PERCEPTION OF TEACHER WRITTEN FEEDBACK
-A CASE STUDY

BY

LIWEN HUANG

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language
in the Graduate College of the
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2016

Urbana, Illinois

Master’s Committee:

Associate Professor Randall Saddler, Chair
Associate Professor Ulugbek Nurmukhamedov
ABSTRACT

Under the impact of the process approach in teaching writing, teacher written feedback is perceived as a comprehensive evaluation, guidance, and facilitator of teacher-student dialogues rather than grammar correction. For these reasons, writing teachers are encouraged to provide balanced feedback on both global and local issues catering for the needs of the students. Previous studies on students’ and teacher’s perception through questionnaires and interviews typically found teachers overemphasize local feedback, but students also showed preference towards such feedback. Working to update the existing research, this study investigated how ESL students and teachers perceive written feedback within the local setting of the ESL writing program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC). A set of questionnaire was administered to elicit information if the students and teachers perceive global skills to be more important than local skills, if the amount of feedback is satisfactory, if they agree on issues regarding comprehension and revision, and if their general preferences and attitudes towards written feedback match.

The results indicate that both the students and teachers considered global writing skills to be more important than local ones; that the amount of feedback on both areas was satisfactory although local feedback might be lacking; that the overall comprehension and revision was fairly successful with language and communication being the biggest barriers. Also, the students and teachers had a matched preference towards written feedback, however, they interpreted the lack of full revision differently: teachers attributed it to inadequate performance while students thought it was mostly normal. Finally, both groups of participants realized the existence of a gap in their understanding, but only from their own perspective: the students claimed their papers misread by the teachers, and the teachers claimed that students did not recognize errors.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my thesis advisor, Professor Sadler for guiding me throughout the thesis writing process from drafting the survey instruments, contacting the importance sources to formatting the actual thesis, and my committee member, Ulugbek Nurmukhamedov, without whose critical comments, the completion of this thesis would never have been possible. Last but not least, I would like to dedicate this research paper to all the teacher participants in ESL 501, whose support was indispensable for the data collection.
Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................................................................. 5
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY ....................................................................................................... 14
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ................................................................................... 26
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION .......................................................................................................... 60
REFERENCES .............................................................................................................................. 68
APPENDIX A STUDENT SURVEY ON TEACHER WRITTEN FEEDBACK ......................... 70
APPENDIX B TEACHER SURVEY ON TEACHER WRITTEN FEEDBACK .......................... 76
APPENDIX C STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT FORM ......................................................... 81
APPENDIX D TEACHER INFORMED CONSENT ...................................................................... 84
APPENDIX E PARTICIPANT RECRUITING SCRIPT ................................................................. 86
APPENDIX F IRB APPROVAL LETTER ..................................................................................... 88
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

For any writing teacher, providing written feedback to students’ writing is not an easy job. With so much to comment about, but very limited time to do so, careful decisions must be made regarding what to comment on and the manners to deliver these comments. For ESL writing teachers, responsibilities placed on their shoulders are even heavier. Their students are learning writing skills and a second language simultaneously. In a sense, these students assume two identities: one is writing students, the other language learners. Should we take care of the writing student or the language learner first? With the scholarly investigations over the last century suggesting it to be a matter extremely complicated, it is sometimes hard to answer this question with a simple yes or no. Making matters worse, much is unknown about students’ reaction towards teacher written feedback: there is little direct evidence how students use written feedback and if they really think it is useful or not (Sommers, 2013).

The topic of teacher written feedback has inspired a mixture of critiques. The older generation of ESL scholars criticized the practice of teacher written feedback for being arbitrary, inconsistent, and vague (Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985), authoritarian, formalist and insensitive (Connors and Lunsford, 1993), some even pointed out that it may be an “exercise in futility” (Knoblauch and Brannon, 1981). Researchers of recent decades assume a more positive outlook, it has been suggested that teacher written feedback is highly valued by second language writers (Ferris, 1995,1997 & F. Hyland, 1998), and most feedback-linked revisions seems to result in text improvements (Ferris, 1997). Contemporary researchers support similar statements with evidence that both teachers and students recognize teacher-written feedback as an important part of the writing process (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Fatham & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1995, 2002).
Both schools of thoughts point to one similar argument: it is unscientific to expect teacher written feedback to function effectively in the context of the writing being a final product.

The aforementioned conflicts in scholarly debates prompts us to contemplate the purpose of teacher written feedback, as well as the role of writing teachers. Are we there to pass verdicts, or to help? Under the belief that teachers should be facilitators for learning, teacher written feedback wear hats such as the establishment of audience, the external writing purpose and motivation, follow up for classroom teaching, evaluation, means of teacher-student communication and more. Hyland and Hyland (2001) characterize teacher written feedback as a way to channeling advice into reaction that is going to facilitate improvements. They implored both researchers and practioners to pay attention to the communicative, interpersonal side of teacher written feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Making reference to Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, Hyland (2003) points out that Feedback should emphasize a “process of writing and rewriting where the text is not seen as self-contained but points forward to other texts the students will write in the future.” These statements showcase the scholarly opinion towards teacher written feedback that aligns with the philosophy of the process approach of teaching writing.

In order for teacher written feedback to serve the purpose of improving students’ future writing, it is important for the writing teachers to pay balanced attention to global issues and local issues. Global feedback refers to the feedback that addresses the content, structures and development of ideas; while local feedback addresses sentence level mechanics such as spelling, grammar, punctuation, formatting, and choice of words. In SLA research, a special type of feedback, Written Correct Feedback (WCF), only addresses grammar issues. In this paper, WCF is treated as a special case of local feedback.
How do we know if there is balanced attention to both global issues and local issues at the instructional level? A series of inquiries started by Cohen (1987) investigated the amount of global and local feedback teachers perceived giving and teachers perceive receiving. Cohen (1987) and his follow-ups, including Cohen (1990), Ferris (1995), and Montgomery (2007) found similar evidence that writing teachers tended to overemphasize local issues, sometimes without being aware of it, but their students also showed preference towards such feedback.

The current study aimed to continue the same line of inquiries in the new decade of 2010s. Would similar questions elicit similar or different responses from the student and teacher participants in the new decade? This study chose the ESL graduate level service course at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for sampling. The unified environment of the ESL writing service provided good controlling for teacher background, student proficiency and writing genres.

The research questions for this study can be summarized as below:

1. Do students and teachers perceive global writing skills to be equally important, or more important than local writing skills?
2. Do students and teachers perceive satisfactory amount of teacher written feedback on global and local skills?
3. Do students and teachers perceive different percentage of understanding and revision?
4. Do students and teachers give different explanations for any difficulties for comprehending written feedback and the performing revision?
5. Do students and teachers show different preferences towards the way feedback is delivered in general?
6. What are the general attitudes of teachers and students towards the practice of teacher written feedback?
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, fundamental concepts from the previous literature are reviewed. The chapter will start with the process approach replacing the product approach as the mainstream writing pedagogical methodology, followed by its impact to the research and practice of teacher written feedback. Finally, the chapter will examine the influence of process approach reflected by a series of students’ and teachers’ paired perception studies. The review will build the foundation for readers to understand the progress of the process approach at the research and practice level.

Product to Process

The old-fashion compositional studies in the early twentieth century endorsed what we call “the product approach” today. The methodology sprung from the heavy reliance on the typical assignment of genre analysis of literature work (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005). As its definition implies, the product approach looks at writing as the final product, and the standards of good essays rest heavily on syntactical and verbal accuracy. Under the philosophy of product approach, the purpose of L2 writing was mostly to practice vocabulary and grammar (Brown, 2007; Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005; Matsuda, 2006; Silva, 1990), Students’ opportunities to practice writing within the context of the classroom, or to use it as a tool for other academic or nonacademic means were limited.

Starting from the late 60s, “the process approach” as a new trend began to emerge. Unlike the product approach, the process approach looks at writing as a multi-staged process, as a social construct and an effort that reflects the writer’s cognitive progress. This methodology places emphasis on the identities of “individual writers, the skills for problem solving, idea
discovering, expression, and revision in the writing” (Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005). Instead of having teachers pass verdicts on students’ final production of the writing assignments, process approach calls for attention to the student writers’ learning experience before arriving at the final stage of their work. Students are engaged in a series of pedagogical activities which help them develop their writing, such as “prewriting tasks, drafting of multiple versions of writing assignments, abundant text level revision, collaborative writing, feedback sessions, and the postponement of editing” (Atkinson, 2003b; Clark, 2003b), and this is called a “compositional cycle”.

The process approach became a more popular method for practical, pedagogical reasons. Previous studies indicated that written feedback is more effective in multiple-drafting stages than in the final drafts (Freeman, 1987; Krashen, 1984). Students also reported paying more attention to the feedback in earlier drafts than in final drafts (Ferris, 1995; Leki, 1990; Montgomery & Baker, 2007). The reasons behind it are intuitive. Students need to revise to attain a better outcome, and in order to do so, they have to rely on teacher feedback (Ferris, 1995), as teachers are essentially the graders. For the continuation of multi-drafting stops at the final drafts, feedback at the final drafts is usually interpreted as evaluation rather than guidance.

Pedagogical Implications of the Process Approach

Since the late 60s, the mainstream writing methodology has been slowly switching from the product to the process approach, and the most direct impact is the pedagogical treatments of global and local feedback. The definition of the product approach implies the obligation for local feedback, which is in accordance with the pedagogical conduct before the 60s. Process approach, on the other hand, focuses on the development of both ideas and text quality, therefore, teachers
should provide feedback on both global and local skills. Although this deduction seems clear to the current day readers, its realization did not come without some trials and errors.

In the earlier days of the implementation of the process approach, the “process” was misinterpreted as only involving the process of the development of ideas, and beliefs in the practice of written feedback swung from one extreme to the other: providing only local feedback to providing only global feedback (Ferris, 2010). A series of studies in the 80s and 90s advocated abandoning local feedback totally. WCF feedback, in particular, was considered to be minimally helpful and therefore should be exercised with cautions (Sommers, 1982; Truscott, 1996). It was criticized for being inconsistent, ambiguous, unclear (Zamel, 1985), and above all, demotivating and contributed very little to writing development (Truscott, 1996).

Later studies argued to redeem local feedback by pointing out the inadequacy in drawing conclusions from the “state of art” argument approach employed by these earlier studies (Ferris, 1996). These later studies employed quasi-experimental and experimental designs, and they established the role of local feedback in improving the quality of student writings (Truscott & Hsu, 2008, see Beuningen et al., 2008, 2012, Bitchener & Knoch, 2010). Although having made some breakthroughs, they also suffered inconsistent findings. Partially because they tended to focus on a very limited number of linguistic features and targeted very specific group of second language users, essentially making the results hard to replicate and be generated to a broader context. A more confounding element is that these studies looked at written feedback as the only cause for revising and learning behaviors, which are in fact influenced by a combination of complicated factors (Hyland, 2006). Teacher written feedback is an integrated part of the instructional process, and it should be studied as such, not teased apart and examined in isolation.
The decades-long debate on whether to provide feedback on global or local writing skills came to a middle ground (Ferris, 2010) of an effective balance between the both (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Raimes, 1987; Zamel, 1982). Writing studies slowly realized that separating forms and meanings is a dubious attempt (Hyland, 2003), and student writers were proved to be able to perform revisions according to both global and local feedback (Ashwell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997). Written feedback research recommended teachers to follow a series of conducts: they should give balanced global and local feedback, prioritizing them strategically throughout multiple drafts, focusing on global issues on earlier drafts, and local issues on later drafts; they should use compliments and criticism constructively, be indirect for long term benefit, and couple written feedback with teacher-student conference; they should also be selective rather than thorough (Ferris, 2002, 2003, 2005, 2014; Goldstein, 2005; Hairston, 1986; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Lee, 2008, 2009b; Liu & Hansen, 2002; see also Straub, 2006; Straub & Lunsford, 1995). Basically, teachers are encouraged to treat every piece of writing in a case-based scenario and cater for the individual’s needs. This, no doubt, requires substantial investment in teacher training and work time outside the classroom.

