STUDENTS' NOTICING AND INCORPORATION OF WRITTEN FEEDBACK:

A SNAPSHOT OF ESOL WRITING INSTRUCTORS' COMMENTARY

ON ADULT ESOL STUDENTS' ESSAYS

by

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You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains. You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas. I am strong, when I am on your shoulders. You raise me up—to more than I can be.
                                        "Bless The Broken Road" by Selah

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With love, gratitude, and humility,

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ABSTRACT

STUDENTS' NOTICING AND INCORPORATION OF WRITTEN FEEDBACK:

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        Combining descriptive text analysis with qualitative interviews, the current study addresses the student-teacher written feedback interaction. Reflecting upon the existing debate within second language acquisition research, which focuses on the interface, or non-interface, of conscious and unconscious learning, the first part of the study investigates the role of noticing. Using teacher written commentary on student essays, learners are asked to identify the existence, boundaries, and nature of errors in their interviews. Student interviews are also used to articulate student perspectives on the purposes of feedback. This data illuminates differing opinions between students and teachers.

Student essays are further used to analyze the type and location of feedback teachers provide their students, as well as to discriminate the kinds of errors teachers focus on in their written commentary. By looking at first and second drafts, the study investigates the extent to which learners incorporate their teachers' commentary of linguistic features. Instructor interviews expound their reasons for providing feedback, clarify commentary on their learners' papers, and illuminate the instructors' perspectives of their error correction practices. Coding of emergent "error" categories is confirmed by the interviews and instructors' commentary on the students' essays. Seven instructors and 33 students from four post-secondary educational institutions located in the southern part of the United States participated in the study. The current study finds that instructor commentary often facilitates the student's ability to identify the existence of an error; however, it usually fails to facilitate the learner's ability to identify the boundaries or nature of an error. Additionally, 90% of linguistic-focused teacher commentary occurs intralineally, with textual markings and explicit corrections as primary types of feedback. However, textual markings are less explicit, and therefore, more frequently misinterpreted by students. Students incorrectly incorporated or did not incorporate instructor feedback 26% of the time. Teacher inconsistencies may have attributed to these difficulties.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ix

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

There is something very magical about writing; it is a form of expression that *requires* an audience. The reader must be able to interact with the author and share in the presented reality. If interaction does not occur, the text can seem illogical and hard to follow. When this happens in a learning environment, and you are the instructor, how do you guide your students? How do you address their mechanical, lexical, grammatical, or syntactic errors? Should you even comment on them? If so, what do you comment on? Where should you direct your student's attention?

For ESOL writing instructors who teach multilingual, higher education classes, these are some of the questions they have to address when considering their feedback practices. They must consider their own views of language acquisition before they can decide if they are going to provide written commentary on their students' essays. Once that decision is made, they have to decide how they will present their feedback, and how much feedback they will provide. In a study done by Dana Ferris (1995), more than 50% of the 155 university students under investigation had problems with their instructors' comments, many of them stating that they were confused about the content questions their teachers wrote on their essays. All too often the teacher's intentions for the feedback are unclear to the students, frequently resulting in students misunderstanding the purpose of these comments. For example, a teacher underlines a verb with the intention of signaling the incorrectness of its tense in relationship with the sentence's subject, but the student understands the comment to mean they have chosen the *wrong* verb. To

1

"resolve" the error, the student substitutes the verb with a synonym; however, because the student misidentified the nature of the error, the error (concord) is still not resolved.

> [Teachers] need to be very conscious of what [they] do and why when [they] provide written commentary on [their] students' writing. This awareness should lead to careful examinations of [the instructor's] commentary, both the form and the content of this commentary, to decide what is working and what is not.
>
> (Goldstein, 2004, p. 67)

Therefore, teachers must ask *themselves*, why am I providing this feedback? What am I trying to get my students to notice from my feedback? How will I make my purposes clear to them?

Often by the time international students enter into an English educational program in the United States, they have encountered English either informally or formally, and these experiences have shaped their perceptions of writing. One way they have encountered English is that they have been living in the U.S. for some time and possess various competencies of spoken English (Bachman 1990); therefore, they do not think they need to be in an ESOL writing class. Another possible way they have encountered the English language is they have studied English in their home country as part of their country's compulsory education, and carry with them the beliefs instilled in them by the many teachers who have taught them along the way- some of those being that the teacher needs to correct all of the students' errors and that the teacher is the sole audience. Or, they do not posses strong writing skills in their first language; therefore, when they enroll in English writing classes, they not only struggle with the act of writing itself, but they also struggle with the linguistic features of English. With the variety of pre-conceived attitudes of writing, attitudes towards the role of the teacher, and error correction in particular, and the

2

potential lack of experience writing in their first language, students and teachers often experience a mismatch in their expectations. They can also experience a mismatch in the way writing is taught in the ESOL classroom in the U.S. Typically, writing is taught in one of two ways: process writing or liner writing. See Figure 1 below for an illustration of the two styles of writing classes.

