Retrieved from www.sciencedirect.com/sciencearticle/pii/S18770428 11012067.

Moilanen, K. L., Shaw, D. S., & Fitzpatrick, A. (2010). Self-regulation in early adolescence: Relations with mother-son relationship quality and maternal regulatory support and antagonism. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 39(11), 1357-67. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/755999987?accountid=141440.

Myers, D. M., Simonsen, B., & Sugai, G. (2011). Increasing teachers' use of praise with a response-to-intervention approach. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 34(1), 35-59. doi: 10.1353/etc.2011.0004.

Nelson, J. A. P., Young, B. J., Young, E. L., & Cox, G. (2010). Using teacher-written praise notes to promote a positive environment in a middle school. *Preventing School Failure*, 54(2), 119-125. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/603227825?account id=141440.

Nematzadeh, F., & Siahpoosh, H. (2017). The effect of teacher direct and indirect feedback on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' written performance. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Learning*, 3(5): 110-116. doi: 10.5923/j.jalll.20170305.02

Partin, T. C. M., Robertson, R. E., Maggin, D. M., Oliver, R. M., & Wehby, J. H. (2010). Using teacher praise and opportunities to respond to promote appropriate student behavior. *Preventing School Failure*, 54(3), 172-178. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/741448218?accountid=141440.

Pauli, C. (2010). *Fostering understanding and thinking in discursive cultures of learning*. Unpublished paper presented at the meeting of EARLI SIG 10 and SIG 21, Utrecht, the Netherlands. Retrieved from http://www.vfconsult.nl/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/tatefrequencies-Voerman-et-al.pdf.

Peloghitis, J. (2010). *The effects of form-focused feedback on quality of writing and performance on accuracy*. Retrieved from http://ci.nii.ac.jp/els/contentscinii_20170713181514.pdf? id=ART0009408989.

Pinter, E. B., East, A., & Thrush, N. (2015). Effects of a video-feedback intervention on teachers' use of praise. *Education & Treatment of Children*, 38(4), 451-472. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1734844726?accountid=141440.

Polick, A. S., Carr, J. E., & Hanney, N. M. (2012). A comparison of general and descriptive praise in teaching intraverbal behavior to children with autism. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 45(3), 593-9. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1269079204?accountid=141440.

Rathel, J. M., Drasgow, E., Brown, W. H., & Marshall, K. J. (2013). Increasing induction-level teachers' positive-to-negative communication ratio and use of behavior-

specific praise through e-mailed performance feedback and its effect on students' task engagement. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 16, 219–233. doi: 10.1177/1098300713492856.

Rodriguez, K. F. R., & Abocejo, F. T. (2018). Competence vis-à-vis performance of special education pre-service teachers. *European Academic Research*. 6(7), 3474-3498. Retrieved from http://www.euacademic.org/UploadArticle/3707.pdf

Schartel, S. A. (2012). Giving feedback – an integral part of education. *Best Practice and Research Clinical Anaesthesiology*, 26(1), 77-87. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/224912514_Giving_feedback_An_integral_part_of_education.

Solomon, B. G., Klein, S. A., & Politylo, B. C. (2012). The effect of performance feedback on teachers' treatment integrity: A meta-analysis of the single-case literature. *School Psychology Review*, 41(2), 160-175. Retrieved from http://search.proquest.com/docview/1022331899?accountid=141440.

Spilt, J. L., Leflot, G., Onghena, P., & Colpin, H. (2016). Use of praise and reprimands as critical ingredients of teacher behavior management: Effects on children's development in the context of a teacher-mediated classroom intervention. *Prevention Science*, 17(6), 732-742. doi: 10.1007/s11121-016-0667-y.

Sprick, R., Knight, J., Reinke, W., Skyles, T., & Barnes, L. (2010). *Coaching classroom management: Strategies and tools for administrators and coaches.* Eugene, OR: Pacific Northwest Publishing. Retrieved from http://www.kansasmtss.org/pdf/Symposium/2013Sym posium/Sprick%20Thursday.pdf.

Stout, D. E., & Sorensen, J. E. (2015). Write right: Improving written communication skills-part one. *Management Accounting Quarterly*, 16(4), 1-11. Retrieved from https://search.proquest.com/docview/1773044078?accountid=141440.

Sugai, G., Horner, R., Algozzine, R., Barrett, S., Lewis, T., Anderson, C., Bradley, R., Simonsen, B. (2010). *Schoolwide positive behavior support: Implementers' blueprint and self-assessment.* Eugene, OR: University of Oregon. Retrieved from https://www.osepideasthatwork.org/sites/default/files/SchoolwideBehaviorSupport.pdf.

Tom, A. A. (2013). Students' perception and preferences of written feedback in academic writing. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*. Retrieved on from http://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/viewFile/1271/1300.

Trazo, S. P., & Abocejo, F. T. (2019). International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) Front Vowel Sound Recognition of Beginner Foreign Learners. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 5(12), 183-196. doi: 10.5281/zenodo.2606194.

University of Reading. (2010). Providing feedback to students on their performance. *Guide to Policy and Procedures for Teaching and Learning*, University of Reading, 24. Retrieved from www.reading.ac.uk/web/files/qualitysupport/feedbacktostudent s.pdf

Voerman, L., Meijer, P. C., Korthagen, F. A. J., & Simons, R. J. (2012). Types and frequencies of feedback interventions in classroom interaction in secondary

education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 28(1), 1107-1115, doi: 10.1016/j.tate.2012.06.006.

Vyncke, M. (2012). *The concept and practice of critical thinking in academic writing: An investigation of international students' perceptions and writing experiences*. Retrieved from https://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/filefieldpaths/mvyn cke_0_1.pdf.

Westmacott, A. (2017). Direct vs. indirect written corrective feedback: Student perceptions. *Íkala*, 22(1), 17-32. doi: 10.17533/udea.ikala.v22n01a02.