In general, the current day teaching philosophy calls for writing teachers to nurture partnerships with their students (Sommers, 2013), to orient towards students’ skill development (Hyland, 2006). The nature of written feedback should change from a pure summative evaluation to a dialogue between students and teachers (Sommers, 2013).
Students’ and Teachers’ Perception of Written Feedback

When introducing the studies on the effect of written feedback, I have mentioned the “state of the art” argument approach employed by the earlier research, quasi-experimental, and experimental designs employed by the later one, none of them being particularly reliable. However, they do show us how a renovation in the methodology is taking time to realize.

Another method to study teacher written feedback is through surveys and interviews. These so-called “perception” studies, although only observational, have yielded the most consistent and coherent evidence and arguments (Ferris, 2012).

For the purposes and scope of this paper, I am only going to review the series of studies started by Cohen and Cavalcanti in 1987 investigating students’ and teachers’ perception of the amount of global versus local feedback. This study has been replicated by multiple researchers by adapting the core question to multiple-draft setting and expanding to the actual drafts with teacher written feedback in the years that follow. The original design of the core question is shown as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How much of the comments and corrections involve:</th>
<th>A lot</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A little</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content/ideas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Participants are asked to choose among “a lot”, “some”, “a little”, and “none” to represent the amount of feedback they perceive receiving/giving on global and local writing skills. The original findings indicated that most of the feedback the students received was local feedback and they also prefer such feedback. Although not entirely replicated, similar results were found by Cohen and Cavalcanti in 1990, later by Ferris in 1995, most recently by Montgomery and Baker in 2007, even in the EFL setting in Hong Kong (Lee, 2004, 2008). In addition, researchers also found a poor fit between student survey and actual teacher feedback (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990), students perceiving receiving more local feedback than the teachers perceiving giving (Montgomery & Baker, 2007), the tendency for teachers to underestimate the amount of local feedback they give (Montgomery & Baker, 2007), difficulties to comprehend the written feedback caused by handwriting, use of metalinguistic terms and lack of specificity (Ferris, 1995). Researchers attributed the overemphasis on local writing skills to inadequate teacher training and institutional constraints (Lee, 2004, 2008). However, with sufficient training, there was still a discrepancy between their beliefs and the actual practice (Ferris, 2014; Lee, 2016). Researchers pointed out that students appreciate teacher written feedback in general (Ferris, 1995, 1997), and they prefer a combination of local and global feedback (Lee, 2004, 2008; Leki, 1991).

The Gap in the Previous Literature

The Original Cohen and Cavalcanti studies were replicated and updated by researchers over the last few decades. The insights generated from these studies are powerful: although the process approach advocates a balance between global and local feedback, at the instructional level, teacher practice was still struggling to live up to this methodology. Scholarly research and
teacher training might have made writing teachers more aware of the recommended feedback writing conducts, but to execute them in a day-to-day work routine is a different story.

These previous studies are insightful, but there are still issues that fall short of consideration. First of all, not all of them directly, explicitly asked the participants whether they considered global writing skills to be equally important as, or more important than local writing skills. Also, these studies asked for the participants’ perception of the amount of global and local feedback, but not if such amount was appropriate or suited their needs. Answers to these two questions will offer us insight as to how much the teacher written feedback is capturing the needs of L2 writing students. Secondly, many of these studies left out the participants’ perception of revision behavior, the most important indicator of the effectiveness of written feedback. How students and teachers perceive the connection between the written feedback and the revision behavior is going to offer us important information as to whether the teacher written feedback is serving the immediate purpose to realizing the improvement of writing quality. Finally, not all of these studies took the chance to explore how the participants perceive the difficulties when working to understand the teacher written feedback and to make according revisions. The answer to the last question is going to offer insight as to how to fine-tune the practice of written feedback at the instructional level.

Although, cautions must be drawn to the fact that revisions between drafts does not equal to learning entirely, although the former is often used as an indicator for the latter. Students use different methods to respond to teacher written feedback. These methods include grammar correction, change in tone and style, and deletion (Hyland, 2003). Grammar correction and change of tone and style can be implemented by following written feedback closely, but there is a good reason to believe that the students may choose deletion simply to avoid the issues
While these changes largely improved the text quality (Ferris, 1995, 2007), we do not know whether students revise with no real understanding as to why it is necessary (Hyland, 2003). Another issue is whether the improvement between drafts can carry over to future writing is not clear. It is a convenient subject for studies for its feasibility. How students perform in writing beyond the classroom period when they are observed as subjects is a lot more difficult to capture.

Finally, the most recent inquiry into paired perception of written feedback between students and teachers was almost a decade ago by Montgomery in 2007. If we perform the same investigation again today, will we still be able to have the similar findings? Or will we be able to see the change of perception of learning writing and the implementation of the process approach at the instructional level? The current study aimed to update the findings from the previous literature to reflect the potential change of the perception towards writings in the new decade.

Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed the history of the movement from the product to process approach in the compositional studies. This movement represents the most important renovation in this field and its pedagogical practice. The process approach promotes the role of writing teachers to ascend from grammar instructors to facilitators for improvement of writing skills, essentially realizing that the most suitable written feedback conduct is to have a balance between global and local feedback implemented with strategies. However, for the researchers and teachers to fully understand the implication of the process approach is a long and still on-going process, and it is not surprising if writing teachers are still struggling to implement it at the instructional level. The goal of this study was to update the scholarly inquiries on how students
and teachers perceive the importance and amount of written feedback on global and local writing skills and the relation between written feedback to revision behaviors. The answers to these questions, hopefully, will show us a point-in-progress the process approach is making.

We aimed to investigate:

7. Do students and teachers perceive global writing skills to be equally important, or more important than local writing skills?

8. Do students and teachers perceive satisfactory amount of teacher written feedback on global and local skills?

9. Do students and teachers perceive different percentage of understanding and revision?

10. Do students and teachers give different explanations for any difficulties for comprehending written feedback and the performing revision?

11. Do students and teachers show different preferences towards the way feedback is delivered in general?

12. What are the general attitudes of teachers and students towards the practice of teacher written feedback?
CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This study aimed to update the preceding scholarly investigations on the perception of teacher written feedback from both the students’ and teachers’ perspectives. Inspirations were drawn from the original Cohan and Cavalcanti studies in 1987 and its multiple replications including the one done by Ferris in 1995 and by Montgomery and Baker in 2007. In this chapter, the design of the questionnaires, the context of the study, the demographic information of the participants, the procedure to obtain institutional approvals, and the administering of the questionnaires are described in details.

Description of the Questionnaires

A set of paired surveys was administered to the student and the teacher participants. For questions reflecting perception of written feedback, there were corresponding counterparts in the version given to student and teacher participants, which were worded slightly differently. For example, this question was in the student survey, “What percentage of the errors in your essays are you able to correct/revise with the help of your teacher’s comments?” In the teacher survey, its counterpart was: “What percentage of errors are your students able to correct/revise with the help of your comments?” Questions regarding demographic information and general attitude were different to cater for the participants. For example, the survey asked the teachers how long they have been teaching, and for the student participants, the survey asked how long they have been writing English regularly. See Appendix A for the student survey and Appendix B for the teacher survey.

The paired surveys were divided into three parts. The first part investigated demographic information from the participants; the second part focused on the perception of written feedback
(e.g., the amount of feedback, revision done based on the feedback); the third part was designed to investigate the participants’ general attitude towards feedback effectiveness and their preference towards a feedback type. More information of each part of the survey is discussed below.

First part: Demographics

The first part of the survey collected demographic information. From the student participants, the survey elicited information such as native languages, years spent in the states, age, and English writing experience. From the teacher participants, the survey elicited information that pertain to their nationalities, educational background, and teaching experience. The demographic information provided categorical data which aided the investigation on whether simple cultural background or age influences the perception of teacher written feedback.

Second part: Perception of Teacher Written Feedback

This part of the survey elicited students’ and teachers’ perception towards the importance of local and global skills, the amount of feedback they received/gave on the two different areas, and the percentage of revision they were able to accomplish using the feedback. Students and teachers were also asked to give a short response explaining the students’ good or poor understanding and revision.

The questions on perception of local and global feedback were an adaption from Cohen (1987). The wording was changed so the questions were more relevant to our participants’ experience. For example, we took into consideration that the terms “global feedback” and “local feedback” maybe jargons not familiar to the participants (especially student participants),
therefore, instead of asking how they feel about local and global feedback, we asked for their opinions on the topics and skills taught in the ESL 501 syllabus, such as thesis statement, topic sentences, logical soundness, organization of ideas and more, which represented global writing skills; grammar, punctuation, citation style, and formatting, which represented local skills. Participants were asked rate all these topics and skills on a five-point Likert scale from extremely important to not important at all, and then they were asked to rate the feedback they received/gave from too much to far from enough.

Building on the foundation of Cohen (1987), this study expanded the perception of feedback to students’ revision behaviors. Participants were asked to choose a category of percentage that represented how much they can understand and revise, from 30-39%, 40-49%, all the way to 90-100%. At the end of this set of questions, participants were asked to give a short response explaining their choice.

Third part: General Attitude and Preference

This part of the survey elicited teachers’ and students’ preferences as well as attitudes towards written feedback: how useful and thoughtful they think it was and how would they prefer to give/receive it?

In investigating students’ and teachers’ preference towards teacher written feedback, we excluded issues such as different comment modes (paper-and-pen, or computer-mediated) or use of marginal and endnotes, but instead focused on the directness of the feedback and the affectionate reaction towards the feedback. To our knowledge, most written feedback was provided through Microsoft Word documents or through the class instruction websites Compass2g. To ensure clarity and readability, the questionnaires were tried out several times
among our ESL fellow teachers and revised with the suggestions from our thesis committee members.

See Appendix A for the student survey and Appendix B for the teacher survey.

Context and Target Participants

This study took place at the localized setting of the ESL 501 writing service course at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. ESL 501 is the second class of the two class sequel for graduate level academic writing with a focus on research-based writing projects. Its syllabus covers general writing principles such as thesis statements, paragraphs structures, use of evidence and elaboration, as well as multiple stage drafting techniques for a typical scientific research paper with an introduction, literature review, body, a conclusion, and bibliography. In the research paper writing unit, students are exposed to plagiarism prevention techniques, formatting, evaluating the relevancy of the sources and more. Students are enrolled by proficiency placement, and the class is taught through seminars with a combination of short lectures, discussion, and group tasks. The syllabus design of the ESL writing service courses at UIUC features pre-writing, corporative writing, and multiple drafts evaluation that are typical in the process approach methodology.