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┌─────────────────────────┐           ┌─────────────────────────┐
│  Student Produces a Text│- - - - - →│   Student Submits Text  │
└─────────────────────────┘           └─────────────────────────┘
             │                                      ┊
             ↓                                      ┊
┌─────────────────────────┐                         ┊
│ Teacher Provides Feedback│←- - - - - - - - - - - -┘
└─────────────────────────┘
             │
             ↓
┌─────────────────────────┐
│ Student Notices Feedback│
└─────────────────────────┘
             │
             ↓
┌─────────────────────────┐           ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Student Correctly     │──────────→│   Student Submits Text  │
│ Incorporates Feedback   │           └─────────────────────────┘
└─────────────────────────┘
```
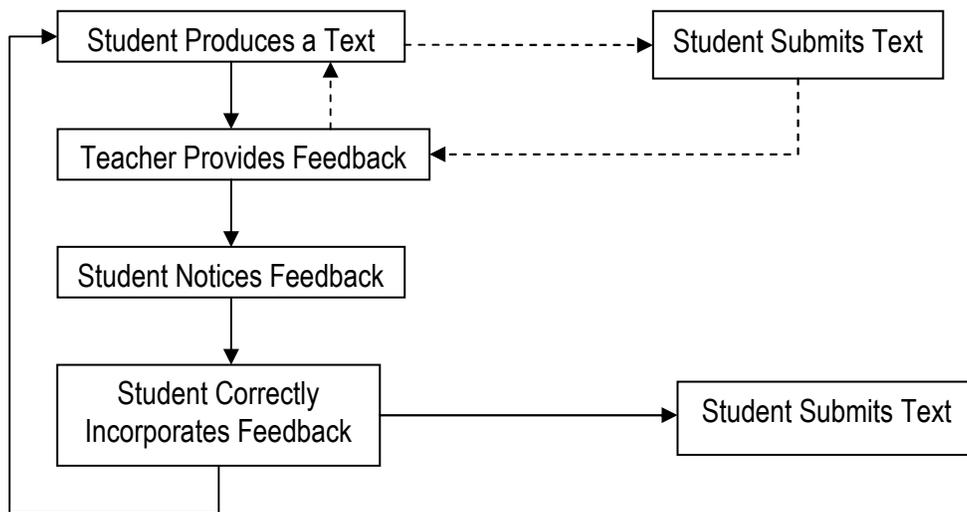
Figure 1. The ESOL Writing Classroom

In the ideal process writing classroom, illustrated with solid arrows, the student produces a text in which the instructor provides feedback. In turn, the student notices the written feedback and correctly incorporates the teacher's feedback. This cycle may repeat two or three times before the student submits the text for the last time. In the ideal linear writing classroom, illustrated by the dashed arrows, the student produces a text, submits the text to the teacher, and the teacher provides feedback. In the linear writing classroom, each essay is only handled once by both parties.

3

It is the intent of this thesis to investigate the theoretical assumptions of the second language acquisition process of written language production by looking at the pedagogical practices of ESOL instructors. The study exposes some of the theoretical assumptions by concentrating on linguistic-focused written feedback teachers provide their students, and analyses how these ESOL learners incorporate such feedback. More specifically, the study explores the extent to which teachers' methods of providing feedback facilitate their learners noticing of lexical, morphological and syntactic errors. In this way, the study hopes to gain insights into the theoretical-pedagogical relationship which unfolds in the student-teacher written feedback interaction.

Based on the findings of the study, students often do not notice feedback beyond the "existence of an error" level, which leads students to take a variety of actions when incorporating teacher commentary. However, written feedback, when combined with student-teacher conferences, greatly improves the students' understanding of the teacher's comments as both parties are able to ask clarifying and follow-up questions. Explicit corrections, defined as recasts in this study, are one of the preferred types of feedback for students because they are able to *accurately* understand what the teacher is commenting on. Resultantly, students felt more equipped to evaluate the teacher's recast to determine if it matched the student's intended meaning.

Sections 2.2 and 3.2 discuss different dimensions of the overarching research question: What written feedback do learners notice and incorporate into subsequent drafts? The literature is presented in two separate chapters because *Noticing* (2.2) focalizes on a theoretical problem, while *Incorporation* (3.2) investigates a pedagogical problem. Resultantly, each literature review

4

addresses specific research questions which requires the data to be analyzed in different ways. In methodology section 2.3, student interview data are utilized to illustrate various levels of noticing, based on the teacher feedback provided on the learners' essays. In methodology section 3.3, student interviews, teacher interviews, and student essays are analyzed to present various aspects of how and what teacher provide feedback on, and what actions students take. Corresponding result sections (2.4 and 3.4) adduce the findings. Then, Chapter 4 discusses the findings and offers some pedagogical applications, while Chapter 5 shares the study's limitations and areas for future research.

CHAPTER 2

NOTICING

<u>2.1 Introduction to Noticing</u>

The theoretical problem that this thesis investigates is the perennial debate of

unconscious and conscious learning, specifically delving into whether or not these two knowledge

sources interface with one another or operate independently. While supporters of both positions

agree that two knowledge bases exist, proponents of the interface position, e.g. Klein,

McLaughlin, and Long, state that a 'learned' linguistic structure can become automatic to a

learner, so that the learner can use the structure unconsciously. However, proponents of the

non-interface position, e.g. Krashen, argue that 'learned' knowledge and 'acquired' knowledge

cannot at any point overlap or interact with one another. If a learner 'learns' a linguistic structure,

regardless of how proficient the learner becomes, the structure remains as 'learned' knowledge.

Section 2.2 delineates specific aspects of explicit and implicit knowledge, particularly

discussing the topics of acquisition (2.2.1), input and intake (2.2.2), attention, awareness, and

noticing (2.2.3), and uptake and output (2.2.4). 2.3 provides information on the setting and

participants for the whole study (2.3.1), then discusses the data collection procedures (2.3.2) and

the analytical procedures used for the student interviews (2.3.3). The results of the student

interviews, where learners articulate different levels of noticing, appear in 2.4.

2.2 Literature Review on the Acquisition Process

The ensuing sections attempt to illustrate the difficulties second language acquisition (SLA) researchers have in defining the acquisition process for ESOL learners.

2.2.1 Acquisition and Learning

Several SLA researchers have attempted to answer the question "What is acquisition?" Below, Krashen, Klein, and McLaughlin are the primary researchers discussed as they attempt to articulate answers to this question.

Krashen's Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, first expressed in the mid 1970s, distinguishes between second language 'acquisition' and second 'language' learning. 'Acquisition' is subconscious, typically occurring in "naturalistic" environments where the learner is focused on communication. Krashen states that 'acquisition' is the possible result of comprehensible input, that knowledge which is one level above the student's current level of knowledge. 'Learning', on the other hand, is conscious, typically occurring in the traditional classroom environment where students are explicitly exposed to grammatical rules and language structures. For Krashen, 'acquisition' and 'learning' develop different aspects of a learner's language, and in turn the learner interacts with the linguistic knowledge obtained during these processes differently. 'Acquired' language is what a learner produces, while 'learned' language monitors the learner's production to help ensure that the utterance is grammatically well-formed. "'Acquisition' is responsible for our ability to use language in both production and comprehension, while conscious 'learning' serves only as an editor or monitor, making changes in the form of output under certain, very limited conditions" (Krashen, 1984, p. 21). In particular those conditions

are: 1) the learner has enough time, 2) the learner is focused on form (not meaning), and 3) the learner knows the linguistic rule.

Like Krashen, Klein (1986) also bases his distinction of the two knowledge sources on learner consciousness, labeling the two bodies of knowledge as 'spontaneous learning' and 'guided learning'. For him, spontaneous learning "is used to denote the acquisition of a second language in everyday communication, in a natural fashion, free from systematic guidance" (p. 16). In spontaneous learning the focus is on communication, not on learning linguistic forms or partaking in metalinguistic reflection, as typical of a language teaching environment. Through these "everyday communication" opportunities, the learner gains implicit knowledge on the target language rules, and encounters the language based on the types of communiqué the learner experiences on a particular day. Conversely, guided learning "refers to learning that is open to *systematic* and *intentional* influence" (Klein, 1986, p. 18, *emphasis in original*). Guided learning represents a teaching environment where the learner explicitly gains knowledge about the language by being supplied with predetermined materials that have been selected and ordered on the basis of difficulty and linguistic relevance; the instructor presents these materials to the learner as "digested" input. However, despite the fact that Klein (1986) identifies two knowledge bases, he argues that the parameters established for spontaneous learning and guided learning facilitate each other's development. "We do not intend to follow Krashen's distinction [between 'acquisition' and 'learning'] since there is no clear evidence that the processes are basically different" (p. 20). Ellis (1994) reinforces Klein's contention that conscious and subconscious learning interface with one another when he concisely states Krashen's position.

Whereas the claim that there are two types of knowledge is not controversial, Krashen's insistence that 'learned' knowledge is completely separate and cannot be converted into 'acquired' knowledge is. This position has become known as the *non-interface position*. Krashen argues that 'acquired knowledge' can *only* be developed when the learner's attention is focused on message conveyance, and that neither practice nor error correction enables 'learned knowledge' to become 'acquired'. Furthermore, he claims that utterances are initiated by the 'acquired' system and that the 'learned' system only comes into play when learners *monitor* the output from it.

(Ellis, 1994, p. 356, *emphasis in original*)

Consider the writing classroom for a moment: the teacher designs an essay assignment, a learner writes an essay, the teacher marks grammatical errors, the learner reviews the corrections, the learner makes changes in a second draft. According to Krashen's view of the acquisition process, none of the language used by the student as a result of the teacher's commentary in the second draft can ever be considered 'acquired' language because the corrections are not the result of a communication-focused interaction. Instead, the language changes are the result of applying explicit knowledge, or what Krashen considers 'learned' knowledge, and what has been 'acquired' can never be 'learned'. This is why Krashen's view is considered a 'non-interface position'. However, according to Klein's view of the acquisition process, the input provided by the teacher has potential to become 'acquired' knowledge.

The interface position that Klein posits is also supported by McLaughlin (1978). However, contrary to *both* Krashen and Klein, McLaughlin argues that the conscious-unconscious distinction is inappropriate because it is difficult to assess whether or not learners

are operating consciously or subconsciously. Therefore, McLaughlin (1978) suggests that the question of acquisition be approached from a general human information processing theory perspective. His distinction is 'controlled' and 'automatic' processing. The advantage of this distinction over the conscious-subconscious one, McLaughlin asserts, is that the 'control processing'-'automatic-processing' distinction is based on *behaviors*, claims about which can be falsifiable, not inner states of consciousness. "A *controlled process* is a temporary sequence of nodes activated by the individual utilizing short-term [memory]" (p. 319, *emphasis in original*). McLaughlin explains that controlled processes require active attention which is contained within short-term memory and regulate the transfer of information from short-term to long-term memory; because they are responsible for this transfer and because learning, according to human information processing theory, is understood to be the transfer of information from short term to long term memory, McLaughlin's 'controlled processes' underlie Krashen's 'learned' knowledge. "An *automatic process* is defined as a sequence of nodes that nearly always become active in response to a particular input configuration and that is activated without the necessity of active control or attention by the individual" (p. 319, *emphasis in original*). Automatic processes are part of an individual's long term memory, as they rely on an established set of "associative connections" and do not require active attention, as such McLaughlin's 'automatic processes' underlie Krashen's 'acquired' knowledge. McLaughlin argues that "controlled processes lay down the "stepping stones" for automatic-processing" (p. 322). In this way, McLaughlin argues that 'learned' knowledge can become 'acquired' knowledge, and thus demonstrates his support of an interface position.

