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ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS' RESPONSE TO WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

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ABSTRACT

Written corrective feedback (WCF) provided by the teacher on student written academic texts is considered important in the process of writing development of English language learners. Its immediate effectiveness has been investigated by various researchers through a study of revision work based on teacher feedback. Many studies have concluded that student response to WCF is in most cases very disappointing, and, therefore, teachers hesitate to invest their time and effort into writing feedback. As a result, most feedback on student essays comprise hastily written comments and grammar and local error correction. This study focuses on the impact of inadequate feedback on students' writing development and whether it plays a role in students' lack of willingness to revise. A content analysis of actual WCF on student drafts and subsequent interviews with the student writers revealed that the quantity and quality of WCF has a direct impact on their ability and willingness to make effective revisions. It is hoped that through this paper writing teachers will consider the impact of inadequate feedback on student revision work and thus improve their feedback practice despite the students not making corresponding effort in acting upon the feedback. The reasons for this are discussed in this paper.

Keywords: Second language writing, feedback strategies, teacher corrective feedback, student revisions, student perception of teacher feedback; student response to teacher feedback; impact of teacher written feedback; feedback in writing pedagogy

Introduction

In a process-oriented approach to teaching writing, the instructors ask the students to write an academic essay in two or three drafts on which they give formative feedback before they turn in their final essay for assessment. Based on this feedback, the students are expected to make changes and improve their essays to meet the required linguistic standards at their level and the course objectives. By revising their work and addressing teacher feedback, the students not only hope to receive a better grade, but also take pride in their writing development. Thus, the remarks written on students' papers are of crucial importance to the student. According to Montgomery and Baker (2007), majority of the researchers in this field have been interested in how teachers 'should' provide written feedback but only a few studies have examined the 'actual' teacher

written feedback and student reaction to that feedback. This study presents student views regarding the actual feedback they received from their teachers on their drafts and its impact on their revision work.

Second language writers often need feedback from their instructors on their writing in order to meet the required written proficiency. As writing instructors, giving feedback on students written texts has been in practice for years, but research regarding the best methods of giving feedback is inconclusive to date. Questions have been raised in the literature as to its effectiveness on student writing development and many studies have focused on whether written corrective feedback is even necessary, or whether a particular type of feedback is more effective than the other. Student perception of teachers' feedback also has not been very helpful. The review below discusses briefly the controversies underlying this practice.

I. Is Teacher Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) necessary for writing development?

Numerous studies have discussed the various types of feedback and its impact on student writing development. Early research in this field was divided on the question of whether feedback was essential in student writing development. One research study that made a significant impact on feedback practice was conducted by Truscott (1996) who found that teacher written feedback had no beneficial impact on writing development. Research opposing this idea was led by Ferris (1999) who addressed Truscott's claim and dismissed his conclusions by pointing out faults in his research methodology. Ferris (1999; 2006) found the practice of providing formative feedback to be essential to writing development. However, while Ferris (1999) points to research evidence that demonstrates that error correction is useful to some student writers provided it is selective, prioritized and clear, she also claims that feedback does not always have a positive impact on the learners. Ferris (2007) even warns that teacher written feedback can, in worst case scenarios, be insensitive or even hostile.

Following these two contradicting ideas, several studies have been carried out to prove both views. Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) cite studies (for example, Kepner, 1991; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986; Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992) that compared the L2 students who received WCF with those that did not receive any feedback, and demonstrated no significant difference in their writing accuracy. On the other hand, research that has found WCF to be effective have focused on various aspects of the practice and have raised even more controversies as outlined below.

II. Which Type of Feedback is Most Effective?

Feedback on Global vs Local Errors

Global issues refer to errors concerning overall content, ideas, and organization of the writer's argument. Ferris (2002, p. 22) defines global errors as "errors that interfere with the comprehensibility of a text" and local errors as minor errors such as grammar, spelling, or punctuation "that do not impede understanding" of a text. From the definition, it may be understood that WCF should ideally address both global and local errors, but feedback on global errors might help students work on the deeper issues on their essay, rather than on grammar or other sentence level or local issues. However, research has shown that teachers make remarks more often on local errors rather than on global issues in the essay. For this reason, most of the research has also focused on local errors. For example, at the end of a review of feedback research, Beuningen (2010) concludes that the type of feedback that has received most of researchers' attention is feedback on linguistic errors that are non-target like production and are mostly local errors.

Direct vs Indirect Feedback

When responding to the global or local errors of the student, the teacher provides either direct or indirect feedback. Ferris (2010) gives a detailed summary of research conducted in this field. According to her, recent SLA studies on WCF have argued for the superiority of direct feedback, at least for a few targeted features, whereas L2 writing researchers have argued for the importance of indirect feedback as a means to engage student writers in guided problem-solving and to encourage them to take more responsibility for their own progress. However, Ferris and Roberts (2001) in their study of 72 ESL students' ability to self-edit their written

work, found that there were no significant differences between students who received direct and indirect feedback.

Hyland and Hyland (2006) also state that the findings on feedback type have been conflicting, largely due to the widely varying student populations, types of writing and feedback practices examined and the diverse research designs employed. More recently, Westmacott (2017) provided an excellent summary of the results of various studies and she concludes that scholarship so far has failed to produce any clear conclusions to date.