The ESL service courses at UIUC has the culture of hiring both domestic and international graduate students as lecturers and current students from its own Master’s program in Teaching English as a Second Language as teaching assistants. These master students learn mainstream communicative teaching approaches, task-based language teaching techniques, and practicum class with peers and supervisor observations. During their appointments serving as instructors, students and lectures are given semester-based training on grading and classroom
management, their teaching is honed by regular peer and coordinator observations. By attending the same classes, workshops, and weekly level meetings, these instructors share the same teaching materials, assignment prompts, grading rubrics, institutional constraints, and their teaching philosophy and practice tuned towards process approach methodology.

The students and teachers from level 501 were chosen as the target sample for this study as it lessened the confounding variables in terms of student proficiency (controlled by placement tests), materials (shared lesson plans and assignments) and teaching approaches (the instructors mostly candidates or graduates from the same MATESL programs).

Procedure

Recruiting Participants and Obtaining Approvals

In order to obtain sufficient amount of high-quality raw data, recruiting participants and the administration of the questionnaires involved careful planning and execution. We first established timelines for all the importance actions including finalizing the survey design, advertising the project to potential participants, and obtaining IRB exemption approval.

The data collection took place during the late November to mid December of 2015, varied from class to class depends on the teaching progress. The data collection was timed after the grade distribution of the research paper, the final assignment for ESL 501. Such arrangement not only allowed students the full experience of all the topics and skills with teacher written feedback, but also ensured sufficient time for the teacher participants to reflect on their grading practice.

Guidelines and relevant forms for the IRB approvals were located and downloaded from the IRB official website before any implantation of this study. Since our research interests were
within the established and commonly accepted education settings, involving normal education practice with a purpose to find out the effectiveness of instructional strategies, and our investigation manner was minimally intrusive, an IRB exemption was obtained. The application process for this IRB exemption was straightforward. The informed consents were drafted to satisfy the requirements set by the IRB office, and the participants were ensured the full knowledge of risks and rights of participation. Final approval for IRB exemption was obtained more than a week after the initial submission, when revisions were made to our informed consents and recruiting scripts (See Appendix C, D, E) to the feedback from the IRB office. Simultaneously, a petition for approval of action was also obtained from the ESL program director. In this petition, the purpose and action of our study were outlined with clarity and specificity.

This project was frequently advertised to the potential participants. All ESL 501 instructors were informed of this research project through emails and in person at their ESL weekly meetings. Student participants were recruited through a promotion video in class with the help of the instructors. In the end, all instructors from ESL 501 and more than 70% of the students participated in this study. Recruiting participants was quite successful.

Survey Administration

The student survey was administered from November 17th to November 20th, 2015; teacher survey was administered from December 3rd to December 17th, 2015. As mentioned before, the time arrangement ensured complete reporting of the learning and grading practice. Starbucks gift cards were distributed to all the teacher participants and selected number of student participants as the reward for participation.
The surveys were administered online through Google Forms. The shorten URLs were distributed to teacher participants through emails. Teacher participants assisted the distribution of the student survey to their classes. Figures 1 to 3 are screenshots of the first three pages of the student survey in Google Forms. The first page showed a YouTube a promotion video; the second page directed students to the complete informed consent; the third page marked the beginning of the actual survey.

![Student Survey on Teacher Feedback]

*Figure 1. The promotion page*
**Figure 2.** The informed consent page

**Figure 3.** The body of the survey
As shown above, the interface of Google Forms ensured the readability and accessibility of the survey. Most of the questionnaires were designed to be multiple choice. The participants clicked the circle in front of the option to indicate their choice.

*Data Analysis Tool*

All the data were collected through an excel spread sheet automatically generated by Google Forms. The analysis was performed by the Excel pivotal table function.

Demographic Features of the Participants

In total, 107 students and 8 teachers participated in the study. All teacher participants and 104 student participants agree their results be used for research purposes, and the other three student participants did not give their consents. The followings are the summary of the demographic information of the participants.

*Student Participants*

The students’ self-reporting on age showed a young international student body dominating by students in their early twenties. There were a few participants that were older than 30, but their number was quite low in comparison. Table 1 below contains detailed information about the age distribution among the student participants.

**Table 1**

*Age Distribution of Student Participants (N = 104)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>20-25</th>
<th>26-30</th>
<th>31-35</th>
<th>&gt;35</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As table 1 illustrates, the self-report data of age and length of being in the states shows that 73.1% of the student participants are in their early twenties, 18.3% are in their late twenties, only a handful are in their thirties; 64 of them reported having been living in the states for less than a year, 31 reported more than a year but under two years, and only a handful have been here for more than 3 years. In general, we have a young student sample with relatively less experience with American Academic culture.

According to the students’ report of their native languages, a dominating proportion of the student participants were Asian, with Chinese being the most frequent native language. There were a mixture of Spanish and European language users among the student participants, but their numbers were relatively smaller compared to the Chinese speakers.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Native Language</th>
<th>count</th>
<th>Native Language</th>
<th>count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Farsi</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinhala</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindi</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marathi</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Greek</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bengali</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**total** 102

Table 2 shows that Asian native language users accounted for almost 70% of the international student body. Among them, Chinese native language users accounted for 56%. The second most frequent native language was Korean, out numbered by Chinese by 49. The student sample displayed a unique demographic feature – Chinese dominant.
In an effort to investigate the students’ exposure to English writing, we asked the student participants the stage (elementary, junior/senior high, college, and graduate) they began regularly writing in English for school work. The majority of our participants reported having a fair amount of exposure to English writing. Many of them started years ago before graduate school. Table 3 below contains more details on that report.

**Table 3**

*Age Starting to Write English Regularly (total: 104)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Elementary</th>
<th>Junior high</th>
<th>Senior high</th>
<th>College</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
<th>other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>26.9%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>20.2%</td>
<td>22.1%</td>
<td>4.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As presented in Table 3, in response to “when do you start writing English for homework”, participants were almost evenly distributed among elementary, high school, college, and graduate. Except for the one fifth that reported to start in graduate school, which was considered quite recent, most of them had years of writing English well before attending graduate school.

**Teacher Participants**

Among the eight teacher participants, four were Americans, two were Chinese, and two were Hispanic; one is lecturer, one was PhD student in linguistics, and the rest were all students in the MATESL program. In terms of teaching experience, two of them were novice, four had fair amount of teaching experience for at least five years, and two were veterans with more than ten years of teaching experience. To sum up, there was a good balance of native and non-native,
new and seasoned teaching staff in our participants. The background of the teacher participants indicated that all of them are well acquainted with mainstream ESL pedagogical theories.

Summary

In this chapter, I have reviewed in details the design of the survey instruments, the process of recruiting participants, obtaining institutional approvals, and administrating the surveys. The paired surveys used for this study was an adaption of Cohen (1987) containing a student version and teacher version. The questions were worded slightly differently to cater for the different participants. The body of the surveys were divided into there parts: demographic information, perception of written feedback, and general preference and attitude towards written feedback.

In this chapter, I have also reported the demographic features of both student and teacher participants. In summary, the student participants featured a body of younger international students with a fair amount of English writing experience, and more than half of them are Chinese native speakers. On the other hand, the teacher participants featured a good mixture of young and old, novice and experience, international and American.
CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chapter Four reports the analysis, results, and the interpretations of the findings. This chapter is organized to address the research questions in order, starting with the perception of whether global skills are more important than local skills and students’ and teachers’ perception of the amount of feedback on both areas, moving to the perception of comprehension and revision issues. In general, the findings indicate that 1) both the students and teachers considered global writing skills to be more important than local ones; 2) the amount of feedback given was generally satisfactory; 3) understanding written feedback and performing revision accordingly were fairly successful, 4) the students and the teachers had matched preference in the general delivery of written feedback; 5) however, students and teachers showed discrepancies in explaining incomplete revision.

In addressing the above research questions with according results, this chapter is divided into sections. Each subsection will present the research question first, followed by the survey data and a short discussion.

Global Over Local

**Question 1: Do students and teachers perceive global writing skills to be more (less) important than the local ones?**

The data to answer this question were from survey question 5 in both student and teacher versions. Please see below for the original questions:
The results were automatically generated in a Google Forms spreadsheet. Participants rated skills and topics on a five-point Likert scale from “extremely important” to “not important at all”. Among these topics, coherence, use of explanation, use of evidence, topic sentence, thesis statement, introduction and conclusion, abstract represented global skills; formatting, vocabulary, and grammar represented local skills.

As shown in Figure 4, there were two unlabeled columns which were set up to be the options between “extremely important” and “somewhat important”, and “somewhat important” and “not important” at all. However, Google Forms failed to record the results of these in-between options, and we were left with the results for three options “extremely important”, “somewhat important”, and “not important at all”. Fortunately, even with the incomplete data, a clear trend indicating the participants’ strong preference towards global feedback over local feedback was shown. Figure 5 demonstrates this trend with more details.
Figure 5 Participants perception of the importance of different writing skills (count)
Figure 5 summarizes the number of student and teacher participants who considered the listed skills to be extremely important. There was a general trend for both students and teachers to favor global writing skills over the local one. For example, 86 student participants rated thesis statement as “extremely important”; other global topics such as topic sentence, explanation, and use of evidence all received such rating from more than 60 participants. In contrast, only 32 rated grammars, and 35 rated vocabulary as “extremely important”. Formatting issues received even less such rating: only 27 students consider it to be so.

All of the eight teacher participants rated thesis statements as “extremely important”, and over five rated the rest of the global writing skills as such. In contrast, almost no teachers considered the local writing skills to be “extremely important”: none rated formatting and vocabulary as such, and only one teacher rated grammar as such.

The strong preference towards global writing skills was different from the findings in Cohen (1987), Cohen (1990), Ferris (1995) and Montgomery & Baker (2007). One way to explain this preference is that the participants’ preference was shaped by the ESL service course curriculum, which has a strong emphasis on paragraph structures, organization and idea development. Although academic word choice, punctuation, and other local writing skills are also integrated parts of the syllabus, the strong emphasis on global writing skills could have influenced participants to perceive them as being more important. Another possibility is that this preference is an indication of the actual needs for writing skills in the academic environment and beyond. Many graduate level classes feature project write-ups that require high level of organizing, structuring skills. Outside of the class, students also need to perform writing for communicative purposes, such as email correspondences, cover letter, personal statements, where content is extremely important. As the population of L2 writers or multi-lingual writers
increase, and writing as a tool becomes more accessible to these non-native writers, and standards for good writings may be more diversified than linguistic accuracy.

The Perception of the Amount of Written Feedback

*Question 2: Are the participants satisfied with the amount of teacher written feedback in global and local writing skills?*

The data to answer this question were from survey question 6 in both student version, question 6 and 7 from the teacher version. Please see below for question 6 in the student version. Question 6 and 7 from the teacher version will be discussed later.