10

These two knowledge sources feed into the development of a learner's interlanguage. Selinker (1972) defines interlanguage as a linguistic system separate from the learner's first language and second language systems which develops for the learner as a result of hypothesis formation and testing. "Through error analyses of speech and writing samples of learners at various stages, researchers have found that interlanguages reflect systematic patterns of error and communication strategies. Many of these errors are developmental and will eventually disappear if the learner receives sufficient appropriate input" (Schulz, 1991, p. 19). Interlanguage theory greatly impacted the field of second language acquisition because it provides an indication that ESOL learners are drawing from a separate mental grammar to formulate their L2 production. Understanding how such a formulation of mental grammar takes place requires a discussion of the role of input and intake.

2.2.2 Input and Intake

Input and intake are two key terms in second language acquisition literature that grew out of a greater understanding of how individuals learn language. Ellis (1994) notes the following:

> The results of error analysis were used to refute behaviorists' views of L2 learning, which
>
> were dominant [in the 1960s and 1970's]. According to these [views], L2 learning took
>
> place in the same way as any kind of other learning- it involved procedures such as
>
> imitation, repetition, and reinforcement, which enabled learners to develop 'habits' of the
>
> L2. The study of error showed that although many errors were caused by transferring L1
>
> "habits", many more were not; learners often contributed creatively to the process of

11

learning. [These studies] also indicated that learners appeared to go through stages of

acquisition.

(Ellis, 1994, p.19)

One of those "stages of acquisition" to which Ellis (1994) refers, Pit Corder (1967) named intake.

However, before a learner could utilize intake, input was necessary. "Input refers to what is

available to the learner, whereas intake refers to what is actually internalized" (Gass & Selinker,

2001, p. 260). Therefore, the written feedback provided by the teacher can serve as a form of

input; however, unless it is internalized by the learner, it cannot be acquired nor can it become

intake. Gass & Selinker's (2001) definition of intake is reinforced by Ellis (1994) when he states,

intake is the "information stored in temporary memory which may or may not be subsequently

accommodated in the interlanguage system" (p. 361).

Krashen states that input can be supplied to learners in many different forms; however,

the type of input that facilitates acquisition, he claims, is comprehensible. Krashen's Input

Hypothesis centers around four main principles. First, it posits that in order for language to be

acquired, learners must be supplied with comprehensible input. Comprehensible input ($i + 1$) is

that language which is slightly beyond the existing knowledge of the learner, where "i" represents

the learner's current knowledge, and "$i+ 1$" represents the language the learner is exposed to

which is new for the learner. Secondly, "comprehensible input is necessary for second language

acquisition, but it is not sufficient. In some cases, input is provided and understood, but does not

result in acquisition" (Krashen, 1984, p. 22). Therefore, Krashen argues, input becomes

comprehensible when it is simplified and when it is accompanied by contextual and metalinguistic

cues. It is not necessary to supply learners with linguistic-focused input on the language forms

12

and structures they are studying; it is only necessary to supply learners with input. Lastly, "learner production does not contribute to acquisition" (Ellis, 1994, p. 273).

Not all researchers agree with all aspects of Krashen's Input Hypothesis. Long's perspective differs with Krashen's Input Hypothesis most substantially in his claim that input needs to be simplified, because while Long acknowledges that the above factors contribute to comprehensible input, he argues that interactional modifications are more important for the learner than simplified input. For Long (1983), interactional modifications encompass linguistics acts such as negotiation of meaning in which both interlocutors experience a communicative breakdown and must work *together* in order to repair it. These negotiated interactions require one to modify his or her own production in order to be comprehended by the other interlocutor. Long (1983) argues that these interactional modifications facilitate acquisition because the existence of a communicative breakdown forces learners to notice ill-formed hypotheses in their interlanguages; when the input supplied by the other interlocutor does not match the producer's production, this breakdown stimulates a re-evaluation of the hypothesis. The attention which Long alludes to requires further discussion to unfold the relationships attention, awareness and noticing have in language acquisition.

2.2.3 Attention, Awareness, and Noticing

As indicated by Krashen, Klein, and McLaughlin, language learning requires attention. Long's interactional input hypothesis also confirms that attention is required; however, he also claims that through interaction, learners notice mismatches between their interlanguages and the target language. Schmidt further develops the role noticing plays in acquisition in his hypothesis. According to Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt 1990, 1995, 2001; Schmidt & Frota, 1986),

input can only be processed as intake if a learner consciously notices the grammatical form. Schmidt (1990) distinguishes three senses of 'conscious': 'consciousness as awareness', 'consciousness as intention', and 'consciousness as knowledge'. Within 'consciousness as awareness' there are three levels which delineate this sense of 'conscious': 'perception' is the first level, 'noticing' is the second level, and 'understanding' is the third level. According to Schmidt (1990), "perception implies mental organization and the ability to create internal representations of external events" (p. 132). In other words, the learner is consciously aware of a stimulus. The difference between 'perception' and 'noticing' is that the learner consciously attends to the stimuli. When a learner 'understands' the stimuli, Schmidt ascertains that the learner is engaging in problem-solving and is conscious of his or her engagement. The second sense of conscious, 'consciousness as intention' is different from 'consciousness as awareness' in that 'consciousness as intention' implies some kind of action taken by the learner. Schmidt (1990) states that "we often become aware of things we do not intend to notice" (p. 133); thereby reinforcing that 'consciousness as awareness' is more of a mental "thinking", whereas 'consciousness as noticing" is more concerned with behavior. Finally, 'consciousness as knowledge' relates back to the conscious-subconscious distinction articulated in 2.2.1. It is the level of automatic processing, to put it in McLaughlin's terms. Combining all of these senses of consciousness into one unit, Schmidt is arguing that a language learner must be actively involved in his or her learning. "Language learning involves more than reproducing from memory what one has noticed and locally understood on particular occasions. Once learners have taken in some part of the input, something goes on in the learner's mind that goes beyond the data presented, a process variously described as hypothesis formation" (Schmidt, 1990, p. 145).

Schmidt's articulation reinforces Selinker's (1972) construct of interlanguage, as well as Corder's (1967) concept of intake.

In Schmidt and Frota's (1986) diary study, they test the relationship between noticed input, intake and hypothesis formation. The most significant result of Schmidt and Frota's experiment is that when a learner notices a difference between the input he or she has received and the output the learner typically produces, the learner must consciously compare the noticed input with his or her own interlanguage production, a process they coined as 'noticing the gap'. Schmidt and Frota (1986) argue that learners who engage in this process facilitate their language acquisition because noticed input becomes intake. Contrary to Krashen's Input Hypothesis which posits that comprehensible input facilitates intake, in Schmidt and Frota's (1986) experiment, "forms that were present in comprehensible input did not show up [in the learner's production] until they had been noticed" (Ellis, 1994, p. 361). As such, a teacher could comment on a subject-verb agreement error, for example, within a student's essay, but until the student noticed what the comment was referring to (the nature of the error), the student would not likely attend to the feedback, incorrectly incorporate the feedback into a second draft, or correctly incorporate the feedback but not understand why a correction was necessary.

The "noticing of stimuli makes it potentially available for inclusion in long-term memory and for further processing…hence it is a requisite for learning" (Philp, 2003, pp. 101-102). Izumi's research (2002), based on cognitive psychology and SLA theory, adds further support to Philp's claim by stating "attention is necessary for learning to take place" (p. 542). Noticing, elucidated by Schmidt, requires focused attention and awareness on behalf of the learner. Tomlin and Villa (1994) subdivide attention into three parts: alertness, orientation, and detection.

'Alertness' is defined as the general readiness a learner has for dealing with input: learners have to be ready to receive and process the stimuli. 'Orientation', which Tomlin and Villa (1994) argue is more important than alertness, is what directs the learner's attentional resources to classify the sensory information and prioritize the input. Finally, 'detection' refers to the "cognitive registration of sensory stimuli [and is] the process that selects, or engages, a particular and specific bit of information" (p. 192). They claim that alertness and orientation only facilitate detection, but detection is necessary for learning. Robinson (1995) challenged Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis and Tomlin and Villa's definition of attention. He argues that not only does a learner need to notice the linguistic input (Noticing Hypothesis) and select a particular linguistic feature (detection), but the learner also needs to *actively interact* with the input.

Simard and Wong (2001) further expand Tomlin and Villa's (1994) definition of attention when they suggest that "alertness, orientation, detection and awareness as… coexisting and interacting in graded levels" (p. 119). Noticing, then, can be paralleled to detection, and can encompass several levels of awareness. That is to say, learners can notice the existence of an error, but not be aware of the boundaries or nature of it. Conversely, learners could notice the boundaries of an error, but falsely identify the existence or nature of it. If this is true, then the written feedback provided by the teacher may signal to the learner that there is a mismatch between the learner's interlanguage and the target language. However, this feedback may not be noticed on multiple levels of awareness, and thus may not be perceived by the learner as an opportunity for intake, uptake or output.

<u>2.2.4 Uptake and Output</u>

Lyster and Ranta (1997) claim uptake "refers to a student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterance" (p. 49). According to this understanding, uptake is a conscious process and the result of a student-teacher corrective feedback interaction. Ellis, Basturkmen, and Loewen (2001) claim that uptake is not reactionary to teacher corrective feedback, as proposed by Lyster and Ranta, but rather argue that "uptake is a student move… [which occurs when] learners have demonstrated a gap in their knowledge (e.g. by making an error, by asking a question, or by failing to answer a teacher's question)" (p. 286). According to this definition, uptake is the result of a student "noticing the gap" in his or her production. Ellis et al. (2001) posit that uptake can be considered successful when a learner can demonstrate the correct form of a linguistic form automatically and without prompting. Uptake, then, is that knowledge which becomes part of the learner's long-term memory.