III. Which types of teacher comments are most effective?

Teachers usually write comments either in the margins and/or at the end of the essay and with the intention to help the writer improve the text in terms of the essay structure, content, logic, understanding and use of sources (global errors), or specific areas of language (local errors) that may need attention and correction. Ferris & Hedgcock (2004) suggest that text-specific commentary is most likely to encourage revision because marginal comments have more immediacy and make it easier for students to locate the source of a problem and revise appropriately, whereas end comments which may be on global issues can be more useful for writing development, since they summarize major problems. Goldstein (2004) emphasizes that marginal comments are more motivating to the students since they demonstrate that the reader is actively engaged with the writer's text. However, systematic studies of teacher comments have been scarce. Ferris, et al. (1997) mention that given the importance of teacher response to student writing, it is "surprising that there has been so little examination or systematic description of teacher commentary, particularly in L2 writing."

IV. Do students respond adequately to WCF?

Most students are thankful to their teachers for any feedback that they receive on their papers. However, when it comes to acting on that feedback and revising their papers, their response is far from encouraging. When studying student response to the feedback through the changes made in their revisions, Bowden (2018) found that even when students are provided with the types of comments endorsed by experts, they make few changes in the final draft. He found that the few concrete changes that students do make seem to be inadequate responses to the feedback provided and they fail to address the major problems that have been pointed out. One of the reasons for failure to respond to WCF by students is their emotional reaction to the WCF.

A nationwide survey in the USA revealed that students sometimes felt negative emotions such as feeling disrespected or stupid, shame, frustration, irritation, and disappointment after receiving WCF (Taggart & Laughlin, 2017). Ryan and Henderson (2018) conducted a study in two universities in Australia and found that regardless of their nationality the students found feedback comments to be discouraging, upsetting and too critical. Yorke (2003, p. 489 cited in Shields, 2015) suggests 'I am a failure' may dominate over 'I didn't understand what was expected of me'. The emotions evoked from reading the feedback are so strong that they prevent the student from using it to improve and develop. In their synthesis of qualitative studies on feedback, Harputlu and Ceylan's (2017) analysis shows that the students who see a high grade as their goal are likely to give strong emotional responses, positive or negative according to the feedback, which influence their acceptance or rejection of the feedback provided by their teachers.

Hyland (1998) mentions how a teacher may need to "sugar the pill" and ensure that there is something positive for the student to boost their confidence. However, he cautions that feedback in the form of praise may give a false impression to students about their real writing ability and eventually would lead them to distrust such feedbacks. On the other hand, criticism as feedback leads to negative feelings from the students (Silver & Lee, 2007).

For feedback to be effective, it is important that students engage with the feedback. According to Bowden (2018) students were especially grateful for feedback when "substantive comments did not merely critique or correct their writing, but invited them into conversations about ideas, texts, readers, and their own subject positions as writers." Li and Lin (2007) also demonstrate in a study that receiving teacher feedback without the engagement of revision tasks is not effective. However, due to large classes and short time, it is often not possible to provide effective feedback. Due to the increased volume of marking and teachers' workloads,

feedback is often being provided too slowly, and lacking in the necessary quality, to be effective (Glover & Brown, 2006).

V. Do teachers practice what they believe?

Teacher's comments reflect what they believe to be good writing practice. "Teacher's comments not only reflect what an institution values in writing, but also as contributes to and reinforces those values. Rater comments serve as a window into how the test defines the construct of good writing" (Hall & Sheyholislami, 2013). Weimer (2010) writes that some instructors make the mistake of providing too much negative feedback and they think they have not done a good job until they point out every error the student has made. Weimer (2010) also mentions that often teachers believe that their feedback is completely ineffective. They find that students ignore their feedback, misunderstand it, or do not internalize it so the errors keep recurring in their writing. Academics often complain that feedback does not work, and that students are more interested in their grade and pay little attention to feedback (Weaver, 2006).

Giving written feedback to students requires time and effort. Henderson (2017) found that students and staff find feedback practices largely unsustainable, de-motivating and without opportunity for improvement. He states that many academics display misconceptions about feedback that inadvertently add to the problem; one of them being the purpose of feedback. Academics often feel that the role of feedback is merely to justify the grade (Henderson, 2017). Stern and Solomon (2006) reports a content analysis on faculty comments from 598 graded papers written for hundreds of courses from 30 different departments in a university. The results of this study indicate that most comments were technical corrections that addressed spelling, grammar, word choice, and missing words, but comments that addressed paper organization and quality of the ideas contained in it were surprisingly absent. They also report that teachers often scribbled a few arbitrary comments that often cause students to become defensive and lose confidence rather than lead to effective revision.

The above review indicates that although numerous studies have compared the different types of feedback given to students and their efficacy on student revision or even student perception, few have analyzed the actual comments made on student work and associated it with student revision or writing development. Therefore, to address this gap in feedback research, this study focuses on the type of actual feedback written on student papers that failed to prompt adequate revision even at the risk of a low grade on their essay. The main research question that the study seeks to answer is: Does the type and efficacy of teacher written corrective feedback have any role in student lack of adequate revision? Further, the research wishes to investigate what the recipients of the WCF felt about the remarks they had received and what kind of impact they had on their wiliness or ability to revise and improve their essay.