6. Tell us how much feedback you have received from your teacher on the above mentioned skills. *

![Figure 6. Question 6 from student version](image)
As illustrated by Figure 6, the student participants responded to whether they considered the amount of feedback on all skills to be satisfactory or not. Again, Google Forms failed to record the unlabeled in-between columns on the five point Likert Scale, and the results only captured the three options of “too much”, “I am happy with the amount”, and “far from enough”. Figure 7 below summarizes the count for the student participants that reported “I am happy with the amount” in all skill areas. All results were generated by Google Forms spreadsheet.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students Who Answer &quot;I am happy with the amount&quot; (Count)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formatting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 7 Students report on the amount of feedback to be satisfactory (count)

As can be seen from Figure 7, the average number of students reported satisfactory with the amount of feedback was around 68 across all skills including global and local ones. Numbers of students reporting satisfactory with “vocabulary” and “grammar” feedback were much lower than average, 49 for “vocabulary” and 55 for “grammar”. Numbers of students reporting satisfactory with “formatting” and the global feedback were similar, averaged to around 72.
The results for “Too much” and “far from enough” provided us with a closer look at the student participants that did not report “I am happy with the amount”. In general, the students had tendency to chose “too much”, and the number of students who chose this option was similar across different skills except for vocabulary and grammar. Figure 8 shows this pattern of responses in more details.

**Figure 8 Students reported the amount of feedback to be unsatisfactory (count)**

Figure 8 summarizes the number of students that report the amount of feedback being either “not enough” (blue) or “too much” (orange). As we can see in Figure 8, although the numbers of students reporting unsatisfactory (“not enough” and “too much” combined) across all skills were similar, averaged to around 13, only in local writing skills do we see complaints about the feedback being “not enough”: 2 for “formatting”, 5 for “vocabulary”, and 5 for “grammar”. Complaints about the amount of feedback being “too much” averaged to around 13 for formatting and all the global skills, and the numbers were similar as well.
The teacher participants answered a different set of questions in terms of the amount of written feedback. The researcher intended to take the advantage of the smaller number of the teacher participants to elicit more qualitative responses from the teacher participants. The set of questions that were designed to be the counterpart for question 6 in the student version are shown below in Figure 9:

![Image of Figure 9](image)

**Figure 9. Question 6 and 7 from the teacher version**

As indicated by Figure 9, question 6 asked the teacher participants to make a general judgment of the amount of feedback they gave, and question 7 asked them to provide a short text explaining why they might have given unsatisfactory amount of feedback at certain areas. The researcher purposefully left the discussion open-ended, not priming the teacher participants to think that “unhappy” must mean “too much” or “not enough”. However, their responses were surprisingly similar to the student participants. On average, five out of the eight teacher participants evaluated the amount of feedback they give was satisfactory, and their text responses mostly addressed the lack of local feedback. The next few paragraphs will illustrate the teacher participants’ original responses to question 7 in details.
“I feel as though I didn't give enough feedback during the PIE teaching for students to comprehend it well enough-- I should have assigned more Homework assignments to help them practice.”

“Coherence: Don't have time to check coherence myself but I asked students to do peer review on that part before I grade”

These two of the six short responses focused on global writing skills. The responses specifically made reference to PIE and Coherence, which were the listed global skills in question number five. The rest of the responses reflected that there should be more feedback in local skills. The details of the theses responses can be seen as below:

“Grammar and Vocabulary: Since my students are all grads, talking about grammar and vocabulary problem is not necessary unless the mistakes influence my understanding.”

“I feel I should give more feedback in terms of wordiness (that's not in the list above). This is because I tend to make my writing wordy so at times I'm not so aware of this issue.”

“I rarely give feedback on vocabulary, because we don't really teach it. I don't have the time to give a lot of grammar feedback. I waste too much time going over silly things like margins.”

“I do not have enough time, also the program is not designed to focus those areas.”

As indicated by these responses, the rest of the teacher participants considered feedback on local writing skills such as “grammar”, “vocabulary”, and “wordiness” might be lacking. One response was not specific, only stating that the syllabus is “not designed to focus on those area”. Based on the researcher’s knowledge about the ESL 501 syllabus, this person was likely referring to local writing skills.

To sum up, the teacher participants, albeit slim in numbers, showed similar concerns that the amount of local feedback might be lacking. Their comments sometimes pointed to similar causes: not required by the curriculum, not necessary, and limited time.
Compared with Cohen (1987) and its follow-up studies in the 90s and 2000s, which asked the participants to reflect on the percentage of feedback focused on global and local writing skills (see Chapter Two for more details), the questionnaire for this study took on a slightly different perspective for examining the amount of feedback: the researcher was less interested in whether there was more local feedback than global feedback, but more interested in whether the participants perceived receiving/giving satisfactory amount of feedback on both areas, which may be a more direct indication of whether the teacher written feedback was catering the students’ needs. Surprisingly, compared with the traditional findings of teachers overemphasizing local writing skills, the current survey results showed that some students considered themselves not getting enough local feedback and some teachers considered themselves not giving enough feedback on local writing skills as well.

The data may suggest that although both students and teachers tended to agree that global writing skills are more important, some of them still appreciated local feedback. Another interpretation is that in ESL 501, the major assignment is a research project which is around ten pages in length. Completing such project requires good competence of global writing skills; responding to such a big project also requires good attention to global issues. Therefore, it may be harder for the teachers to provide too much local feedback. The nature of the project itself requires the teachers to focus on the higher order issues such as the organization of the paper, the logical soundness of the thesis statements and such, in order to have a good evaluation of the overall success of the students’ performance. That is probably why several teachers also write down not having enough time as the reason for not providing enough local feedback.
Successful Comprehension and Revision

*Question 3: How well can students understand the written feedback and make revision accordingly?*

The data to answer this question were from question 7 and 9 in student version, question 9 and 11 in teacher version. Please see below for the original survey questions.

**Student version:**
7. What percentage of feedback given by your teacher can you understand?
9. What percentage of the errors in your essays are you able to correct/revise with the help of your teacher’s comments?

**Teacher version:**
9. What percentage of the errors in your essays are you able to correct/revise with the help of your teacher’s comments?
11. How would you want your errors to be treated by your instructor?

Students and teachers were asked to choose from a drop-down menu a percentage range that best represented students’ comprehension of the teacher written feedback and students’ revision to drafts. These percentage range were from 0-10% to 90-100%. In general, both the student and the teacher participants chose the higher percentage ranges to present the understanding of written feedback. Their responses are summarized in Table 4 below. One in the 104 student participants omitted this question, therefore, the total count for student participants was 103.

**Table 4**

*Students’ and Teachers’ Perception of the Percentage of Understanding*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Students (N = 103)</th>
<th>Teachers (N = 8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Ratio</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

36
According to Table 4, the majority of the student participants opted for the higher percentage of understanding. Over 90% of the students considered that they could understand more than 80% of the written feedback; almost 70% chose the highest percentage range of 90-100%. No participants chose any percentage range below 50%; Only two students considered their understanding to be below 70%. Teachers’ evaluation of the level of comprehension was not far off from the students reported data. Six of the eight teachers choose the range of 90-100%, and the other two choose the range of 70-79%.

Similarly, both the student and teacher participants opted for higher percentage ranges to represent the students’ performance in revision. Two in the 104 student participants omitted this question, therefore, the total count for student participants was 102. Table 5 below summarize the responses from both student and teacher participants.

**Table 5**

*Students’ and Teachers’ Perception of the Percentage of Revision*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>percentage</th>
<th>Students (N = 102)</th>
<th>Teachers (N = 8)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Ratio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-100%</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>24.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown by table 5, most participants chose the higher percentage range. More than half of the students chose the highest percentage range of 90-100%; more than 40% of them chose the range between 70-89%; only less than 10% considered their revision is below 70%. Again, the teachers’ evaluation was not far off from the students’ reported data. Seven of the eight teachers chose the percentage ranges above 80%, and only one choses 60-69%. No teacher participants choose any percentage range lower than 60%.

The self-report data from the student participants also indicated an interesting phenomenon: the student participants who reported a higher percentage of understanding also tended to report a higher percentage of revision. This tendency is illustrated in Figure 10 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage Range</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100%</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>29.4%</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79%</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69%</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-9%</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 10 *Relationship between percentage of understanding and percentage of revision*

Figure 10 shows the responses from the student participants cross-tabulated and graphed by Excel. The horizontal axis represents the percentage range of revision; the colored pie charts represent the percentage range of understanding. For example, blue represents the students claiming they can understand 90-100% of the written feedback, and yellow represents those claiming they can understand 80-89% of the written feedback. As indicated by the graph, the higher percentage ranges of understanding cluster at the higher percentage ranges of revision (long blue pie with a short yellow pie at 90-100% revision, combination of blue and yellow pies at 80-89% revision).

The survey data showed that both students and teachers considered understanding the written feedback and revision to be fairly successful, which is a positive finding suggesting that the quality of the instruction for ESL 501 is high. Also, it is important to reiterate that, according to students' self-report percentage of understanding and percentage of revision, these two elements dependent of each other. It is reasonable to say that the key to promote better revision may be to ensure that students can understand all the written feedback.
Justification for the Amount of Understanding and Revision

Question 4 (I): How do students and teachers explain the lack of full comprehension of written feedback?

The data to answer this question were from question 8 in student version, question 10 in teacher version. Please see below for the original questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student version:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8. Why are you not able to understand your teacher comments completely? Explain why briefly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher version:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. What percentage of feedback do you think your students can understand?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked to provide a short explanation for the percentage ranges they choose to represent the level of understanding. According to the responses to these questions, both students and teachers agreed that language and communication were probably the biggest barriers preventing better understanding. Students’ results and teachers’ results are reported separately below.

Student participants

Among the 104 student participants, 50 answered and 54 omitted this question. The 50 available responses were categorized into “ineffective responses”, “positive responses”, and “negative responses”. “Ineffective responses” refer to responses with no content meanings. For example, “NA”, “Nil” and “nothing” were categorized as such. “Positive responses” usually pointed out the good features of the written feedback. For example, “the feedback is clear”, “enough repetition”, “I can understand almost everything” were categorized as such. “Negative responses” typically pointed out the unsatisfactory features of the written feedback. For example, “not enough time”, “the teacher does not understand me”, “too vague” were categorized as such.
Table 6 summarizes the responses from the student participants cross-tabulated with their self-report percentage ranges of understanding. The responses in the 50-59%, 60-69%, and 70-79% range only amounted to ten counts. They are collapsed into one cell.

**Table 6**

*Overview of Responses to Justify the Percentage Range of Understanding*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage (understanding)</th>
<th>Omission responses</th>
<th>Ineffective responses</th>
<th>Positive responses</th>
<th>Negative responses</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>50-79%</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-89%</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90-100%</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6 indicates that 44 of the 54 cases of omission took place in the 90-99% percentage range. In the same category, the positive responses outnumbered the negative responses by eight. In the rest percentage ranges, there were fewer cases of omission and more negative responses.

In total, from the percentage range of 50-89%, there were 18 negative responses and only five positive responses. Therefore, there is a good reason to speculate that most omissions took place because the participants considered their comprehension pretty successful, therefore, this question was not applicable, and the omissions were likely to have been positive.

The positive responses were a positive confirmation of good teacher practice and good quality of the instruction, however, it was the negative responses that provided information on how to refine the practice of teacher written feedback. In order to understand the barriers in comprehending written feedback, it is necessary to examine these negative responses. Most of these negative responses offered information, from the students’ perspective, as to why the
students failed to derive adequate actions based on the written feedback. These responses were put into four categories according to their content: quality, language, communication, and time. The original responses within their categories are shown below with details and analysis.