Therefore, one point of view is that uptake is 'acquired' language; as such it is the language that learners produce, or output. Krashen's Output Hypothesis defines output in terms of 'output plus correction'. In the writing classroom, output plus correction can manifest itself in the forms of self, peer, or teacher feedback. Learners produce a text in which they hypothesis-test grammatical rules or language features in their production. Then these hypotheses about the written language are either confirmed or disconfirmed by the audience, for a U.S. writing class, this would be the reader(s) of the essay. For classes engaged in peer feedback, confirmations and disconfirmations would come from the peer's comments; if collaborative feedback is not part of the class, then the instructor's feedback would serve this function. Swain's (1985) notion of

comprehensible output compounds the idea of output in that Swain (1985) argues that production only aids in acquisition when a learner is pushed.   If a learner is not pushed, it is Swain's claim that production will not facilitate acquisition.

> Both versions of the output hypothesis attribute considerable importance to feedback, both direct and indirect. In the case of 'output plus correction' feedback is necessary to supply learners with metalinguistic information, while in the case of 'comprehensible output' it is necessary to push learners to improve the accuracy of their production in order to make themselves understood.

(Ellis, 1994, p. 282)

The gap in the literature is that the four components of the acquisition process aforementioned focus on spoken discourse literature. There has been little empirical evidence on how these components could be applied to the writing classroom. As such, the question as to how written feedback on ESOL learners' essays facilitates such processes is a relevant one to address. The current study poses the following research question to investigate the assumptions of noticing for the writing classroom (the first of four research questions):

1)   To what extent can an ESOL learner identify the existence, boundary, and nature of an error based on the written feedback received for a given error by his or her writing instructor?

2.3 Methodology for Noticing

Language learning requires the development of both organizational and pragmatic competence (Bachman, 1990). A learner needs not only to know what to produce in a given language they must also know how to produce it appropriately for a given context. Since it is not

possible to adequately discuss all aspects or all contexts of language learning at one time, this study focuses on organizational competence within a post-secondary, ESOL academic writing context. More specifically, while organizational competence is comprised of grammatical and textual competencies, the main interests of this study are vocabulary, morphology, and syntax, as these are the instructors' foci in their written feedback.

To address the research questions proposed throughout the thesis, the current study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods. As Snow (1999) points out, while the broadest interpretation of "qualitative methods" can be applied to many data collection and analytic procedures which are not undeviatingly tied to survey research, the use of statistics, and experimental laboratory research, this study has delimited its qualitative data collection and analysis to student and teacher interviews. Dushku (2000) states that interviews can be "used to elicit qualitative data through a social interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee(s), [and as a result] interviewing can provide information on reported behavior, attitudes, and beliefs, and contribute to an in-depth understanding of research participants' perspectives or experiences" (Dushku, 2000, p. 763). In order to gain an in-depth understanding, it was paramount to ask the learners if they noticed their instructors' written feedback, and if so, could they articulate the existence, boundary and nature of the error the written commentary intended to indicate.

2.3.1 Setting and Participants

Two community colleges and two universities in the southern part of the United States participated in the study. The four schools are located in three counties of a major metropolitan area. The participants included seven instructors and 33 students. Table 1 below presents

demographic information on the participants from each school. Pseudonyms are used in place of

actual names to preserve the confidentiality of the participants.

Table 1. Sample Size and Participants

School Type	Instructor/ Gender	Total No of Students/ Class	Total No. of Participants	Gender of Participants
Post-secondary institution 1	Roshan, F	17	7	1 M, 6 F
	John, M	11	4	1 M, 3 F
Post-secondary institution 2	James, M	11	3	2 M, 1 F
	Amisha, F	17	8	3 M, 5 F
Post-secondary institution 3	Olivia, F	12	3	1 M, 2 F
	Grace, F	14	6	4 M, 2 F
Post-secondary institution 4	Christine, F	9	2	1 M, 1 F
TOTALS	2 M, 5 F	91	33	13 M, 20 F

As shown in Table 1, 33 students volunteered to participate in the study from a total population

size of 91 students. Of those 33, 1.54 times as many female students participated in the study as

compared with male student volunteers. As for the seven instructor volunteers, there is a 2.5:1

ratio of females to males.

All of the student participants are adult non-native English Speakers of Other Languages

(ESOL) and advanced level writing students. Students represent four regions of the world and

come from 18 different countries (Table 2).

Table 2. Regions and Countries Represented by Student Participants

Africa	3	The Americas	11	Asia	15	Middle East	4
Ethiopia	2	Brazil	1	China	2	Jordan	1
Nigeria	1	Colombia	1	Japan	1	Turkey	1
		Mexico	7	Nepal	1	Saudi Arabia	1
		Peru	1	South Korea	5	Syria	1
		Venezuela	1	Taiwan	3		
				Thailand	2		
				Vietnam	1		

The Americas and Asia are the regions most represented, with Mexico and South Korea being the countries most predominant. The student participants speak 12 different first languages: Arabic, Amharic, Cantonese, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin Chinese, Nepali, Portuguese, Spanish, Thai, Vietnamese, and Yoruba. 48% of the students have resided in the U.S. between two to six years; however, 30% of the students have lived in the U.S. for less than two years, while 21% of the students have lived in the U.S. for over 10 years. The students' educational backgrounds ranged from having earned a GED to earning Masters' degrees from their home countries. Additionally, there are a variety of reasons for the students being enrolled in the ESOL classes. Many students stated they want to improve their English, while others are focused on career goals. Most of the students are required to complete the course they were enrolled in, and pass the appropriate examination, before they would be eligible to pursue non-ESOL courses.

With regard to the instructor participants, all have earned at least one Masters' degree; of the seven, three also have earned doctorates. Five of the instructors are native English speakers from the United States. Two of the instructors are non-native English speakers, one from Iran and the other India, speaking Farsi and Tamil respectively. Both have resided in the U.S. for over 25 years.

2.3.2 Data Collection

Data were collected during the spring 2007 semester. The researcher photocopied students' papers with their teacher's written comments on them, which the students had written over the course of the semester. The papers collected were regular class assignments, not assigned by the researcher nor developed from research prompts. Interviews of the student and teacher participants were conducted after papers had been collected so as to ensure that the

written comments on the papers accurately reflected the practices of the instructors. All interviews were video-recorded; student interviews lasted approximately one half hour, while instructor interviews were approximately one hour.

2.3.3 Data Analysis

Analyzing data for this part of the study required transcribing student interviews and identifying instances where the student articulated a level of noticing. Three possible levels of noticing could be identified by the learner: *existence*, as in the student's ability to articulate that an error existed in a given utterance; *boundary*, as in the student's ability to identify the parameters of the error; *nature*, as in the student's ability to identify the root cause of the error. While student interviews focused around five questions, only three are applicable to noticing and presented here:

1. Pointing to a specific teacher comment- **Why did the teacher mark this?**

2. Pointing to the same comment- **What specific words or parts of a word is the comment talking about?** That is, does this comment relate only to this word or does the comment relate to other parts of the sentence as well?

3. Pointing to the same comment- **What type of error is this?**

The purpose of this questioning is to determine if students can identify the existence of an error (question 1), the boundaries of that error (question 2), and the nature of that error (question 3) as a result of the teacher's written comments on a particular error. When an ensuing draft is available, the same phrase is investigated to see if the student can articulate the reason behind his or her draft 2 reformulation. During the interview, students are shown their essays and asked questions which elicit the student's articulation of the three levels of noticing. Figure 2 is an excerpt of a student's essay.

Figure 2. Example of Teacher Feedback: Desta

Desta's interview (1) below revolves around the utterance: "in the United States everyone has to finish high school before they choose their major." Specifically, the interview focuses on "they" and "their" of this utterance (Highlighting done by researcher). The interview below illustrates the thinking process of the student in her attempt to understand why the teacher marked this utterance. Furthermore, the interview exemplifies the language I use in determining when a student identifies the existence, boundary, or nature of the error. When the student identifies a given level of noticing, that level is denoted on the far right side of the interview in parentheses. The researcher's comments (R) are italicized, while the student's comments (S) are in plain text.

The teacher identifies the boundary of the pronoun agreement between "everyone" (singular) and "they" and "their" (plural) by drawing a line between "everyone" and "they". Then, the instructor provides explicit corrections of "they" and "their" in their singular forms to illustrate the nature of the error. However, as evidenced by Desta's interview, the student fails to identify both the boundary and the nature of the error. When a student *attempts* to identify a level of noticing, but fails to identify it correctly, the line where the false identification occurred will be labeled, for example, (false identification: existence of error). If a student does not make any attempt to identify a level of noticing, no designation is given within the interview.

23

(1) *R: What's going on here?*
S: Most of the time she tells us to use plural, otherwise we have to use her or she.
(Student reads silently) I think I don't have to generalize   (existence of error)
R: What do "their" and "they" refer to in this sentence?
S: It's the same thing.
R: What are these called (pointing): they, their, he, she?
S: It's a pronoun.
R: Okay. Good. What do pronouns do?
S: They must describe a noun… no, no, no… they take the place of noun.
R: Okay. So what noun are these pronouns taking the place of?
S: (No response)
R: Can you show me a noun in this sentence?
S: "the United States"
R: Okay. So does "they" refer to "the United States"?
S: No. I'm talking about the people.
R: Okay. So what word in this sentence refers to people?
S: Oh… ya, now I think I got it. I'm talking about United States, I don't think I have to
talk about, you know, one sentence. So if I use this pronoun it refers to this
(States).

(false identification: boundary of error)
R: States? Okay.
S: Ya. (Student reads then begins to rephrase utterance). in the United States
everyone has to finish high school before the students choose their major. I think
that makes more sense.

(false identification: nature of error)

In this example, the student identifies the existence of the error when she states that she has to

use plurals. However, because she is never able to correctly identify the boundaries of the error,

"everyone" and "they", "their", she also is never able to correctly identify the nature of the error.

Additionally, she does not seem to notice the line drawn by the instructor linking "everyone" to

"they" and "their"; her final reformulation confirms this observation.

In the results presented below, both the writing sample and student's excerpted interview

are presented. Additionally, within each interview identifies the student's answers that address

the existence, boundaries and nature of the error as (theoretically) indicated by the teacher's

written comments.

<u>2.4 Results for Noticing</u>