Research Sample and Methodology

A Sino-foreign collaborative institution of higher learning was chosen for this study where native English speakers teach freshman composition to first year university students. The student population consists mainly of Chinese nationals for whom English is a second language. A total of eight essays of different modes are submitted by the students for assessment. At the end of the year the students submit an e-portfolio of their work, ideally consisting of all their drafts with teacher feedback and the final revised submissions. Each final submission is graded according to the institutionally approved criteria and the aggregate of all the essays made up the students' final grade for the course.

After completing the paperwork for this study and receiving ethics approval by the parent university in the United States, the researcher, being a part of the management team as well as a part of the portfolio reading and assessment committee, accessed the e-portfolios that had been submitted at the end of the year for assessment, and randomly selected the portfolios of students having been identified as those that had failed to adequately revise the essay mode under investigation. The Argumentative essay, the final essay type taught towards the end of the year, was chosen for the study.

From 60 essays that had been identified as not having been revised adequately, seven essays were randomly selected for analysis and the student writer of each essay was then interviewed. Teacher written

feedback on all the drafts for each of the seven argumentative essays was analyzed and each mark or comment was first distinguished as addressing either a local or a global error and then classified as either marginal comment or end comment. Finally, each teacher mark or comment was labeled according to the scheme used by Glover and Brown (2006) in their study (see Figure 1). Each student was then interviewed regarding their response to the they had received on their paper.

Glover and Brown (2006) identified the teacher comments in their study as being either positive praise or negative criticism, and as referring to language-based issue (Type 1), structure-based issue (Type 2) and content-based issue (Type 3). Further, Glover and Brown (2006) identified the 'depth' of the comment by categorizing each comment into one of the three: identifies the issue but gives no suggestions (Category 1); identifies the issue and gives suggestions for overcoming the weakness (Category 2); and identifies the issue and gives suggestions along with an explanation of the weakness or the nature of the correction provided (Category 3).

This system of analysis was most suitable for this study because the main objective was to see whether the feedback provided to the students was substantial enough for them to carry out a revision. The situation that Glover and Brown (2006) describe in their research is similar to the situation in our study: Due to the increased volume of marking and teachers' workloads feedback is often being provided too slowly, is too little and lacking in the necessary quality, to be effective. Therefore, their method was adapted in this study.

Table 1. Teacher Comment Codes – adapted from Glover and Brown (2006)

Types of Comments		Institutional Assessment Criteria
Type 1	Identifies language-based issue	Grammar and Mechanics
Type 2	Identifies structure/organization-based issue	Focus, Organization
Type 3	Identifies content/genre-based issue	Development, Genre Conventions
Type 4	Includes some Positive Comments (Praise)	-
Type 5	Includes Negative Comments (personal, derogatory remarks such as student not paying attention...)	-
Quality of Comments		
Category 1	Identifies the issue but gives no suggestions	
Category 2	Identifies the issue and gives suggestions for overcoming the weakness	
Category 3	Identifies the issue and gives suggestions along with an explanation of the weakness or the nature of the correction provided	

In the sections below, the findings will be presented as a combination of this data in two main sections: WCF provided on the essays and Student Response to WCF.

Findings and Discussion

WCF provided on the essays

Teacher marks and comments on seven student written texts were analyzed. All the seven students submitted at least one draft to the teacher for feedback. In cases where two drafts were marked, the WCF provided on both the drafts was accounted for in the analysis.

Local Errors

The teachers identified the local errors that comprised of grammatical forms, agreement errors, sentence structure errors such as run-on sentences, punctuation, and capitalization errors (see Ferris 2002). Table 2 displays the type of local errors found on each essay.

Table 2. Description of teacher marks on local errors

Number and type of local errors corrected directly or indirectly	
Essay 1	Grammar errors marked only on draft 2 and included errors such as ro (run on) 4 times, article 2 times, awkward word 4 times, mw (missing word) 2 times, and fragment.
Essay 2	More than 55 errors in the first draft and about 47 errors in the second draft were identified and directly corrected by the teacher. Errors included punctuation, capitalization, word forms, agreement, word choice, etc.
Essay 3	Teacher provides indirect feedback on 3 instances : underlines words and phrases to indicate an error exists; Circles a phrase used twice and links them by drawing a line.
Essay 4	Teacher goes through the essay and gives oral feedback that is recorded by two peers as the student writer listens. Fifteen errors were identified in two drafts, and sometimes correct form was supplied. Errors included word choice, missing words, articles, need for transition, and formatting issues in the references.
Essay 5	Six errors were identified in the first draft. The teacher underlined some words, circled the question marks, added an article, deleted a word, circled a word, and identified some errors in the references.
Essay 6	Teacher provided direct and indirect feedback. Replaced words and phrases 7 times, underlined a word, deleted some words, deleted the pronoun 'I' and advised 'use 3 rd person' in the margin, and changed word forms about 20 times.
Essay 7	Teacher cancelled some words and phrases and suggested replacement words 17 times, corrected word forms 5 times, rephrased the title, rephrased parts of sentences 3 times, indicated errors in capitalization, and corrected author name sequence in the first entry of the references.

Table 2 shows that most instructors identified grammar and punctuation errors in the student drafts. The number of errors identified and corrected ranged from more than 100 in one essay to about 3 and 6 in two other essays. The remaining essays consisted errors between 13 and 26. It is understood that missing local error detection by the teacher could indicate that either there were no remaining local errors, or only part of the essay was close-marked and the student was expected to self-identify the remaining errors, or the local errors were ignored by the teacher in the WCF. Although the range varied and depended on the number of errors present in the essays, the analysis of teacher feedback shows that they identified to varying degrees the local errors in the essays.