These comments shown below state that language proficiency might be an issue in comprehending the written feedback, therefore, they were categorized as Language. This category accounted for a majority of the students’ responses to this question:

“because of my poor English”
“Perhaps, the teacher speaks too quickly. Sometimes, I just do not know the meaning of a specific word”.
“I need to improve my english skills such as listening”.
“MY Listening skill is bad”.
“my poor listening”.
“Some concept that explained in English is not very easy to understand and some vocabulary in examples is not familiar”.
“The language barrier”.
“The limitation of language and I am not familiar enough with English”.
“my poor listening skill”.
“Not in this course but for other courses sometimes because of the speed of speech”.

This category – Language – point to the problem that the students’ English proficiency may have impeded the comprehension of the written feedback. However, many of these responses seem to go beyond the scope of written feedback as they mention “listening skills”. The participants might have misunderstood the survey question, and responded to lack of comprehension in general instead of targeting only written feedback.

These comments shown below state the unsatisfactory quality of the written feedback, therefore, they were categorized as Quality:

“the comments are too general, I think one to one is better”.

42
“Some of the feedback is so indirect. I don't know how to correct it. And he just mentioned part of my work's mistakes.”

“Some comments were vague”.

“Very general”.

“Most of the time I understand his comments, but for the issues come up because I don't know how to apply those comments”.

“Sometimes, I am not quite sure about what is needed to be added and how it will work.

This category - Quality- point out that the written feedback may have been too general, indirect or vague. Sometimes, student might not have a clear idea of how the teachers intended the written feedback to be used. One student stated that he/she did not know “how to apply those comments” and another stated that he/she is “not quite sure what is needed to be added”.

These comments shown below state that the teachers may at times misunderstood the students’ papers, therefore, they were categorized as Misunderstanding:

“Because sometimes the teacher hasn't got my point so the comments might not be accurate enough”.

“Different culture background”.

“Maybe there are some background information he doesn't know, which I'm not aware of that”.

“we are in different major”

This category – Misunderstanding – point out that the causes for misunderstanding may be different “culture background”, lack of shared information, and “different major”. One student directly stated that his/her teacher “hasn’t got my point”.

These two comments below point out that lack of time may be the issue leading to full comprehension, therefore, they were categorized as Time:

“Do not have enough time work for this course”.

“For limited time to communicate individually.”
It was not directly apparent how not having enough time may cause difficulty in understanding the teacher written feedback. A possible interpretation is that the students were addressing their overall performance at this course rather than targeting the issues in understanding the teacher written feedback.

These comments below contain overlapping issues that were mentioned before, such as language, misunderstanding and time:

“Usually misunderstanding is caused by imprecise expression in words, for limited time frame, it is sometimes hard for international students to deliver the exact meaning they wanted to say. In that case, teachers won't be able to respond correctly to solve their problems.” (time + language)

“Limited time cannot give us enough information.

In addition, I could not understand perfectly because of my English proficiency.” (Time + language)

There were also incidents where the students were not too specific about what caused the difficulties in understanding the written feedback. They pointed to some other issues that has little to do with understanding the written feedback:

“Just do not get the idea of the teacher”.

“want more feedback from teacher on drafts.”

As shown, neither of these two responses addressed the survey question. The first simply states that the teacher’s idea was hard to get, and the second expresses the wish to get more feedback. Here is another response that does not go in any of the categories before.

“Basically it's my own interpretation has gone south”.

44
As shown by the students’ responses so far, although their responses were not always addressing the survey question, they still offered us some insights as to why students sometimes find teacher written feedback hard to understand: they considered their English proficiency in the way, sometimes felt their papers misread, or wished the written feedback can be more specific. More communication between students and teachers may alleviate these problems. If the teachers can spend time engaging in in-person conversations, walking their students through the written feedback, the students may have less difficulties understanding the written feedback. If the students have chances to explain their ideas in person, the teachers may do a better job understanding their paper and advise ways to present their ideas in writings. If the teachers do not have such time for communication, they should be as specific as possible in their feedback.

Teacher participants

The explanations given by the teacher participants point to similar concerns such as language proficiency and the quality of the feedback; they also state that the students sometimes did not understand the same issues in the same way. See below for more details of the original teacher responses.

The first cluster of responses state that language proficiency was causing the difficulties in understanding the written feedback:

“many of them are not used to US academics and a few need to improve their English proficiency.”

“Perhaps I use American phrases or am no clear enough with what I am expecting when they change it.”

“I try to make the language simple, but sometimes I may use some structures and vocabulary that are too complicated. Sometimes I'm also concerned that the comments
make sense to me, but that it may not be very clear to the student about a specific strategy to use in the future. I think perhaps making an effort to be more specific about suggestions could help my students.”

These above responses from the teacher indicate that sometimes the vocabulary, sentence structure, and genre (American academic English) during instruction might make it more difficult for the students to understand the written feedback. The last response points out that sometimes what was “clear” to the teacher may not be so “clear” to the students and “making an effort to be more specific” may help in the future.

These following two responses from the teachers indicate that the teacher themselves saw room for improvement in the quality of the feedback they gave to the students:

“They might be overwhelmed by the amount; they might not see if the way I saw it; it might be an issue it's easier to discuss in person”.
“I tended to give handwritten feedback this semester, for some quick tasks. They didn't understand my handwriting. As for digitally-based feedback, perhaps they do not understand it when it's a bit metalinguistic (their memory fails): "Go back to your topic sentence as you write your explanations.”

One teacher pointed out giving too much feedback might overwhelm the students, and one teacher suggested that using handwriting might compromise the readability of the written feedback. The first response stated that students just “don’t see the way I see it”. Another teacher response in our data also stated that sometimes the students “just don’t get it”:

“They didn't catch the information I talked in class, or they miss the class where I point out some certain problems. Then when they make those mistakes I've talked about, they don't understand my explanation. However, that happens really rare;”

According to this teacher participant, students may not understand what happened in the class, and repeated the same mistakes in their writing, given that the teacher gave explanation, they still might not get it. This teacher participant also stated that such situation was rare.

In summary, the teacher responses stated some similar problems that their students already mentioned: language proficiency and quality of the written feedback. Unlike the student participants, the teacher participants did not take account of the possibility that they might have misread the students’ papers, but they may be pointing out a very complicated issue in
processing ideas: sometimes the students did not see their teachers see, and this led to a failure to recognize “errors”. A possible interpretation is the process of writing involves certain degree of arbitrariness, therefore, it is only natural that the student and teachers did not always see eye to eye with each other, as the possible answer to a writing problem may be many. Another interpretation is that the students were still in the process of acquiring the writing skills imparted to them, therefore, it is normal for them not to meet expectation perfectly.

These problems mentioned by the students and teachers may not be entirely solvable, but they at least can be alleviated with more communication between students and teachers. It is advisable that the teachers utilize office hours to arrange more teacher-student conferences, or offer some supplement to the written feedback.

*Question 4 (2): How do students and teachers explain the failure of full revision?*

The data to answer this question were from 10 in student version, question 12 in teacher version. See below for the original questions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student version:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Please justify your answer to the question number 9 (Tell us briefly why you chose that option).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher version:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Please justify your answer to the question number 11 (Tell us briefly why you chose that option).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were asked to give a short explanation to justify the percentage ranges they chose to present the revision. The survey data indicate a discrepancy between students and teachers. Student responses tended to address the success of revision only while the teacher responses only addressed the lack of complete revision. Moreover, the students seemed to have the tendency to perceive an absence of necessity for further revision, or that the lack of complete
revision was natural; on the other hand, the teachers seemed to attribute the lack of complete revision to various reasons such as insufficient language proficiency, communication, motivation, and reception of instruction.

Students Participants

Among 104 student participants, 62 responded to this question and the rest omitted this question. In general, the majority of the student responses addressed the success of revision. A typical response reports the positive experience with teacher written feedback and points out its helpfulness in the process of revision. The following are typical student responses:

“All the comments given by my teacher were useful.”
“I can correct nearly all errors based on my teacher comments.”
“As a native speaker in English, my teacher can find the errors easily, so most of the errors were found by him.”
“I will check before handing in my essay, so there are only small errors, and Ms. Wells can always help me find these small errors and fix them quickly.”
“I just have some citation errors in my first assignment.
“grammer, format, and basic structure are easy to adjust.”
“When I first wrote my diagnostic essay, my writing was far from the concise, to the point American style. Ms. Wells helped me adapt.”
“Because my teacher feedback is focus, specific and easy to understand.”

These above responses from the student participants mentioned positive experience with the teacher written feedback, such as it was “useful”, and that the teachers were right on in spotting errors, and correction was relatedly easy. These responses were almost compliments for the teachers’ work.
On some lesser occasions, students mentioned that they were at a language proficiency level which made it almost impossible to be totally accurate (assuming on local issues), however, such responses were relatively few:

“Some mistake is difficult to overcome completely without knowing the native expression.
“The reason I choose around 79% is that some of the grammar and vocabulary mistakes are hard to find even by the native speakers.
“My problem. I am not good at English writing so maybe...”
“Some mistake is difficult to overcome completely without knowing the native expression.”
“There are some grammatical problems that is not easy to correct or lets say learn a way to never repeat them again.”

…

As indicated by the above responses, the student participants considered their language proficiency not at the level as to be self-conscious of local language errors and be able to correct them. Several of these responses mentioned “native expression” were beyond their grasp. On even rarer occasions, students mentioned that not being able to correct or revise 100% was only natural, or that it was hard for them to detect their own errors and hard not to repeat them, but they were not explicit that these were regarding local issues only:

“I expect there will always be some errors I missed.
“Sometimes I would make similar problems.”

…

So far, the student responses to this question illustrate that most students felt accomplished with the percentage of revision they perceived to be able to perform. Others felt that the failure to accomplish full revision was because they were still in the process of acquiring
the language, therefore, it was natural not to be able to have a native-like accuracy in language use.

**Teachers**

All the eight teacher participants responded to this question, and their responses were more varied compared to the students’ responses.

One teacher pointed out that language proficiency was the reason for lack of full revision:

“Many of them are truly struggling with even the most basic grammar rules in writing”

This next teacher was less explicit about students’ language proficiency was the major issue, but implied that the teacher should accommodate for the students’ language level:

“I am not clear enough or use American phrases.”

Two teachers pointed out that the mastery level of the class content was the reason that the students were not able to accomplish full revision:

“Big change of information rearrangement is very hard to revise.”

“Explanation in PIE structure is hard for them to revise.”

In the above two responses, both teachers pointed out the difficulty for the student to revise globally. The second response specifically mentioned PIE structure, which is a major subject in the ESL 501 syllabus. These following responses mentioned, similarly to the teachers’ explanation for difficulty in understanding the written feedback, the cognitive gap between the students and the teachers:

“I noticed they forgot. I also think the "errors" on content were not errors to them, so they disregarded my feedback (or peer feedback).”