This results section is qualitative, and presents the data received from student interviews based on the teacher's comments on the students' essays. As illustrated in 2.3.3, each student interview is accompanied with the relevant section of the student's essay. These two components are presented as a means of providing context for the instructor's comments focused on during the interview, and the student's comments about the instructor's feedback or the student's comments about his or her own writing. Below are three excerpts which illustrate the most common ways these instructors provided their written feedback: Underlining (2.4.1), Underlining and Abbreviation (2.4.2), and Underlining, Abbreviation, and Explicit Correction (2.4.3).

<u>2.4.1 Underlining</u>

In the excerpt in Figure 3, the instructor underlines seven different kinds of errors; only the interview segments corresponding to the first three underlines are presented. In the first underline (line 1), the teacher indicates the need for a comma, to appropriately combine the two independent clauses. For this error, the student correctly identifies its existence, boundary, and nature (interview 2). In the second underline (line 3), the instructor indicates verb form error; however, the student never correctly identifies the boundaries of the error, and falsely identifies the nature of the error (interview 3). In the third underline (line 4), the instructor indicates the incorrect use of the pronoun "it". For this error, the student correctly identifies all three levels of noticing (interview 4).

The media should be used as a tool of information and people should not

believe everything they see on TV or read in newspaper and even magazines

because many times the media is bias, and might inform something bad about one

politician, candidate or even a president, just to make it look as a fool, or just to

giving him bad reputation. Do not let the media influence on you, make your own

decisions, and give your own opinions.
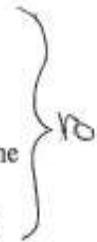
Figure 3. Underlining: Jose

The interview below discusses the first three intralineal comments centering around "tool of

information and people" (2), "the media is bias, and might" (3), and "just to make it look as a fool"

(4).

(2) *R: What do you notice about this part of your paper?*
S: It's kind of messy.
R: Tell me what you see.
S: Punctuation and word choice errors.
R: Where's punctuation and where's word choice?
S: I think there's a comma right there. (Student reads text) The media should be
used as a tool of information,   (existence & nature of error)
R: Why would you put a comma right there (in between "information" and "and")?
S: because it's a different idea referring to the same paragraph to this one right here.
It's a linking thing.   (boundary of error)
R: Conjunction?
S: Ya…

Because the entire paragraph is written as one sentence, when the student states that a comma

is needed in between "information" and "and", he correctly identified the boundary. Jose also

correctly identified the existence and nature of this punctuation error.

(3) *R: Alright, so you'd put a comma there and then what?*
S: (Student silently reads text)… a period right there (after bias).
(false identification: existence of error)
R: Yeah, why do you say that?
S: 'cause I'm gonna start off with a different idea. Actually, semi colon.
(false identification: boundary & nature of error)

26

For this error, the student thinks that the underline relates to the comma after "bias"; however, the underline refers to the tense of "bias". Never does the student identify the existence, boundaries or nature of the real error.

> **(4)** *R: Can you read this (the paragraph) out loud for me?*
> S: (Student reads)
> *R: What does this underline refer to? (third underline)*
> S: "it" isn't supposed to be there. It's gotta be "he", I think. It's referring to one of these persons (points to "politician", "candidate" and "president")
>   (existence & boundary of error)
> *R: Okay. So you would put "he" there.*
> S: No, just to make "him".   (nature of error)
> *R: Him. Okay. Why "him" instead of "he"*
> S: just to make him, not just to make "he"… it makes sense

The student correctly identifies the existence of the error when he states that "it isn't supposed to be there"; he also correctly identifies the boundary of the error when he states that "it" refers to "politician", "candidate" and "president". As for the nature of the error, he initially states that "it" needs to be changed to "he", then he self-corrected himself by saying that "it" needs to be replaced by "him". Though he correctly identified the nature of the error and comes up with the correct answer, he is not able to explain that "him" is needed (and not "he") because the sentence calls for a pronoun in the object position.

2.4.2 Underlining and Abbreviation

In Figure 4, the teacher identifies three errors. Two errors are indicated in the first underline (line 2), where the underline (theoretically) directs the student's attention to "he" and the comma's misuse. However, the student falsely identifies the nature of the pronoun error and never identifies the existence of the punctuation error. In the second underline (line 3), the instructor provides both an underline to indicate the existence of an error, as well as the

27

abbreviation "voice" to indicate the nature of the error. However, the student falsely identifies the nature of error to be "word choice".

TV channels tend to favor one political party or another. A person who always watches or gets information from only one radio or TV station, he will eventually become sympathized with the same political affiliation the source does. The media

Figure 4. Underlining and Abbreviation Use: Jose

Jose's interview (5) below focuses on the sentence "A person who always watches or gets information from only one radio or TV station, he will eventually become sympathized with the same political affiliation the source does". Interview (5) discusses "he", while interview (6) focuses on "become sympathized"; these labels are designated above the corresponding interview excerpts. Additionally, where indicated by the student, the three levels of noticing (existence, boundary, and nature) are marked.

> **(5)** (He)
> *R: What does this underline mean?*
> S: 'he' doesn't necessarily specify 'A person', so I think I had to put 'he or she'.
>   Instead of 'person' put 'people' and then after comma, put 'they' instead of 'he'
> <div align="right">(false identification: nature of error)</div>
> *R: Why do you think [your teacher] put an underline there?*
> S: Because 'he' wouldn't refer to 'person'; it's gotta be like 'he or she' or something.
> *R: When you look at [this sentence] how do you know what the underline refers to?*
> S: no response
> *R: When [your teacher] underlined the word 'he', how did you know that it referred*
>   *back to 'a person'?*
> S: Because it's the same sentence, still talking about the same person
> <div align="right">(boundary of error)</div>
> --break--

In interview (5), when Jose says that "he" refers to "a person" is correct; however, the error is not that a pronoun incorrectly refers back to the subject, the error is that a pronoun is not necessary and needs to be deleted. Additionally, the comma needs to be deleted, but the student never

28

identifies the existence of this error. However, the student does correctly identify the boundary of

the error when he states that it is a sentence-level error.

(6) (Become sympathized)
  R: Can you tell me why [your teacher] marked that ("become sympathized")?
  S: Might be that it's not the right word or I didn't describe as it should be… I don't
      really know.
                                         (false identification: nature of error)
  R: Do you know what he wants you to look at?
  S: No.
  *R: So the fact that [your teacher] underlined this ("become sympathized") isn't
      helpful?*
  S: hummm
  R: What does this underline [mean to] you?
  S: I would say word choice or something like that. I really don't know.
  *R: When you were looking over your paper, did you notice one of these more than
      the other (the underline markings of "he" and "become sympathized")?*
  S: Ya.
  R: Why?
  S: Because of the big line…
  R: Ok, so the length of the line [helps you to notice].
                                 (existence of error: both "he" and "become sympathized")
  *R: Do you think that [your teacher] wanted you to focus on the words "become
      sympathized" or just "become" or just "sympathized"…*
  S: both   (false identification: boundary of error)
  R: or other words as well?
  S: other words as well.   (boundary of error)
  R: Can you tell me which ones?
  S: I think he wanted me to express this with a different word, just like "sympathize",
      but I really don't know.

In interview (6), Jose also falsely identifies the nature of the error. The textual marking "voice"

below the underline never gets mentioned by the student, and it could be assumed that he did not

notice this part of the comment because the student stated that he made a word choice error.

However, it may also be possible that he is not familiar with the metalinguistic terminology and

therefore intentionally ignored the comment. Unlike in interview (5), the student does not correctly

identify the boundaries of this error either. In the latter half interview (6) Jose attempts to identify

the boundaries by saying the underline applied to "other words as well", but then when asked to identify what those other words were, the student was unable to do so. As for existence of both of these errors, the student explicitly articulates existence in the middle of the "becomes sympathized" section.

2.4.3 Underlining and Explicit Correction

In this example, the focus of the interview is on "start" (end of line 1) and "spend" (middle of line 2). With regard to these two errors, the instructor employs two types of feedback to indicate the errors to the learner. For the first error, the teacher makes the explicit correction "ed", underlines the correction and draws an arrow, directing the student's attention to "twentieth centtury". For the second error, the instructor only underlines the error.
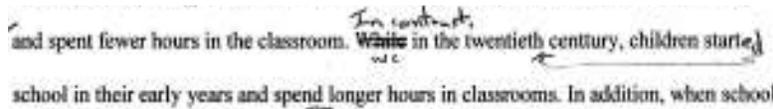
Figure 5. Underlining and Explicit Correction: Luz Elena

Figure 5 provides illustrates the teacher commentary on Luz Elena's writing. Interview (7) focuses on the verb "start", while interview (8) centers around the verb "spend".

(7) (Start)
   R: *What does this line and arrow mean?*
   S: I have to move this word (started) over here (in between "twentieth" and "century")
   R: *So if I said, "In contrast, children started in the twentieth century school…"*
   S: No… (35 seconds of silence passed) Okay… In contrast, in the twentieth century children started school…umhum…   (existence of error)
   R: *Okay, keep reading…*
   --break—
   R: *Why did [your instructor] put "ed" here (at the end of "start")?*
   S: because of my verb tense   (nature of error)
   R: *What was wrong with "start"?*
   S: I'm talking about something that has already happened
                                        (boundary of error)
   R: *So the children are no longer little; they are grown.*

S: Ya, umhum

Luz Elena correctly identifies all three levels of noticing for the error "start". The interview

continues in interview (8), where she discusses the error "spend".

(8)   (Spend)
S: In contrast, in the twentieth century children started school in their early years
and spend longer hours in classrooms.
R: *(thinking that I heard "spenT", I asked:) Can you read this word for me?*
S: spend… it has to be spended   (existence of error)
R: *(thinking that I still heard spenT, I wanted to clarify) So you need to put a "t"
here (pointing to the end of spend)*
S: Ya… "ed"… spended
R: *So what does this underline mean? (pointing to spend)*
S: I don't memorize all the signs that he do so I have to check my paper that he
give us
R: *Does an underline always mean the same thing?*
S: Most of the time yes
--break--
R: *Do you know if it (the underlined error) is just "spend" or "spend" and "longer"
or something else?*
S: No. Well… no "longer"
R: *So it's just "spend"*
S: umhum… something with "spend"

In interview (8), Luz Elena correctly identifies the existence and nature of the error 'spend' but is

unable to identify the boundary or nature of the error of "spend". At one point, she comes close

to identifying the nature when she says "Ya, ed… 'spended'"; however, in the conclusion of this

section she simply resolves to say "something with 'spend', indicating that she really is not sure

what the nature of the error is.

While this thesis cannot make the claim that input becomes uptake, by investigating what

written feedback students notice, and do not notice, the current study can examine the

assumption that noticing is required for the acquisition of written language as Long and Schmidt