Global errors

Global errors, both marginal and end comments, were coded based on the analysis strategy used by Glover and Brown (2006) as outlined in Table 2.

Teacher Comments

A total number of 47 comments were provided on all the drafts of all the essays, almost half of which were found in a single essay. The other essays had anywhere between 2 and 8 comments. Two essays had a positive (praise) comment each, and one essay had a negative comment (a personal remark). Almost half of the

total marginal and end comments belonged to Type 1 that identified a language issue (See Figure 1). The figure also shows that 4 of the 7 essays did not have any comment on content or genre, and 3 of these did not have a comment on structure either.

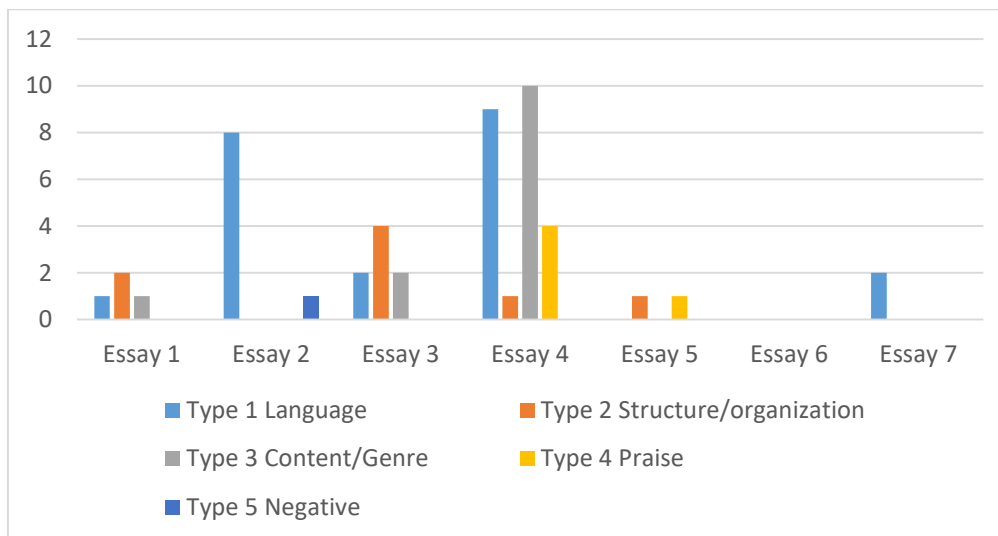


Figure 1. Types of Teacher's Written Comments

It appears that the WCF on these essays displayed a combination of in-text marks as well as comments, and that a majority identified sentence or word level errors; however, these marks and comments were very few in comparison to what could have been included in the feedback. Considering that these were first-year university students identified as having intermediate or low proficiency levels of English, it is expected that the first drafts of an argumentative essay would require substantial formative feedback. It is also expected that since these students had written an argumentative essay for the first time in English, that they would expect teacher feedback on their argumentative techniques, the logic of their ideas, the presentation of counter arguments and their refutation, the organization and flow of ideas, and on cohesion and coherence; however, the analysis showed that none of these issues had been identified or commented upon in most cases.

The Quality of Teacher Comments

Another aspect of the comments that was investigated in this small-scale research is the quality of the comments. According to Glover and Brown (2006) teacher comments are further analyzed to measure the depth of the remark. In this analysis, the term 'quality' of the comment replaces the term 'depth.' A comment labeled as category 1 only identifies the error but does not offer any advice. This category of comments is helpful to a lesser extent and the students may have to spend relatively more time and look for additional resources to help them address the feedback. A category 2 comment was considered more useful if it was accompanied by corrective advice or suggestions for revision. A category 3 comment added an explanation of the error which it was hoped would help the writer gain a better understanding. This would lead the student learner to be more responsible for their learning.

It was not easy to code the comments as merely identifying an error or giving advice for correction. A case in point is a comment such as "be specific here." Underlying this statement is the indication that the word or phrase is too general, vague, or lacks sufficient information. However, the comment is not helpful to the student who might wonder how to be more specific. Does this mean that the student needs to replace the word or add more explanatory information? Therefore, although this comment may seem like a suggestion, it was coded as a category 1 comment. On the other hand, a comment such as, "This is not an advantage-disadvantage essay, but it is an argumentation essay so use -This essay argues..." identifies an error, explains the error, and gives a suggestion for improvement. This was considered a clear Category 3 comment.

Figure 2 shows that 36 (76%) of the total 47 comments belonged to the first category. These comments identified the issue but did not contain a corrective advice or suggestion for improvement and revision. Most

essays received only one or two comments that gave a suggestion to the student about what they could do to improve their draft. Only one comment (quoted above) was labeled as a category 3 comment that included an explanation and a suggestion.