“I think maybe they don't see the connection between the error I highlight and a specific set of tools and/or strategies that can be used to improve. There could be a disconnect here. I would be interested to see if my students feel this way, or if they feel like my comments both (1) identify the problem AND (2) provide enough clear guidance about how to deal with the specific problem. This is challenging because I cannot spend hours on each essay, and the less time I have to mark an essay, the less explicit and personalized instruction I can give.
The above three responses all stated that what the teachers considered errors were not necessarily so to the students. The second response also pointed out that giving students more specific direction may help the issue. The next response stated that sometimes the teachers’ expectation for revision may not be that clear to the students:

“They may not really know what I want.”

One teacher attributed the lack of full revision to lack of motivation on the students’ part:

“Too lazy or too busy to make the effort.”

So far, the teachers’ responses illustrate quite different picture: they only addressed the lack of complete revision but not the success of revision — a contrast between “glass half full” and “glass half empty” scenario. Although the teacher participants seem to be less light-hearted than their students, their explanations were sometimes similar to the students’: both of them would agree that language proficiency was an issues. However, the teachers’ explanations carried a different perspective in several ways: they saw problems in global writing skills, which was never mentioned by the students; they saw the cognitive gap between themselves and the students, which was also unaware to the students. In general, the teacher participants look at the percentage range as an indication for inadequate performance rather than success: the incomplete revision was interpreted to have been caused by language proficiency, lack of mastery of the class content, lack of motivation. In addition, the teacher participants also realized that there was discrepancy between their understanding and their students’ understanding about the same subject. Again, it is possible that writing related subject matters are sometimes too arbitrary to generate total agreement, or that the students were still in the process of acquiring these global writing skills, and errors were not immediately apparent to them.

In order to help the students to achieve higher level of revision, it may help to establish explicit agreement on the responsibility of revision. Teachers should have a clear expectation of what are the necessary changes that need to happen in the final drafts, and explicitly
communicate this to the students. To resolve the problem of lack of motivation, teachers can assign grades for the revision. For example, the revision can account for certain percentage of their final grade for this assignment.

Preference and General Attitude for Feedback

Question 6: Do students and teachers show different preferences towards the way feedback is delivered in general? Do they consider the teacher written feedback to have a good balance of praise and criticism, not being too indirect, helpful and thoughtful in general?

The data to answer this question were from question 8 in teacher version; question 12 in student version, question 13 in teacher version. See below for the original questions:

8. How do you usually give comments?
- Point out without correction
- Point out with suggestion for correction
- Point out with direct correction
- Do not point out or correction
- Depends on the errors, I treat different errors differently

11. How would you want your errors to be treated by your instructor?
- Pointed out without correction
- Pointed out with suggestions, not direct correction
- Pointed out with direct correction
- Not pointed out or corrected
- Depends on the errors, I want different errors to be treated differently.
- I don't have a preference

Figure 11 Question 8 in teacher version and question 11 in teacher version

As indicated by Figure 11, both groups of participants were asked to state their preference whether they would like their errors to be pointed out and whether they wanted them to be directly corrected. Figure 12 below summarizes the results from the student participants.
Figure 12. Students' Preference with Teacher Written Feedback

As Figure 12 indicates, students showed a strong preference for error to be pointed out with suggestion for revision but not direct correction. 52 out of the 104 student participants chose this option; only 24 chose “pointed out with direct correction” and 18 chose “depends on the errors”. This result aligns with the answers from the teacher participants: Six out of the eight teacher participants respond that is the way they usually treat errors in students’ writing, and the other two answer that it depends on the types of errors, however they have not offered further details on how to treat different types of errors.

Figure 13 below is screenshot of question 13 in the teacher survey and question 12 in the student survey:
Figure 13. *Question 13 in teacher version and question 12 in student version*

Figure 13 presents the paired questions on the survey page. Both groups of participants were asked to choose on a Likert Scale how much they agree on: whether the teacher written feedback contained too much praise, too much criticism, being too indirect, and whether they considered the feedback to be helpful and thoughtful in general. There were seven options on the Likert scale, but Figure 12 only shows part of these seven options. The rest of the options were available to view for the participants by dragging a slide bar on the webpage in the actual online surveys.

Figure 14 and 15 illustrate the results to these questions. In general, there was a good fit between the student data and teacher data. Two of the 104 student participants omitted this question, therefore, there were 102 student participants. All eight teacher participants responded.
As Figure 14 indicates the students’ general approval towards teacher written feedback, even though slightly more student participants considered there was too much praise in the feedback. To begin with, 30 students held no opinion towards whether the teachers were giving
too much praise, 38 students opted for the “agree” options while 24 opted for the “disagree” options. In total, 14 more students considered there was too much praise in the teacher written feedback. Next, besides the 17 students that held no opinion whether there was too much criticism in the written feedback, 69 opted for the “disagree” option while 16 students opted for the “agree” option. A lot more students disagreed that there was too much criticism in the written feedback. In terms of whether written feedback was too indirect, 17 students held no opinion, 17 students agreed while 68 disagreed. Again, a lot more students did not consider the teacher too indirect. Finally, majority of the student participants considered the written feedback to be helpful and thoughtful. Only 4 students opted for the “disagree” option and 9 held no opinion, while the rest of the 89 participants considered the teacher written feedback to be helpful. Likewise, only five student participants disagreed, 12 students held no opinion, while the rest of the 85 participants agreed that the written feedback was thoughtful. To sum up, although slightly more students considered the teacher written feedback containing too much praise, students generally considered there was appropriate amount of criticism: majority of the students disagree that the feedback contains too much criticism or that it is too indirect; vast majority of the students consider teacher written feedback to be helpful and thoughtful.

Figure 15 summarizes the results from the teacher participants. There were only eight teacher participants therefore the bar charts do not show all the seven options as some of these options were not chosen by any of the participants.
Figure 15. Teachers’ general practice of their written feedback.

As indicated by Figure 15, one teacher agreed that they have given the students too much praise, two held no opinion, and the rest tended to disagree; the teachers tended to distributed evenly between agreeing and not agreeing having given too much criticism, although two held on opinion; all but two teacher participants disagree that their written feedback was too indirect, the other two held opinion. All teacher participants consider their feedback to be helpful and thoughtful.
In general, the students’ perception was in accordance with the teacher’s perception in stating that the written feedback was helpful, thoughtful, and not too indirect. Unlike the students, who tended to consider the teachers were giving too much praise but disagreed that there was too much criticism, the teachers were more inclined to disagree there was too much praise but was less assure about criticism, or being too indirect.

Summary

In this chapter, I have reported the survey results and the possible interpretations for these results. Unlike in the previous literature (Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995; Montgomery, 2007), where the teachers were often found to overemphasize local writing skills and tended to overestimate the amount of local feedback given to students’ draft, the findings of the current study indicate that both the students and teachers showed a strong preference towards global writing skills, and both considered the amount of written feedback to be satisfactory, although quite a few of them reported that there should be more local feedback. This may indicate that although participants admit that global writing skills are more important, they still appreciate and welcome local feedback greatly.

Another possible interpretation is that this strong preference is shaped by the design of the curriculum. The ESL 501 curriculum does have a strong emphasis on global writing skills, although local writing skills are also the integrated part. The Final assignment of the ESL 501 is a research project in which the students are required to form an argument based on well-rounded scientific evidence, the completion and grading of which requires more attention to global issues and allows less time to focus on local issues.
Both groups of participants report a high level of understanding of the written feedback and a high level of revision. For the student participants, the ones who report high level of understanding are likely to report high level of revision as well. This suggests that in students’ perception, understanding may be the key to better revision. Both the students and teachers report that language proficiency and that the feedback not being specific enough may have caused some difficulties to understand the written feedback, this in turn, might have caused some difficulties for successful revision. For the writing teachers to facilitate revision and eventually learning in long term, it may be advisable to initiate more conversations with the students. This can be accomplished by taking advantage of conference time and office hours. If in-person communication is not an option and the teachers are to consider other alternatives such as emails or more written feedback, they should make it as specific as possible.

An interesting discrepancy in the perception of these two groups of participants is the “glass half full, glass half empty” scenario towards the lack of full revision. Students’ responses tend to address the success of the revision, or attribute to language proficiency or that full revision is almost impossible; teachers’ responses address the lack of full revision only, and they seem to consider it as an indication for inadequate performance caused by language proficiency, insufficient mastery of the class subjects, and lack of motivation. Both the students and the teachers realized that there may be a gap in their understanding, but they only interpreted it from their own perspective: the students thought the teachers may have misunderstood their papers, while the teachers pointed out that the students did not recognize errors.
CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to connect all the dots in the literature review and the result chapters to make several concluding statements. I am going to start with discussing the contrasts between the current and the previous studies on the perception of teacher written feedback, followed by interpreting the similarities and discrepancies in how the students and teachers addressed the difficulties in comprehending the written feedback and making according revision. Then I will move on to explore the contradictions displayed by the students’ survey results, and finally ending with the pedagogical implication, limitation and suggestion.

To preview, the perception of the amount of global and local feedback may reflect the transition from the product approach to the process approach at the instructional level; both the students and the teachers saw a gap in understanding, but they all interpreted it from their own perspectives; the students’ survey results featured certain contradictions which call for the teachers to be sensitive to the individual student’s needs. To better serve the needs of ESL writing students and achieve agreement in multi-drafting writing assignments, both students and teachers are encouraged to seek more opportunities to communicate to negotiate while responding to written feedback.

The current study only pursued the inquiry on teacher written feedback through survey-based methods, but future studies should look into analyzing the actual writing samples with teacher written feedback, but when any inquiries into the effectiveness of teacher written feedback take place, researchers should treat it as an integrated part of the instructional process.
The Process Approach in Action

As mentioned in the literature chapter, the process approach, which emphasizes a balance between the two types of feedback, became the mainstream methodology in the 80s. Previous research from the late 80s, 90s, and 2000s all suggested that writing teachers overemphasized local writing skills (Cohen, 1987; Cohen, 1990; Ferris, 1995; Montgomery, 2007), and students perceived receiving more local feedback than the teachers perceive giving (Montgomery, 2007), but they also showed preference toward such feedback (Ferris, 1997). This series of similar studies reflected the reception of the process approach at the instructional level: although the teacher training made the writing teachers more aware of switching focus onto global writing skills, however, they still struggled to implement these changes in written feedback practice. This study has updated these collective findings by showing a trend that both students and teachers consider global skills more important than local skills, that the amounts of global and local feedback are generally satisfactory, although there were a few participants think that there should be more feedback on vocabulary and grammar skills.

Students used to feel getting too much local feedback, now most of them are happy and some of them want more. Does this change of perception reflect a different trend dictated by the process approach? Maybe. As mentioned before, the participants’ perception of written feedback maybe shaped by the course curriculum, the mainstream teaching training, and the implementation of it; and the designs of the ESL curriculum and and teacher training in the ESL program at UIUC feature the influence from the process approach (See Chapter Three for more details). If the studies in the previous few decades have shown us that the process approach has been burgeoning but still meeting obstacles during implementation, the current study may suggest that the process is gradually taking effect during implementation at the instructional level:
instead of perceiving the overemphasis on local feedback, the participants are perceiving satisfactory amounts – an overall balance.