argue for spoken language. Students seem to experience varying levels of difficulty with all types

of feedback. Abbreviations appear the most difficult for students to utilize, as illustrated in interview (6). Underlining resulted in mixed effects. At times students are able to correctly identify all three levels of noticing, but at other times they misidentify or falsely identify all three levels of noticing. The most commonly misidentified level of noticing is nature, followed by boundary, then existence. Explicit corrections seem to facilitate the accurate identification of all three levels of noticing, especially nature.

CHAPTER 3

INCORPORATION

3.1 Introduction to Incorporation

Chapter 2 illustrated the relationship between how teachers provide feedback and what students notice about the feedback, which investigates the theoretical assumption that input must first be noticed to become intake and be utilized by the learner. Chapter 3 presents the debates within the written feedback literature, first presenting the debate of the benefits, then discussing possible ways to make written feedback more accessible to students. The interaction between the theoretical assumptions a teacher has, and the pedagogical feedback practices of that teacher is the problem I am investigating.

Given that this study focuses on second language writing, it is important to distinguish how second language writing is different from first language writing. While it is true that both first language (L1) and second language (L2) writers implement a recursive writing design to brainstorm, organize, and develop their essays, there are some salient differences, especially within lexical and morphosyntactic elements, this study's specific foci.

In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing, Tony Silva (1993) reviewed 72 articles comparing L1 and L2 writing. Twenty-one of the articles highlight several differences between L1 and L2 morphology and syntax. These studies find that L2 writers tend to be more direct, explicit, and authoritative in tone in their essays, often employing stronger modals, such as 'will', 'should' and 'must'. L2 writers tend to use fewer

analogies, less parallel structure, and fewer rhetorical questions; as such they tend to have greater repetition of ideas. On the sentence level, L2 writers' sentences tend to have fewer but longer clauses requiring simple coordinate conjunctions, and less use of subordination. L2 writers also use fewer adjectives, prepositions/ prepositional phrases, and definite articles. They also tend to use less passive voice, more pronouns and more initial transitions (Silva, 1993, 666-7). With all of these differences existing between L1 and L2 writers, ESOL instructors must attend to different grammatical needs when commenting on L2 writers' essays. However, much of the literature on L2 writing is based on L1 writing theories because the body of L2 literature is still developing.

Section 3.2 reviews literature on written feedback and error correction, discussing the commentary practices of teachers and some of the problems students have in interpreting and applying these comments. 3.3 identifies the analysis procedures used in categorizing the type (textual markings, explicit corrections, and qualitative comments) and location (intralineal, marginal, summative) of teacher feedback within the students' writing samples. Additionally, 3.3 investigates how students incorporate their instructors' feedback in subsequent drafts. 3.4 presents the findings of these results through a series of data charts and discussions.

3.2 Literature Review on Written Feedback

Before we can further explore written feedback, we must first define "feedback" itself; to do so, let us look at definitions presented by Moffett (1968), Lamberg (1980), and Shuqiang (1985). Moffett (1968) defines feedback as "any information a learner receives as a result of his trials" (p. 188). According to this definition of feedback, feedback is the action of correction in and of itself; the learner is not required to act upon the feedback. In Lamberg's (1980) definition he

maintains that feedback is "information of performance which affects subsequent performance by influencing students' attention to particular matters so that those matters undergo a change in the subsequent performance" (p. 66). As such, feedback must not only be corrective but it must also promote action on behalf of the learner. Shuqiang (1985) builds upon these two definitions, but her definition further clarifies the role of feedback in relationship to interlanguage development. According to Shuqiang (1985), "feedback is construed as any information that, in reacting to certain preceding performance, has the potential of affecting ensuing linguistic performance by calling attention to inadequacies in learners' interlanguage system, thereby facilitating remedy or refinement" (p. 4-5). This definition exploits what the preceding definitions fail to: the function of teacher feedback acts a means for highlighting a learner's attention to linguistic errors *in a manner that facilitates interlanguage development*. If teacher feedback can indeed facilitate interlanguage development, then it has the potential to facilitate a learner's acquisition of the target language.

3.2.1 The Debates within Written Feedback

Since the late 1970's studies have investigated teacher commentary. The focus of some of these studies has been on describing what and where teachers write their comments (Bata, 1972; Kepner, 1991; Sullivan, 1986; for description *and* student perceptions see, Saito 1994; Al-Ghonaim, 2005; Abbuhl, 2005). Others have investigated the impact or effectiveness of teacher written feedback (see Marzano & Arthur, 1977; King, 1979; Shuqiang, 1985; Goldstein, 2004; Cardelle & Corno, 1981; Sugita, 2006; Bitchener et al., 2005; Zamel, 1985; Ferris, 1997).

For example, Vivian Zamel (1985) investigates the commentary behaviors of fifteen university ESL writing instructors, and discovers many parallels to the written feedback strategies investigated in L1 studies. She states:

> The findings are consistent with much of what has been found about the responses of L1 writing teachers. ESL writing teachers misread student texts, are inconsistent in their reactions, make arbitrary corrections, write contradictory comments, provide vague prescriptions, impose abstract rules and standards, respond to texts as fixed and final products, and rarely make content-specific comments or offer specific strategies for revising the text. What is particularly striking about these ESL teachers' responses, however, is that the teachers overwhelmingly view themselves as language teachers rather than writing teachers; they attend primarily to surface-level features of writing and seem to read and react to a text as a series of separate sentences or even clauses, rather than as a whole unit of discourse. They are in fact so distracted by language-related local problems that they often correct these without realizing that a much larger meaning-related problem has totally escaped their notice.
>
> (Zamel, 1985, p. 86)

Because of these realities, Zamel offers many tips to help instructors avoid the pitfalls of written feedback. For example, she suggests teachers provide content-specific feedback, relevant only to a given student for a particular essay. By doing this, teachers limit the possibility of responding to the student's essay as a final product. Resultantly, teachers can reduce the number of "vague prescriptions" because they will be focusing more on discourse level concerns. Additionally, she suggests that teachers ask their students to provide a cover sheet where learners articulate who

36

their audience is and what their intentions are in writing the text. In this way, the instructor is less likely to misinterpret the student's text.

Ferris (1997) offers additional support for Zamel's concerns. Ferris's (1997) study focuses on one university instructor and 47 freshman and sophomore advanced- level ESL writers over the course of two semesters. In her findings, 46% of the teacher's marginal comments and 47% of end comments which were written in question form, led to either no change or a negative change in the student's revision. 72% of the teacher's marginal comments that gave information in question forms to students resulted in no change or a negative change in the students' subsequent draft; furthermore, 100% of the teacher's end comments of the same type resulted in no change. As a result of her study, Ferris "suggests that, although the students appeared to understand from the comment that something was required of them, they were less clear about how to incorporate the requested changes successfully" (p. 331).

Knoblauch & Brannon (1981) summarize the difficulties in providing written feedback:

(1) students often do not comprehend teacher responses to their writing; (2) even when they do, they do not always use those responses and may not know how to use them; (3) when they use them, they do not necessarily write more effectively as a result.

(Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981, p. 1)

Results indicate that written feedback is typically ambiguous, unsystematic, and inaccessible, often confusing students; thus, the benefit to learners has been deemed questionable. This conclusion is further supported in Leki's (1990) conclusions when she states that "research reveals depressingly little evidence to indicate that careful annotation of a paper actually helps student writers improve" (p. 60). Sperling and Freedman's (1987) case study reinforces this

conclusion by highlighting that sometimes students are able to implement their instructors' feedback in the instance where the teacher marks an error; however, they are not able to identify the underlying principle of the error. Consequently, learners are not able to correct the error in other sections of the essay where the teacher did not mark. The data in section 2.4, offer further support to Sperling and Freedman's (1987) claim, as many of the students were often not able to identify the nature of the error as a direct result of the instructor's written feedback. Additionally, Lee (2003) argues that teachers are not convinced there are long-term benefits to providing written feedback. "*Teachers tend to treat error feedback as a job with little long-term significance.* Although they are spending a massive amount of time marking student writing, *teachers themselves are not totally convinced that their effort pays off in terms of student improvement*" (p. 216; *emphasis added*). However, despite these conclusions, students say they want feedback.

As illustrated above, the first debate within written feedback is that feedback is ineffective and confusing to students; however, students continuously request teachers to provide feedback. As such, the second debate within written feedback literature provides guidelines for how teachers' feedback practices can make written feedback more accessible to students. To address this second debate, Hendrickson (1978) raises five fundamental questions with regard to error correction: "1) Should learner errors be corrected? 2) If so, when should learner errors be corrected? 3) Which learner errors should be corrected? 4) How should learner errors be corrected? 5) Who should correct learner errors?" (p. 389). Hendrickson concludes that learner errors should be corrected under two conditions a) when learners are unable to identify the errors themselves, and b) when the correction will help the learner distill the semantic, syntactic, or lexical constraints of linguistic features in the target language. Hendrickson further argues that,

correction should occur when the task is focused on grammar manipulation rather than on communication. By correcting errors when the task is to exchange ideas, students argue that their confidence to use the language gets shaken (Walker 1973).

In deciding which errors to correct, Hendrickson (1978) suggests teachers consider the degree to which the error compromises the intelligibility of the learner's message, the frequency of the error in a learner's production, the grammatical structures being taught in class, and the generalizability of the grammatical rule.

Global versus Local Errors