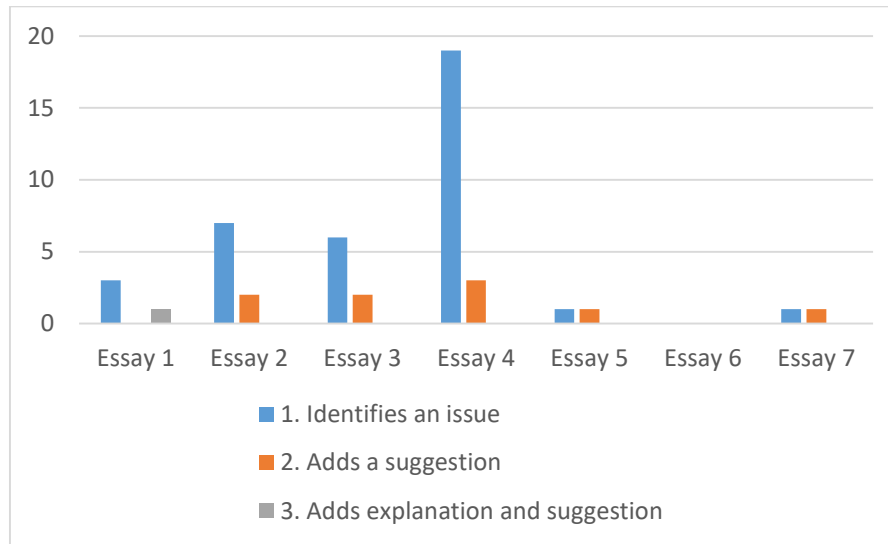


Figure 2. The Quality of the Teacher's Written Comments

Teacher comments in relation to the criteria for writing assessment

Generally, students are concerned about their grades and are eager to meet the teacher's assessment criteria. To find out whether the teacher comments were made in relation to the assessment criteria, the comments were once again coded according to the specific assessment criteria. Since the writing assessment descriptors are provided by the institution, it is reasonable to assume that the writing instruction would be related in some way or the other to the assessment criteria and that teacher written feedback would address the criteria: Audience and Genre Conventions, Focus, Development, Organization, Grammar and Mechanics (that includes academic conventions), and Revision.

Figure 3 shows the types of comments each teacher made on the essays and the corresponding assessment criteria in column 3. Except for Essay 6 that did not have any comments but had some in-text linguistic error correction, the rest of the essays included marginal and overall comments. Again, it was observed that a large majority of the comments were related to linguistic errors concerned with one criterion -- Grammar and Mechanics. These included all the errors related to grammar and vocabulary as well as punctuation and formatting errors. A small number of comments corresponded to other assessment criteria such as content and organization. Figure 3 is a graphic representation of the number of comments that belong to each of the assessment criteria.

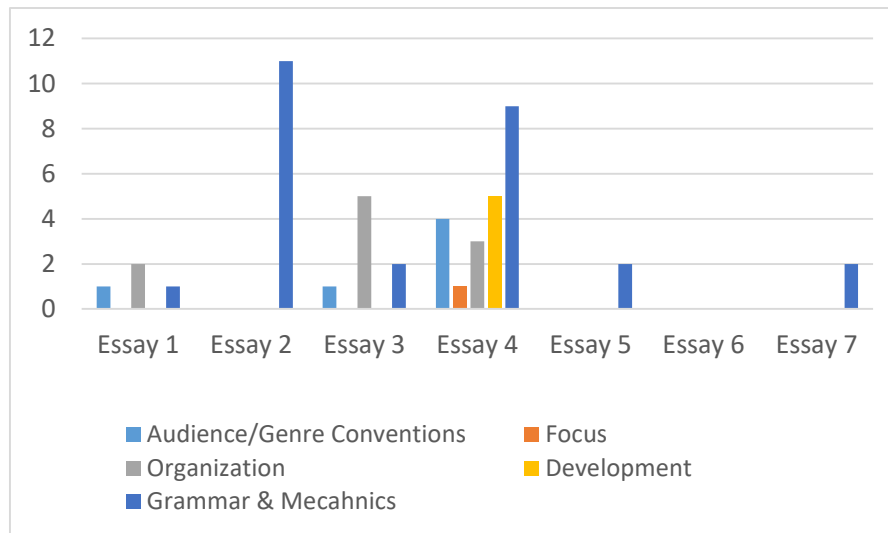


Figure 3. Comments matching the assessment criteria

Figure 3 shows that the highest number of comments after grammar and mechanics were about the organization of ideas and the structure of the essay. Most of these comments were on the students' poorly constructed thesis statements and topic sentences. Next were comments related to audience and genre conventions. One of the criteria that was not addressed in these comments was related to development of ideas. This concerned the content and the genre conventions of an argumentative essay. According to most of the course material on writing argumentative essays, a high scoring essay will need to display logical reasoning, evidence to support the writers' stance, language featuring concessions and rebuttals, and avoidance of logical fallacies or faulty argumentation, among other things. The teachers would ideally comment on these factors either by praising or by pointing out errors or by making suggestions for improvement. This analysis showed that there were as few as four comments (8% of all the comments) related to these conventions. Moreover, only one essay (Essay 4) consisted of a variety of comments related to all the points of assessment that were used for formative feedback.

Considering this apparently inadequate feedback, both in terms of quantity and quality, our research attention turned to the students' response to this feedback. The interview data will be used to investigate their response to WCF.

Student Response to WCF

The seven student writers were interviewed in confidence regarding their views on the feedback that they had received on their argumentative essay drafts. A qualitative analysis sheds some light on their expectations and whether the teacher feedback met their expectations or not.

WCF and students' emotional reactions

The interview data revealed that more than half the participants in this study experienced dissatisfaction with the WCF that they had received and were frustrated because they either did not understand the feedback or did not know how to respond to it effectively. Many of them felt annoyed that they had received many grammatical error corrections but no feedback on the content.