However, we should be aware of two things. Firstly, the survey questions were designed differently from the original Cohen (1987). Instead of asking how much percentages of teacher written feedback were distributed between global and local skills, we asked if the participants were satisfied with the amount distributed in both types of skills (See details in Chapter Two and Chapter Three). Secondly, it is always possible that the current study only captured the difference by samples. For example, the current study only sampled graduate international students (the majority being Chinese) in the advanced ESL writing sequel and their teachers at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in 2015; Montgomery (2007) sampled students from Brigham Young University English Language Center with more variety of international students and language proficiency levels. Cohen (1987), Cohen (1990), and Ferris (1997) all employed different localized samples, therefore, the difference may be a reflection of the local differences in the different samples.

Discrepancy in Comprehension and Revision

The current study expanded the previous literature by involving comprehension and revision. The common ground between the teachers and students is that they both recognized that language proficiency and the quality of the feedback (mainly not specific enough) are the major barriers in comprehending the teacher written feedback and making according revisions. The discrepancy in the students’ and teachers’ perceptions is that they both reported a gap in understanding, but each from their own perspective: the students claimed that the teachers
sometime misunderstood their papers; the teachers claimed that the students just did not see errors in the same way as they did.

According to the student participants, their teachers may have misunderstood their papers due to lack of shared background information or difference in majors. This is a logical explanation but not a well-rounded one. What caused these misunderstandings, or feeling of being misunderstood, may be a combinations of factors involving the nature of the writing assignment, the writing process, and the reading process, as well as the limited time the teachers have to grade the assignments. To begin with, the final assignment of ESL 501 is a challenge for the students and the teachers (See Chapter Three for more details). Students are required to form a critical argument by presenting scientific evidence for a potentially complicated issue to general audience, which is easier said than done. Many of them chose a topic relevant to their majors, or they know well about. It is extremely challenging to write on a topic at a research level to general audience who know barely anything about the subject matter. Something that may seem straightforward to the writer may need great explanations. At the other end, reading scientific writing is equally as hard as, if not harder than constructing it, especially when these papers are written by inexperienced international graduate students. On top of that, the required length for this research project is around ten pages, and every individual project different from each another. A 501 teacher has to grade, on average, 10 to 15 (the class size in the ESL service course) such projects in a relatively short period of time. The pure workload to go through all these projects one by one is challenging enough. For the very practical constraint of time limit, the teachers may not be able to a single project multiple times or take time to process information presented by the student writers.
As for the teacher participants’ opinion, we first need to acknowledge that our students are still in the process of acquiring the skill imparted to them, therefore, it is normal that they do not meet our expectations all the time, as it takes time to master the skills such as argument developing and writing in the tone of a specific genre. Secondly, we have to take into account that the nature of writing embodies certain degree of freedom and arbitrariness, therefore two answers to the same question may both be plausible. Sometimes, when grading the students’ arguments, I find myself subconsciously forming counter-arguments, and these counter-arguments in my head might in some way, lessen my ability to evaluate the students’ ability in constructing arguments. Along the same line, I may be producing written feedback that to the students may not agree with, and thought that I may misunderstood their papers.

Self-conflicted students?

The student results displayed a few contradictions: although the majority reported that global skills were significantly more important than local skills, a few of them reported wanting more local feedback; although almost all of them stated that indirect feedback (have errors pointed out with suggestion) was the best, and that the teacher written feedback they received was not too indirect, a considerable amount of them pointed out that the written feedback was not specific enough to derive successful revision. The students’ responses, on one hand, reflect perceptions that align with the methodology of the process approach and deductive approaches in teaching, they sometimes make assertions that contradict such perceptions entirely.

As practitioners, we want to interpret this phenomenon in a way that is most beneficial to conducting our future work. First of all, we need to realize our survey results only indicate a trend, not reflecting individual cases. The overall inclination towards global writing skills does
not mean that local feedback is not greatly appreciated anymore by individual students, considering our students come from cultural backgrounds with different traditional approaches to writing. As Hyland (2006) point out that the writing needs are also cultural, and it is disrespectful not to provide local feedback when such feedback is valued by the students’ cultures. Likewise, a general trend to favor indirect feedback does not mean that every individual student welcomes it.

Secondly, the inconsistency in the students’ opinions may reflect the discrepancy between ideal and actuality in their perception. Students may agree that indirect feedback would be the most beneficial as it encourages problem solving and maximizes learning, but at the same time, it demands greater investment in time and effort. In contrast, having errors corrected by the teachers or having suggestions for revision expressed clearly and explicitly is an easy way out. Likewise, the students may agree that the current writing needs requires them to focus on the balance of global and local writing skills, but their previous writing experience may prime them to react to such balance with unsatisfaction, especially if the students come from a cultural background that emphasizes the accuracy in language use.

Pedagogical Implication

In this part, I want to recap the aforementioned results, and generate useful implications based on them. Let’s start with the discrepancy in interpreting the gap in understanding the papers and course content. The suggestion I am putting forward is communication and negotiation. The process approach promotes a relationship and dynamic between the students and the teachers that is more cooperative and dialogic, coupling or supplementing the written feedback with in-person conference to maximize its effect. The ESL service course syllabus currently incorporates teacher-student conference, but in these conferences, do we only focus on
expressing our expectations, or do we also seek to understand why students make certain choices while constructing the papers? As a teacher, it may be easier to perform the former but not the latter. Of course, teachers should have clear and explicit expectations, but it is also important that these communications be mutual, two-sided, allowing for negotiations between the students and the teachers.

As for the seemingly self-conflicted students’ opinion, it requires the writing teachers to be sensitive towards the individuals’ needs. Since the overall trend does not say much about each individual student. When our indirect suggestion may meet a pitfall, offer the students more guidance by showing more examples.

To overcome the time limit in grading the research projects, it may be easier for the teachers assign and grade outlines and paragraphs. Getting ourselves more involved in the students’ writing process may award us with more understanding of it while reducing the pressure for reading the final drafts. To sum up, the practice of teaching can always be honed and better with greater investment in time, attentions, and above all, passion.

Limitations and Suggestions

The findings of this study is conducive to refining teacher practice in written feedback, but its limitation is not to be ignored. To begin with, since it was conducted in a localized setting, it is not sure how much of it can generate to a boarder ESL context. Secondly, the teacher-student ratio led to uneven paired sample sizes. The number of student participants were 104, while the number of teacher participants was only eight. Therefore, it is also hard to say for sure whether the comparisons between the two data sets is significant. Finally, the nature of survey-based research is subject to the inevitable limitation of self-report data: we do not see actuality,
but a subjective reflection of it, but the scope of the current study did not me to go beyond perception to exam the actual writing samples with written feedback, but it should make a good direction for future studies. Last but not least, in this study, I interpreted the contradictory students’ opinion by speculations, but future studies should follow up with interviews or seek direct explanations in other manners from the student participants if they can generate similar findings.

A word of cautions for the future researchers in teacher written feedback: it is important to bear in mind that teacher written feedback is an integrated part of the instructional process. Therefore, to tear it away from all the other instructional practice and study it in isolation is problematic. What impact learning is a complex combination of learner motivation, choice of materials, teaching practice, teacher-student dynamic and more. This study has not explored written feedback in the dimension of that perspective, but it is a necessary topic for future research. The direction for future research on written feedback should focus on how these factors interact with each other and plays a larger role in facilitating learning in the student writers.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A STUDENT SURVEY ON TEACHER WRITTEN FEEDBACK

Student Survey on Teacher Feedback

As writing teachers, we spend hours reading and commenting students' paper. Do this 10 minutes survey to help us find out whether these comments/feedback are helpful to you as we think they are. A gift coupon was included in the end.

* Required

Click youtube to watch this video in full

http://youtube.com/watch?v=k0oHTTvMyV4

It is going to tell you a little bit of our project

Informed Consent

A student consent form can be view here: http://tinyurl.com/pubtu2q

After reviewing this consent form, please indicate whether you are interested in participating this research project.

1. Do you allow us to use your answers for research purpose? Check all that apply.

   Yes □

   No □

Now the questionaires!
We really appreciate that you take the time to answer all the questions. Therefore, we have prepared a little reward for you when you finish all the survey.

2. 1. What is your native language?

____________________________________

2. Your age (choose a category) *Mark only one oval.*

☐ 20-25
☐ 26-30
☐ 31-35
☐ Above 35

3. How long have you been in the United States?

____________________________________

4. When did you start to write school work in English? *Mark only one oval.*

☐ Never
☐ Elementary
☐ Junior high
☐ Senior high
☐ College
☐ Graduate school
☐ Other: _________

5. Some of the topics that have been covered in ESL 501 this semester are listed below. Please tell us how important each of the skills is for successful academic writing. *
6. Tell us how much feedback you have received from your teacher on the above mentioned skills. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>Not important at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction &amp; Conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis statement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points/Topic sentence (P in PIE structure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration/Evidence /synthesis (I in PIE structure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanation (E in PIE structure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formatting issues such as font, size, margin etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. What percentage of feedback given by your teacher can you understand? *Mark only one oval.*
8. Why are you not able to understand your teacher comments completely? Explain why briefly.

________________________________________________

9. What percentage of the errors in your essays are you able to correct/revise with the help of your teacher’s comments?

Mark only one oval.

☐ 90-100%
☐ 80-99%
☐ 70-79%
☐ 60-69%
☐ 50-59%
☐ 40-49%
☐ 30-39%
☐ 20-29%
☐ 10-19%
☐ 0-9%
10. Please justify your answer to the question number 9. (Tell us briefly why you chose that option)

_____________________________________________

11. How would you want your errors to be treated by your instructor? Mark only one oval.
- Pointed out without correction
- Pointed out with suggestions, not direct correction
- Pointed out with direct correction
- Not pointed out or corrected
- Depends on the errors, I want different errors to be treated differently.
- I don’t have a preference

12. How much do you agree with the following statements? Mark only one oval per row.
15. Do you have other opinion about feedback that we have not yet asked in our questionnaire? If so, tell us briefly.

Enter your email address to win a Starbucks gift card.

(To express our appreciation, we are giving out starbucks gift cards to random participants. If you wish to be included, please leave your email address here. If you don't, you can leave this question blank)
Teacher Feedback Survey

* Required

1. Where are you from?

2. How long have you been in the United States? (if you are an American, you do not need to answer this question)

3. How many years have you been teaching? *Mark only one oval.*
   - less than 1 year
   - 1-2 years
   - 2-3 years
   - 3-4 years
   - 4-5 years
   - 5-6 years
   - 6-7 years
   - 7-8 years
   - 8-9 years
   - 9-10 years
   - 10-15 years
   - 15-20 years
   - more than 20 years

5. The followings are the skills we cover in ESL 501. Tell us how important do you
think each is for successful academic writing. *

Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very important</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>Somewhat important</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>Not important at all</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction &amp; conclusion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thesis statements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Points (P in PIE structure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustration (I in PIE structure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explanations (E in PIE structure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coherence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Citation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formatting issues such as font, size, margin etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Do you think that you have given your students the right amount of feedback concerning the aforementioned skills? Check the following box to indicate your opinion. *

1 2 3 4 5

☐  ☐  ☐  ☐  ☐

7. If you are not happy with the amount of feedback concerning some areas, what are the reasons? Please tell us briefly.

8. How do you usually give comments? Mark only one oval.

☐ Point out without correction
9. What percentage of feedback do you think your students can understand? Mark only one oval.