Burt & Kiparsky (1972) distinguish between 'global' errors and 'local' errors. 'Global' errors are those which obstruct the reader's ability to comprehend of the learner's message. On the other hand, 'local' errors are those which do not hinder the reader's ability to understand or comprehend the learner's message. Hendrickson (1978) establishes narrower parameters of 'global' and 'local' error in his definitions. For him, a 'global' error is "a communicative error that causes a proficient [reader] of a foreign language either to misinterpret a written message or to consider the message incomprehensible with the textual content of the error" (p. 391). On the other hand, "a 'local' error is a linguistic error that makes a form or structure in a sentence appear awkward but, nonetheless, causes a proficient [reader] of a foreign language little or no difficulty in understanding the intended meaning of a sentence given its contextual framework" (p. 391). Hendrickson (1978) encourages teachers to focus their correction efforts on 'global' errors as those are the ones which impede the comprehensibility of the student's essay. George (1972) reinforces this position by recommending that teachers consider the severity of the error. However, he also recommends teachers consider the student's perception of achievement when

deciding which errors to correct. Additionally, George (1972) believes that teachers often overestimate the incomprehensibility of student errors, and consequently provide *too much* correction on student essays. This leads to another difficulty. Hanzeli (1975) argues that proficient English speaking teachers have difficulty in developing standardized criteria against which to correct student errors because they have learned to interpret their learners' interlanguages as presented in their written production. However, Burt (1975) disagrees with Hanzeli's argument, stating that the global-local distinction is one way teachers can standardize their error correction practices. In Hendrickson's (1976) study, which investigates 24 intermediate ESOL writers, he finds that the majority of global compositions errors "resulted from inadequate lexical knowledge, misuse of prepositions and pronouns, and seriously misspelled words. Most linguistic ('local') errors were caused by misuse and omission of prepositions, lack of subject-verb agreement, misspelled words, and faulty word order" (p. http://eric.ed.gov/ED135260).

Fossilization

In addition to prioritizing error correction on the basis of global and local impact, Hendrickson recommends commenting on fossilized errors, those which appear to be permanent in the learner's language production. He articulates urgency in addressing these errors because in order for the student's language acquisition to progress, the student will have to re-learn the rules that govern the acquired features that have become fossilized. Therefore, the sooner they are commented on, the sooner the student can address the error. This hypothesis is supported by McLaughlin's claim that once a process becomes automatic for a learner it is difficult for the learner to suppress or alter it (McLaughlin, 1978, p. 319). Additionally, Hendrickson (1978)

suggests the frequency of errors as possible indication of fossilization. High-frequency errors

should be attended to so that they do not become fossilized. If a writer has formed a false

hypothesis about a language feature that continues to not be addressed by the instructor, it is

reasonable to believe that the student will think that the hypothesis is correct, and will continue to

produce it. Therefore, it is important to correct these errors while the student is still forming the

hypothesis, rather than after the false hypothesis has been "confirmed."

Course Content

Another consideration teachers can make when deciding which errors to comment on is

focusing their correction on grammatical structures recently presented in class. Cohen (1975)

suggests providing error feedback which reflects the current pedagogical foci of the classroom.

In this regard, students are able to focus their attention on the 'use' of grammatical structures

presented in class. By practicing grammatical structures in the context of 'usage' and 'use',

students are able to experience the linguistic and communicative importance of the structures.

Finally, teachers could prioritize their error correction by grammatical rule. Johansson (1973)

advocates correcting errors which resemble general rules rather than exceptions because in the

long-term these corrections will benefit the student's acquisition of the language more than

correction of atypical grammatical errors.

Selective versus Comprehensive Feedback

When considering how to correct errors, Hendrickson (1978) suggests using strategies

that do not embarrass or frustrate learners, as these feelings could raise the affective filter

(Krashen 1985) and lower the student's confidence to communicate in the language (George

1972). As such, one method of correction that has been suggested is the 'discovery' approach

(Corder 1967). The discovery approach, it is claimed, facilitates the learner's ability to locate the existence of errors, thereby increasing the opportunity for students to change their existing hypotheses, and increasing the opportunity for intake to become uptake. However, many teachers employ the discovery approach unsystematically which negates these (potential) positive outcomes. "Many teachers correct students' written work so imprecisely and inconsistently that it is often difficult for students to distinguish their major errors from their minor ones" (Hendrickson, 1978, p. 393; cf. Allwright, 1975). Because of this reality, error correction is often said to have no significant effect on reducing errors. Hence, some researchers have supported utilizing more selective strategies in deciding which errors to provide feedback on. George (1972) cautions teachers in correcting *every* student error because in doing so the teacher takes away the opportunity for the student to discover the errors and learn from the corrections that the teacher has made. While Hyland (2003) agrees that teachers should not correct every error, he does recommend that teachers comment on every aspect of writing. "Teacher written feedback should respond to all aspects of student texts: structure, organization, style, content, and presentation, but it is not necessary to cover every aspect on every draft at every stage of teaching" (Hyland, 2003, p. 185). Therefore, teachers need to prioritize which errors to comment on and at what stage of the writing process to comment on them. By focusing on a handful of errors, the teachers may be able to limit student feelings of confusion and increase their feelings of writing competence. Thus, Hendrickson (1978) argues that "when teachers tolerate *some* student errors, students often feel more confident about using the target language than if *all* their errors are corrected" (p. 388, *emphasis in original*; cf. Ferris, 2002). Despite these recommendations, Lee (2003) argues that more teachers provide comprehensive

commentary on students' essays rather than engage in selective feedback practices. Lee (2003)

states, "Although selective marking is recommended both in the local English syllabus and error

correction literature, *the majority of teachers mark errors comprehensively* (p. 216; *emphasis*

added).

Direct versus Indirect Feedback

Additionally, researchers suggest teachers choose a technique that considers the

individual needs of the student before commenting. As such, some times (and for some

students) commentary needs to be more direct than at other times (and for other students).

Nonetheless, Allwright (1975)

> concludes that *any* error correction includes some of the following general features:
>
> indication that an error was committed, identification of the type of error, location of the
>
> error, mention of who made the error, selection of a remedy, provision of a correct
>
> model, the furnishing of an opportunity for a new attempt, indication of improvement, and
>
> the offering of praise.

<div align="right">(as cited in Hendrickson, 1978, p. 395, emphasis added)</div>

Before employing direct correction, Hendrickson (1978) encourages teachers to consider whether

or not students could correct the error themselves. If the answer is yes, then he suggests

refraining from direct correction. He also suggests using direct correction on second drafts,

under the assumption that if indirect feedback has been provided on the first draft and the error

still exists, then the student does not know how to correct it. Ferris (2002) cautions teachers in

using direct correction because over use of this technique could lead to appropriation of students

text. For indirect correction, Hendrickson (1978) recommends underlining, circling, or providing

comments which designate the nature of the error so as to facilitate the learner's ability to correct the error independently. If the instructor uses editing guides, Ferris (2002) suggests teachers decide how discrete they are going to be in identifying error sub-types. She recommends using larger error categories because the smaller the parameters one sets, the harder it is to discriminate the error when it appears in a student's text and the harder it is to be consistent in one's marking.

In addressing the fifth question, Hendrickson (1978) says teachers assume the role of "error corrector"; however, they should not dominate it. Peer correction and self-correction can be ways to increase learner responsibility and create a more equitable classroom. "Peer correction or self-correction with teacher guidance may be a more worthwhile investment of time and effort for some teachers and learners" (Hendrickson, 1978, p. 396). Ferris (2002) argues that self and peer feedback have their place, but "ESL writing teachers *can* and *should* learn to treat student errors effectively" (p. 48, *emphasis in original*).

Perhaps the reason there is such a debate within the written feedback literature is because we have assigned too many roles to feedback. We want feedback to be able to improve our students' writing, facilitate revision, and motivate our learners; however, most teachers do not change their feedback strategies to accommodate these multiple purposes, yet we get frustrated and say feedback is just a waste of time because we don't see any benefit when we look at our students' papers. But what if we narrow our expectations to reflect our practices? Since we typically focus on the "language" aspects of our students' writing, why not investigate the extent to which our feedback facilitates their language acquisition? Shuqiang (1985) discovers from her study of university level ESL writers that teacher commentary has positive effects on students'

linguistic output. "The only aspect where manipulation of feedback sources causes significant variation is grammaticality, which, understandably is not a small concern in an ESL writing program" (p. 75). By looking at feedback studies through this lens, we can consider spoken discourse theories, cognitive psychology, as well as existing SLA theories.

<u>3.2.2 The ESOL Writing Classroom</u>

The "interactional modifications", as defined in Long's interaction hypothesis, provided by the teacher's written comments, provides learners with implicit and explicit feedback of the learner's own interlanguage production. This feedback (theoretically) highlights the mismatch between input, intake, uptake, and output. As a result, what role does written feedback have on facilitating reformulation? To what extent does written feedback facilitate a learner's ability to acknowledge the existence of an error, the boundaries of that error, and the nature of that error?

With a growing number of ESOL writing classrooms orientating themselves towards process-writing, instructors have to learn how to become collaborators as well as evaluators (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996). This is problematic because the role of "collaborator" encompasses working, negotiating and interacting with the students, as well as engaging them in a dialog about their essays. On the other hand, the role of "evaluator" entails assigning a grade. Both roles can provide students with written feedback; however, the perception of that feedback may be quite different. From the students' perspective, the collaborator's feedback is more flexible; it's not perceived as mandatory to incorporate. However, the perception of the evaluator's feedback functions like a ruling: "These are the changes you must make to improve your paper." The terms "respondent" and "evaluator" show how instructors often send conflicting messages to their students in process-oriented writing classes. In process-oriented writing, the

45

writer, his peers, and the teacher are all supposed to be "respondents" to the writing. However, despite the fact that process-writing has become more prominent in L2 writing classrooms, many times the teacher remains the only real audience for the students' writings (cf. Davies & Omberg, 1987; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1992; Mangelsdorf, 1989; Stanley, 1992). If this is true, then the feedback the teacher writes actually functions as an *assessment* of the *product* (teacher as "evaluator") rather than as an *interaction* in the *process* (teacher as "collaborator"). This contradiction -the hypothesized role of the teacher/ "respondent" in a process-oriented classroom and the reality of the teacher/ "evaluator" role as sole audience and "assignment-giver"- sends conflicting messages to students' perceptions of what to do with the feedback teachers provide on their assignments. "Even when the status of teachers as assignment-givers and as evaluators is unambiguous, teachers frequently operate on the basis of principles and criteria that do not match the concerns or expectations of their student writers" (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996, p. 288).