Student 1 did not feel satisfied with the type of feedback she had received: "You can see, the feedback is insufficient..." She expressed her frustration, "In the second draft, the feedback is really simple, like 'MW'. Even today I do not understand what MW means." It can be inferred from this remark that the student was unwilling to check the meaning of the error code that was given in the textbook. On the other hand, Student 2, received substantial direct corrective feedback on her drafts. However, the student revealed that she felt "annoyed" at having to revise and make the small grammar corrections, but she did it anyway to "satisfy the teacher." In this student's opinion, the goal for revising and correcting the errors was to satisfy the teacher and not for the

student's own benefit. The student stated that she would have preferred comments on content and advice given on how to improve the subject matter. grammatical errors.

Student 3 received substantial end-comments. The WCF included remarks such as: *Where does your actual argument start? Topic sentence should present your argument more clearly; it will benefit you greatly to begin formulating your argument before you start bringing outside sources into your argument; and it is vital that you fully understand the issue before beginning an argument.* It appears that the student had not understood the topic or the techniques used in argumentation and needed help. In the interview the student revealed that she was aware of her weakness and to her the teacher's feedback was really good despite the fact that she did not know how to address it well. In her words, "I really appreciate his way of giving feedback as he will not only make you realize where you did wrong but encourage you to keep the good parts." The student appreciated the teacher feedback so much that she considered revising her essay as a "way to prove that I care about his feedback."

Student 4 was happy with the amount of teacher's feedback on his essay. He revealed that the teacher provided the feedback orally while he asked two other students to record the feedback on paper. He checked this written record later for accuracy. The teacher did this because of his poor handwriting and as a strategy for saving time. As described in the previous section, this student received the most amount of and the largest variety of feedback. Student 4 stated that teacher feedback was very important to him because often "the expectation of an essay is different in students' perspective and professors' perspective. An omission of an important aspect of the essay can only be pointed out by the teacher."

Student 5 felt that even though he is grateful for the feedback, he did not get much feedback: "[My teacher] corrected this paper from face to face and he used his pen to [write] some errors. He writes and speaks. [Draft 2] is based on his feedback. It is the one I am going to be graded." Student 5 recalled that in the previous semester he received direct feedback where every mistake had been pointed out. "This semester the teacher only points out that I make a mistake and explain why this error is an error, but he didn't tell me how to correct it."

Similarly, Student 6 was not happy with the feedback she had received on the two drafts. In the interview, she explained: "Actually, I am not satisfied with the feedback. Normally, the first draft will contain many mistakes and when students move on to the final draft, there will be [fewer] mistakes in the essay as students correct most of mistakes. However, in my first and second draft, my professor did not point out many mistakes, just few grammatical mistakes, so I assumed I did okay with my essay. But after I got my final essay, red marks covered my paper so I think if he could point them out earlier, I could have taken corrections and might have gotten a higher grade."

The students also looked for sufficient guidance in the WCF, which they called 'inspiration'. For example, Student 6 felt that teacher's feedback is very necessary for students as "teacher's ideas and comments can inspire the students." But she also warns that sometimes teacher comments may not be very helpful because of misunderstandings due to cultural differences. The teachers' inability to accept some ideas caused them to be discouraged and they felt that the teachers sometimes rejected some of their ideas because they did not understand the cultural implications behind the use of those ideas or expressions. Sometimes "what they dislike is what students really want to write," stated the student.

Student 7 explained that the teacher actually helped her in coming up with the topic for the argumentative essay and she was appreciative of this. However, when it comes to teacher's written feedback, she was not very satisfied: "The reason is that he did not mark all of my mistakes. I know I cannot depend everything on my teacher, but the problem is if he only circled out part of my grammatical mistakes without indicating the rest, I naturally thought I did fine with the rest of my essay." This indicates that the student relied on teacher's feedback completely and did not attempt to identify any other errors that had not been pointed out. She complained, "... after I got his feedback on the final draft, he informed me that I still got lots of mistakes in my essay. I cannot accept this because I didn't realize I made mistakes, nor did he tell me." Student 7 was also not happy because the teacher did not show errors in the works cited list in the first draft, then marked it

in the second draft, and was “still not satisfied with my final production although I followed every step as he told. I was confused about this issue.”

Student Preference of the type of feedback

While all the students agreed that they had language issues and that they were grateful that the teachers had pointed out these to them, it became clear that the students valued feedback on other aspects of argumentative writing as well. For example, Student 4 felt that teachers do not need to supply the correct forms for their errors because “students should take the responsibility for their own writing, not the professor.” Moreover, Student 4 thought that this type of error correction [local grammatical errors] could be provided by other tutors [in the writing center] instead of the teacher.

Student 6 revealed that WCF she had received did not help her improve her draft. She admitted that teacher gave instruction in the class on how to think of opposing arguments before stating your own argument, and she considered this as feedback that helped her and “inspired” her in writing the essay. Evidently, she relied on the lessons taught in the class rather than the feedback to improve her drafts during revision, but she felt that she could have done better and received a higher grade if her teacher had provided better feedback [on content development].

Student 7 also opined that “grammar errors such as verb tenses, etc. are errors that can be corrected by revising, as some errors are made simply because the student forgot to check. But content related feedback was absolutely essential, such as, pointing out of logical fallacies.” The student was referring to logical fallacies in argumentation.