- [ ] 90-100%
- [ ] 80-89%
- [ ] 70-79%
- [ ] 60-69%
- [ ] 50-59%
- [ ] 40-49%
- [ ] 30-39%
- [ ] 20-29%
- [ ] 10-19%
- [ ] 0-9%

10. List some possible reasons that your students may find it hard to understand all your comments.

11. What percentage of errors are your students able to correct/revise with the help of your comments? Mark only one oval.

- [ ] 90-100%
- [ ] 80-89%
- [ ] 70-79%
12. List some possible reasons that you students may find it hard to revise with your comments.

13. How much do you agree with the following statements? *Mark only one oval per row.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>agree</th>
<th>slightly agree</th>
<th>no opinion</th>
<th>slightly disagree</th>
<th>disagree</th>
<th>strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am giving my students too much praise</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am giving my students too much criticism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am being too indirect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe my feedback is very helpful to the students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think about what would help my students most before making any comments</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. Do you use a rubric for grading? *Mark only one oval.*
☐ Yes, and that comprises most or all of the feedback.

☐ Yes, but I add substantive personalized comments of my own

☐ No, I provide my own comments exclusively

☐ Not applicable because I do not provide much/any written feedback.

15. Do you have extra comments about feedback that is not elicited by our questionnaire? If so, tell us.

________________________________________

As a follow-up to this survey, we would like to conduct interviews with interested teachers to explore these topics in more depth. This interview would last about 15 minutes and be arranged at your convenience. If you would like to volunteer to be an interview subject, please indicate in the following box.

Check all that apply.

☐ Yes

Sign and date

________________________________________
You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: Randall W Sadler, Professor
Department and Institution: Department of Linguistics
Address and Contact Information:
   Office: 3054 Foreign Languages Building
   Telephone: (217) 244-2734
   Email: rsadler@illinois.edu
Sponsor: NA

Why am I being asked?
You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about the current teacher-written feedback practices in the ESL course at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. You have been asked to participate in the research because you are enrolled in such class, and your performance in such class provide important information that help us answer our research question.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

Approximately 80 subjects may be involved in this research at UIUC.

What is the purpose of this research?
The purpose of the current project is to provide insight into the current teacher-written feedback practices in our ESL writing program. The findings of this research will potentially assist instructors in adjusting their instructional strategies and techniques.

What procedures are involved?
This research is designed not to intrude your regular class activities. What you are doing for this study is mostly what you are already doing for this class. At the end of the study, you will be asked to fill out a 10-minute survey. By participating in this research you agree that the researcher may examine the multiple drafts and notes of your writing assignments.

What are the potential risks and discomforts?
To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

Are there benefits to taking part in the research?
The current project aims to promote the effectiveness of the instruction techniques of the ESL service course, and your drafts and notes are helpful indications of your learning in response to our instruction.
The findings of the current project are to be used assist instructors in adjusting their instructional strategies and techniques, and in designing course materials based on more accurate needs assessment. Your contribution potentially benefits the quality of our program and other international students enrolled in our ESL service course.

**What other options are there?**
Giving your permission is completely voluntary and you can refuse to participate or discontinue your participation at any point despite your initial consent.

**Will my study-related information be kept confidential?**
Yes, but not always. In general, we will not tell anyone any information about you. When this research is discussed or published, no one will know that you were in the study. However, laws and university rules might require us to tell certain people about you. For example, your records from this research may be seen or copied by the following people or groups:

- Representatives of the university committee and office that reviews and approves research studies, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Office for Protection of Research Subjects;
- Other representatives of the state and university responsible for ethical, regulatory, or financial oversight of research;
- Federal government regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services

All your materials, as the research data, is to be stored in a secured computer protected by passwords. Only the researcher has access to this computer and your files.

All the materials will be deleted from this computer within two years of the current project.

**What are the costs for participating in this research?**
There are no costs to you for participating in this research.

**Will I be reimbursed for any of my expenses or paid for my participation in this research?**
You will not be offered payment for being in this study.

**Can I withdraw or be removed from the study?**
If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.

The Researchers also have the right to stop your participation in this study without your consent if:

- They believe it is in your best interests;
- You were to object to any future changes that may be made in the study plan;

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**
Contact the researchers Liwen Huang or Professor Sadler at 217-974-5443 or email address: lhuang57@illinois.edu

- if you have any questions about this study or your part in it,
- if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research.

**What are my rights as a research subject?**
If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 217-333-2670 or e-mail OPRS at irb@illinois.edu
**Remember:**
Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.

I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I confirm that I am above 18 years old and I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

_________________________________________  __________________________
Signature                                      Date

_________________________________________
Printed Name

_________________________________________  __________________________
Liwen Huang                                  Date (must be same as subject’s)
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

_________________________________________
LIWEN HUANG
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent
APPENDIX D TEACHER INFORMED CONSENT

Informed consent for project: The Current Teacher-Written Feedback Practices in a US-based ESL Writing Program--A Case Study

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Researchers are required to provide a consent form such as this one to tell you about the research, to explain that taking part is voluntary, to describe the risks and benefits of participation, and to help you to make an informed decision. You should feel free to ask the researchers any questions you may have.

Principal Investigator Name and Title: Randall W Sadler, Professor Department of Linguistics 3054 Foreign Languages Building (217) 244-2734 rsadler@illinois.edu

Why am I being asked

You are being asked to be a participant in a research study about the current teacher-written feedback practices in the ESL course at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign because you are teaching this class, and your involvement in this class provide important information that help us answer our research question. Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future dealings with the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. **If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.**

Overview of the current project

The purpose of the current project is to provide insight into the current teacher-written feedback practices in our ESL writing program. The findings of this research will potentially assist instructors in adjusting their instructional strategies and techniques. This research is designed not to intrude your regular class activities. You do not have to alter any of your regular teaching activity. In the end of the study, you will be asked to fill out a 10-minute survey. By participating in this research you agree that the researcher may examine the the comments you give your students and your student’s multiple drafts.

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

The current project aims to promote the effectiveness of the written feedback of the ESL service course, and your written feedback is a helpful resource for our research question. The findings of the current project are to be used assist instructors in adjusting their instructional strategies and techniques, and to help future students as well as assist instructors in designing course materials based on more accurate needs assessment. Your contribution potentially benefits the quality of our ESL program and future international students who are to enrolled in our class.

Will my study-related information be kept confidential?

Yes, but not always. In general, we will not tell anyone any information about you. When this research is discussed or published, no one will know that you were in the study. However, laws and university rules might require us to tell certain people about you. For example, your records from this research may be seen or copied by the following people or groups:

- Representatives of the university committee and office that reviews and approves research studies, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Office for Protection of Research Subjects;
- Other representatives of the state and university responsible for ethical, regulatory, or financial oversight of research;
- Federal government regulatory agencies such as the Office of Human Research Protections in the Department of Health and Human Services
All your materials, as the research data, is to be stored in a secured computer protected by passwords. Only the researcher has access to this computer and your files. All the materials will be deleted from this computer within two years of the current project.

**Who should I contact if I have questions?**
Contact the researchers Liwen Huang or Professor Sadler at 2179745443 or email address: lhuang57@illinois.edu
- if you have any questions about this study or your part in it,
- if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research.

**What are my rights as a research subject?**
If you feel you have not been treated according to the descriptions in this form, or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, including questions, concerns, complaints, or to offer input, you may call the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS) at 217-333-2670 or e-mail OPRS at irb@illinois.edu

**Remember:**
Your participation in this research is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time without affecting that relationship.
I have read (or someone has read to me) the above information. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in this research. I will be given a copy of this signed and dated form.

__________________________________________  ________________
Signature                                     Date

__________________________________________
Printed Name

__________________________________________
Liwen Huang                                  Date (must be same as subject’s)
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

__________________________________________
LIWEN HUANG                                  Date (must be same as subject’s)
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent
APPENDIX E PARTICIPANT RECRUITING SCRIPT

For teacher participants:

Hello, fellow teachers (everybody knows me already). I am conducting research on teacher-written feedback at ESL 501 level, and I am inviting you to participate because you are instructing this class.

Participation in this research includes very minimal work outside of your regular class activities, the things you will do for this research are mostly the things that you are already doing for this class. I will collect your students’ multiple drafts and your feedback as materials for my study, and in the end, I will ask you to fill out a 10-minute survey.

Please know that your participation in this research is going to help us find out what would be more effective in terms of grading and giving feedback, so the quality of our program and future international students enrolled in our ESL service course will benefit. Everything used for this research paper will be made anonymous.

If you are interest in being a participant in this study and you are above 18 years old, I have a consent form here for you to sign. You will find a brief statement of my research purpose and description of the study on it as well. After you have read it through, please sign and date it to agree to participate. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and will not affect your grade in this class. Even if you decide to withdraw from the study after you have given your consent, you are free to do so at any point.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, I can be reached at 2179745443 or lhuang57@illinois.edu

Thank you for your attention and time.

For student participants

Hello, my name is Liwen Huang. I am a graduate student at the Master’s program of Teaching English as a Second Language at the linguistic department. I am conducting research on teacher-written feedback at ESL 501 level, and I am inviting you to participate because you are enrolled in this class.

Participation in this research includes very minimal work outside of your regular class activities, the things you will do for this research are mostly the things that you are already doing for this class. I will collect your multiple drafts as materials for my study, and in the end, I will ask you to fill out a 10-minute survey.
Please know that your participation in this research is going to help us find out what would be more effective in terms of grading and giving feedback, so the quality of our program and future international students enrolled in our ESL service course will benefit. Everything used for this research paper will be made anonymous.

If you are interested in being a participant in this study and you are above 18 years old, I have a consent form here for you to sign. You will find a brief statement of my research purpose and description of the study on it as well. After you have read it through, please sign and date it to agree to participate. Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary and will not affect your grade in this class. Even if you decide to withdraw from the study after you have given your consent, you are free to do so at any point.

If you have any questions or would like to participate in the research, I can be reached at 2179745443 or lhuang57@illinois.edu

Thank you for your attention and time.
APPENDIX F IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research
Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
528 East Green Street
Suite 203
Champaign, IL 61820

09/29/2015

Randall Sadler
Linguistics
3054 FLB
707 S Mathews Ave
M/C 168

RE: The Current Teacher-Written Feedback Practices in a US-based ESL Writing Program--A Case Study
IRB Protocol Number: 16234

EXPIRATION DATE: 09/28/2018

Dear Dr. Sadler:

Thank you for submitting the completed IRB application form for your project entitled The Current Teacher-Written Feedback Practices in a US-based ESL Writing Program--A Case Study. Your project was assigned Institutional Review Board (IRB) Protocol Number 16234 and reviewed. It has been determined that the research activities described in this application meet the criteria for exemption at 45CFR46.101(b)(1).

This determination of exemption only applies to the research study as submitted. Please note that additional modifications to your project need to be submitted to the IRB for review and exemption determination or approval before the modifications are initiated.

We appreciate your conscientious adherence to the requirements of human subjects research. If you have any questions about the IRB process, or if you need assistance at any time, please feel free to contact me at the OPRS office, or visit our website at http://oprs.research.illinois.edu.

Sincerely,

Rose St. Clair, BA
Assistant Human Subjects Research Specialist, Office for the Protection of Research Subjects

c: Liwen Huang