Student reasons for inadequate revision

The researchers carefully investigated students’ revision work to see the extent to which they had addressed the feedback. First it was observed that students only responded to the WCF that they found on their drafts. It is normally assumed that the students will have made use of all the available resources such as class input and group discussions, peer feedback, access to the textbook and other study materials in addition to WCF to improve and rewrite their essays as their final grade depended upon the final revised essay submission. However, it became apparent that the students only responded to the WCF on their drafts and the extent of their revision reflected the local errors that had been identified in the drafts.

First, some students carried out revision as an appropriate gesture of appreciation for the teacher. One student revealed that even though she was annoyed by the large number of grammatical errors pointed out by the teacher, she carried out the corrections only “to satisfy the teacher.” Another student attempted to address the feedback that she in fact did not really understand, because this was her way “to show that I care about the feedback.”

In contrast, some students did not carry out revision because of the negative opinion they formed about the teachers’ professionalism based on the WCF they had received. “The way she gave me the feedback is not authentic” was a remark by Student 1. “I cannot understand some points and I just ignore them.” The student’s explanation showed that the amount of feedback she received on her drafts had a psychological impact on her. “Feedback is important, and when seeing she gives me a lot of feedback, I am really happy. The more [feedback], the happier I am.” It seems that the students formed an opinion of the teacher’s efficacy through her feedback: “[When there is more feedback], I think she is looking through my essay very carefully. If there are only [few comments] in the whole essay, I think maybe she is not looking at students’ essay close enough.”

Another student response was that of avoidance. When a student did not understand the WCF or were too lazy to make the requested modification, they either ignored the feedback or deleted the section that had the weakness that was pointed out by the teacher. Student 2, for example, revealed that she did not understand all the corrections and had to ask for clarifications. Sometimes she simply ignored them because she failed to understand the reason for the error. Another reason why she ignored them was because she did not agree with the teacher’s correction. She felt “the teacher did not know much about the current situation in China,” and if

she followed her instructions, she would “digress from the initial point.” Student 2 also revealed that the feedback on structure and content was more complicated, so students sometimes chose to ignore or delete the whole parts. The students made a conscious decision either to make the corrections or just ignore the feedback.

Several students did not understand the feedback and neither did they make any effort to use other resources to address it. For example, Student 3 displayed low proficiency and was not able to understand or address even the simple feedback that she had received from the teacher. Students who had received feedback on sentence and word level local errors, relied on the teacher corrections and did not attempt to correct any other similar errors in the rest of the paper. If the teacher did not mark it, the student did not correct it. In the case of Student 4, the final revised essay demonstrated that the student successfully addressed all the local errors that had been directly identified and corrected by the teacher, but most of the other feedback was either not addressed at all or was done so unsuccessfully. For instance, the student was able to add an evidence, as was suggested by the teacher to develop the paragraph. However, the student did not address many other suggestions, such as improve the thesis statement, or clarify the ideas. The student decided to ignore the comments that had no clear instructions on how to revise.

Similarly, Student 5 successfully corrected a few local errors, but he ignored much of even the local errors. Based on teacher suggestions, he changed the questions into statements and restated the point in the concluding paragraph. However, he did not address many other points. Where the teacher had circled one word, Student 5 deleted the entire paragraph. In the final essay, the student had corrected only a few errors but had ignored all the other errors. The reason given by the student was that there was too little feedback on the paper and though the student was aware of his own limitations, the lack of adequate WCF did not display his weaknesses. The teacher did not offer any suggestions, and had no comments related to the assessment criteria. Of the only two comments, one was praise for the essay title, and the other was a suggestion to restate a point. According to this explanation, lack of adequate written feedback impacted the student’s willingness to revise the essay effectively.

Another reason for ignoring teacher feedback was the unwillingness to accept a change, especially a change of word or a phrase. A case in point was Student 6. She explained: “I corrected all grammar mistakes just as he suggested but...if there are some personal bias on our word choices, I will ignore them and use my own; also, if his handwriting is hard to read, I will leave his comments out because I do not know what he means in the feedback. Sometimes he gave suggestions on my organization or whole paragraphs, and though I agreed with his ideas, I did not change them as he told.” It appears that because the student did not agree with the teacher about some word choices, he chose to ignore other feedback points as well. Student 7 also had a similar experience. He received and corrected a few local errors. He also did not agree with some of the teachers’ suggestions. Although he was appreciative of the chance to have discussions with the teacher regarding the differences of opinion they had on the choice of the topic as well as word choices, he did not make any effort to improve his essay on areas that did not have teacher feedback.

In conclusion, the findings of this study can be summarized into the following points:

1. WCF on these drafts consisted primarily of local errors that aimed at helping the students improve their grammar and punctuation more than other aspects of the essay such as the content and organization of ideas.
2. The number of written remarks was much less than what could have been, and what students expected; and most often the errors were identified but they did not come with a suggestion for improvement or an explanation.
3. Students revisions showed lack of adequate response to the feedback. Local errors that had been identified and correct form supplied were addressed accordingly, but no effort was made to identify similar errors elsewhere in the essay, and no effort was made to revise the essay beyond the WCF. In some cases, the students ignored teacher comments and made no changes.

4. The interview data revealed that the students appreciated WCF but were frustrated because they expected teacher comments beyond the local errors that would help them to improve in ways that will lead to better grades. The students also ignored feedback because they either did not understand it, or had no idea how to act upon it, or did not agree with teacher suggestions.

Discussion

The findings of this study are consistent with what previous feedback literature has already revealed. Not only do teachers focus on the local errors in their WCF, even the researchers, according to Beuningen (2010), have focused on investigating the error correction in their feedback research. However, previous research has shown that students value the feedback (Bitchener et al., 2005) that, among other things, includes comments on the content and ideas (Weaver, 2006) and invites them into conversations about ideas and texts (Bowden, 2018), and when feedback engages with the writer (Hyland and Hyland, 2006) and appears as a dialogue. The findings of this study confirm that when students consider the feedback provided to them as inadequate and not helpful for revision, they lose motivation to improve their writing skills and also experience frustration, disappointment, and anger. Some points raised by this study are as follows.

Psychological Impact

As revealed in this study, students make judgements about the work ethics and professionalism of the writing teachers by the quantity and the quality of the feedback they receive on their papers. The students are acutely aware of their shortcomings and when teachers do not point these out to them, they feel disappointed and do not make adequate revisions. This is consistent with research that found that lack of adequate feedback can result in lack of motivation to revise (Hyland, 2006; Ferris, 2010). Students could also assume that lack of feedback means lack of need for correction or improvement, leading to disappointment due to a low grade.

Ignored feedback does not always indicate student inability to revise

An important aspect that is little discussed in the research literature is that in this study the students did not accept some of the suggestions because they did not agree with the teacher. Often, they felt that the teacher, being unfamiliar with their culture, did not understand the issue and asked the students to replace the idea, or a word, or even the topic. The students thought that cultural differences caused different interpretations of an issue, or even word choice, and if the students felt that the suggestion given by the teacher would have caused them to lose their original intended meaning, they simply ignored the suggestion. A recent meta-analysis carried out by Thirakunkovit and Chamcharatsri (2019, p. 141) also affirms that students usually believe that teachers provide better feedback because they are considered “experts”; However, some students think that teachers sometimes take over or “appropriate” students’ ideas and perspectives.

Students expect feedback related to assessment criteria

It is obvious that students in the first year of university study and having intermediate to low level of writing proficiency, would make several grammatical errors in their texts. Writing teachers value grammatical accuracy above ideas or content at this level and hence realize that the area the students need help the most in is sentence level grammar. However, as this study has revealed, many students appreciated grammar correction, but were not satisfied with it because they wanted feedback on their content and their ideas. They felt that their language was weak, but they could seek help from other sources regarding their grammatical errors. They wanted the teachers’ feedback on their skills of written argumentation. This is consistent with researchers who had previously argued that written corrective feedback is necessary for many reasons but especially because the students wanted this feedback (Ferris, 1999); however, they wanted feedback on the content and ideas in their writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006); and that matched with the assessment criteria (Weaver, 2006).

Students expect written feedback

While it is not the intention of this study to compare oral and written feedback, it certainly does not minimize the impact and advantages of student-teacher conferencing. As noted by Perex-Amurao (2014) conferences are believed to be essential because they permit students to be in command of the communication,

make clear their teachers' reactions, and negotiate meaning. This sounds logical, but it should be noted that the oral feedback is not always understood even though the students appear to have understood it. The students would rather not show their lack of comprehension or their doubts or disagreements because they consider their teachers to have unquestionable authority (Hyland and Hyland, 2006). It is also possible that students do not remember all that was said during oral explanation. Therefore, students only act upon what has been written down on their essays. It was clear in this study that in their revision work, when the students did revise their work, they only acted upon the written feedback. No other changes which could be attributed to oral feedback, peer feedback, references to classroom instruction, or other feedback resources, were made in their revised essay.

Student proficiency and placement levels

As research has shown, students do not respond adequately to the feedback, and make very few changes in their submissions (Bitchener et al., 2005; Bowden, 2018; Weaver, 2006). Silver and Lee (2007) found that low English proficiency and lack of appropriate strategies for providing explanations might not lead to successful revision by the students despite providing feedback. This is consistent with what was found in this study as well. However, the data in this study revealed that several of them did not understand the feedback. It was noted that the feedback on the student papers was simple and yet the students did not address it successfully, leading to the conclusion that these students had low written English proficiency and may not have been placed at a suitable level. It is important to place the students at appropriate proficiency level from the very beginning so that they are not overwhelmed by the course content and the course expectations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has provided additional evidence that English language learners at first year university level rely on teacher written corrective feedback (WCF) to make substantial revisions of their academic essays. However, WCF is beneficial only when it contains teacher comments that match the assessment criteria, that include not only local error correction but also comments on global errors, and not only point out the errors but also offer suggestions on how to improve. Inadequate feedback or feedback that does not engage with the student writer, attracts minimal response from them and impacts on their revision work. Lack of adequate comments also have psychological impact on the students and may be responsible for lack of motivation leading to ineffective revisions. As Ferris (1997, p. 331) suggested, teachers should be careful (a) in their own responding strategies, (b) in explaining those strategies to their students, and (c) in helping students learn to revise and holding them accountable for considering feedback they have received (whether from teacher or peers) in doing so. This study is limited to a small sample and a specific pedagogical situation and therefore may not be generalized. However, it does provide some new insights into students' responses that need to be further investigated with a larger and more varied sample size. Further studies are needed study the factors impacting student motivation to revise. Moreover, as has been raised in this study, further investigation is needed on the reasons for rejecting WCF, including cultural differences and disagreements.

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