In Kepner's (1991) study, she concludes that "consistent use of L2 teachers' written error-corrections combined with explicit rule reminders as a primary medium of written feedback to periodic discourse-level L2 student writing is *ineffective for promoting the development of writing proficiency in the L2*" (p. 310; *emphasis added*). In contrast, when feedback is stratified and focused, in addition to being provided at all stages of the writing process, students are more apt to improve their writing (cf. Beach, 1979; Chandrasegaran, 1986; Ferris, 1995; Freedman, 1987; Hillocks, 1986; Krashen, 1984; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986). This is to say, written feedback that is provided to students in such a way as to facilitate the student's attention to multiple levels of the errors, facilitates learners improving their writing.

46

The foreign language students interviewed in Hedgcock & Lefkowitz's (1996) study convey that "the assignment of a second draft clearly intended to raise their awareness of the linguistic weaknesses of their written texts and to teach them language- not necessarily to engage them in the dialogic, recursive activities that are the hallmarks of process-oriented L1 and ESL writing instruction" (p. 298). Therefore, what teachers say, in terms of the objectives of the class, and what they do, in terms of the written feedback they provide to their students, frequently conflict.

The gap this study addresses with regard to the debates within the written feedback literature is 1) how and where is feedback inaccessible to students, and 2) how and what do teachers provide feedback on. In order to address these co-existing debates, I have three research questions:

2) To what extent does the type of feedback (textual marking, qualitative comment, or explicit corrections) or location of feedback (intralineal, marginal, or summative) facilitate an ESOL learner's ability to incorporate instructor written feedback into their second drafts?

3) What errors do teachers consider to be salient as manifest in their correction habits?

4) Do students respond consistently to all types of feedback?

Unlike previous studies which have focused on the placement of teachers' feedback to evaluate the effectiveness of each individual location, this study describes the different types of teacher feedback, and how these different types relate to where the comments are written (location). In doing so, the study gains insight into whether or not the type and location of feedback facilitates the student's ability to incorporate the given feedback into subsequent drafts.

Additionally, the current study investigates what students actually do with the feedback they are provided, as such students' actions concerning incorporation are examined.

3.3 Methodology for Incorporation

3.3.1 Data Collection

I observed eight teachers' advanced level ESOL writing classes. These classes were held at two community colleges and two universities; seven of the eight classes were combined grammar and writing classes. Because of this, the papers chosen for analysis exemplified standard academic expository writing classes, with essay types encompassing comparison/ contrast, cause/ effect, and argumentative style writings. All essays selected for analysis were mid-semester, single-authored essays type-written by the students at home. These parameters were established to limit the variables among the classes and between the students and teacher within a given class (i.e. students getting accustomed to the way in which their teacher provided feedback). Additionally, the study focused on hand-written teacher commentary, as this was the most common method for teachers' feedback in this study.

Because of these restrictions, two classes were eliminated from analysis. The first set of class papers were removed from the analysis process because the papers provided to the researcher consisted of short stories, poems, and collaborative writings, which did not conform to the parameters aforementioned. Additionally, teacher commentary was type-written, as papers were typically exchanged electronically. The other set of class papers was eliminated because none of the students elected to participant in the student interviews; given that interviews were an important part of the analysis, none of the student writings from this class were included.

<u>3.3.2 Data Analysis: Type of Feedback</u>

Overall, analysis for *Incorporation* entailed six major steps: 1) descriptive text analysis on the teachers' commentary for type of feedback, 2) descriptive text analysis on teachers' commentary for location of feedback, 3) parameters of err categories as established by the teachers, 4) frequency count of these errors within draft 1 essays, 5) comparative frequency count of the same errors between draft 1 and draft 2 essays, and 6) transcription of student and teacher interviews with regard to providing and receiving feedback.

Step one included a descriptive text analysis of the multiple drafts as well as multiple papers for each student in which the teacher's comments are coded into specific categories within the general groupings of 'textual markings', 'qualitative comments', and 'explicit correction' to represent the *type of feedback* provided.

Written feedback is coded into seven total categories for *type of feedback*. The independent categories of 'textual markings', 'qualitative comments', and 'explicit corrections' serve as foundation categories. The other four categories represent combinations of the independent categories: Textual Markings & Explicit Correction, Textual Marking & Qualitative Comments, Explicit Correction & Qualitative Comments, and Textual Marking, Qualitative Comments, and Explicit Corrections.

*3.3.2.1 Textual Markings*

Current literature has defined indirect teacher feedback in a many ways; however, none that I found accurately described what the teachers in this study were doing. Hyland 2003 provides one definition. "Minimal marking… is a type of in-text, form-focused feedback. It follows research which suggests that indicating the location and perhaps type of error, rather than direct

correction, is more effective in stimulating a student response" (Hyland, 2003, p. 181; cf. Ferris, 1997). However, this definition was not employed because the instructors did not always indicate the type of error and they frequently provided a direct correction. Consequently, two categories emerged: 'textual markings' and 'explicit correction' as a result from what researchers like Hyland and Ferris have deemed "minimal marking". Therefore, the category of "Textual Markings" includes underlining, circling, highlighting, typical editing symbols, crossed-out text, and abbreviations (i.e. "sp", "vf", "wc", "frag", "voice"). See Figures 6 and 7 for representative examples of teacher commentary with Textual Markings.

Figure 6. Examples of Editing Symbols

Sometimes teachers used "standard" editing symbols, such as those illustrated in Figure 6, to indicate to the learner what he or she needed to do.

Figure 7. Crossed-out Text

Other times, teachers indicated deletion through a variety of "crossed-out" text markings, as illustrated in Figure 7. Even though the same "message" is being communicated when the teacher uses a deletion editing symbol and when the teacher crosses out the student's text, teacher feedback were coded according to the marking, not by the intended action.

The term "textual markings" was developed to classify feedback that was intended to stimulate an "editing" function to the learner. Feedback in this category only encompassed that feedback which included no other commentary outside of markings. By isolating the types of

50

written feedback, some conclusions can be made about what type of feedback learners notice and incorporate most.

3.3.2.2 Explicit Corrections

The term "explicit correction" was adapted from Lyster and Ranta (1997). According to their definition, "explicit correction refers to the explicit provision of the correct form. As the teacher provides the correct form, he or she clearly indicates that what the student ha[s] said [i]s incorrect" (p. 46). Because Lyster and Ranta deal with oral errors, and this study deals with written errors, recasts were the only way teachers could clearly supply and indicate correction (see Figure 8).
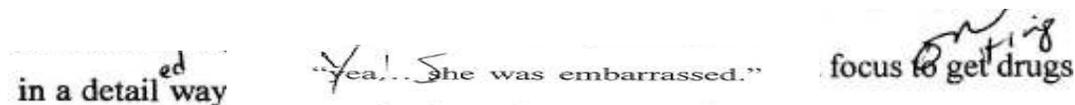

Figure 8. Examples of Recasts

As Figure 8 illustrates, these instructors sometimes also provide corrections to the students' written production.

Typically recasts are viewed as implicit negative evidence because they are spoken as a response to a learner's utterance, and there is a possibility the teacher's indirectness makes the error less noticeable to learners. However, because this study is looking at the *written* feedback teachers provide, a recast is defined here as *explicit* since (in theory) these corrections are directly written on the student's text and are read (and noticed) by the student. Nonetheless, the principles of 'recast' are upheld. Recasts are defined as a native-like form supplied by the instructor in response to an ill-formed utterance written by the ESOL student, all the while *attempting* to maintain the original meaning of the learner's written utterance.

51

3.3.2.3 Qualitative Comments

The category of "Qualitative Comments" included questions, suggestions, imperatives, and question marks (?). Examples of questions included "Does this support the thesis and topic sentence?" or "How?" or "What?". See Figures 9 and 10 for examples of qualitative comments.
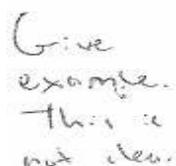
Figure 9. Imperatives

Imperatives typically directed students to expand, clarify, or to remove repetitive material from their essays, as illustrated in Figure 9.
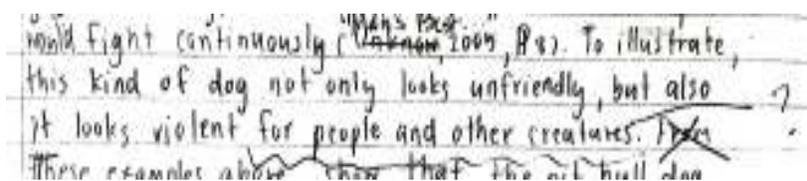
Figure 10. Question Mark (?)

A question mark was coded as a qualitative comment because it typically symbolized the question "What do you mean?" or the declarative "I don't understand"; therefore, it was deemed that the question mark was acting more like a qualitative comment than a textual marking.

3.3.2.4 Combination Categories

In an effort to maintain accuracy and holistically develop categories that represented the actual feedback practices employed by the teachers, four additional categories were created. These categories represent the ways in which teachers combined Textual Markings, Qualitative Comments, and Explicit Corrections. Figures 11- 17 provide textual samples for each category.

52

Figures 11 through 13 illustrate how teachers combine textual markings & explicit corrections.

Figure 11. Crossed-out Text and Recast

In Figure 16, the teacher crosses out "of" and writes the correction "for" to indicate the preposition error.

Figure 12. Editing Symbol and Recast

In Figure 12, the teacher uses an editing symbol (^) to indicate that a word needs to be inserted in between "prior" and "the". Then, the teacher provides the missing word.
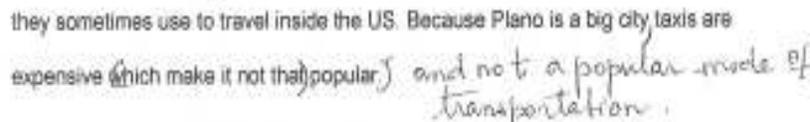
Figure 13. Brackets, Editing Symbol, and Recast

In Figure 13, the teacher brackets off the clause, marks it with a deletion editing symbol, and supplies the learner with a more native-like reformulation.

Figures 14 and 15 illustrate how the teachers combined textual marking and qualitative comments.
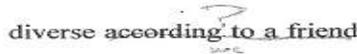
Figure 14. Abbreviation, Underlining, and Question Mark

In Figure 14, the teacher uses the textual markings of abbreviation, "wc", and underlining in addition to a qualitative comment, the question mark to highlight the non-native like essence of this utterance.
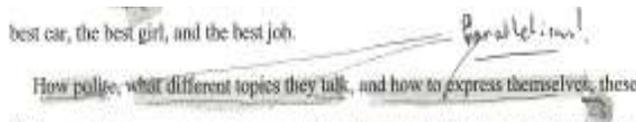
Figure 15. Underlining, Highlighting, and Imperative

In Figure 15, the teacher employs the textual markings of highlighting and underlining as well as the imperative comment, "Parallelism!" to indicate the error to the student.

Figure 16 illustrates how teachers combined explicit correction & qualitative comments.
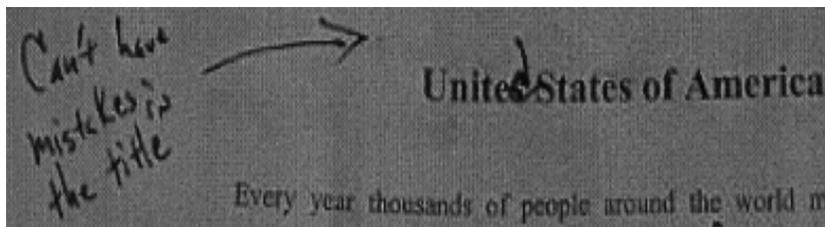
Figure 16. Recast and Imperative

In Figure 16, the teacher directly corrects the spelling of "Unite_d_" and writes "Can't have mistakes in the title" to communicate with the learner a writing standard.

The final combination category includes all three foundation categories: textual markings, qualitative comments, and explicit corrections.
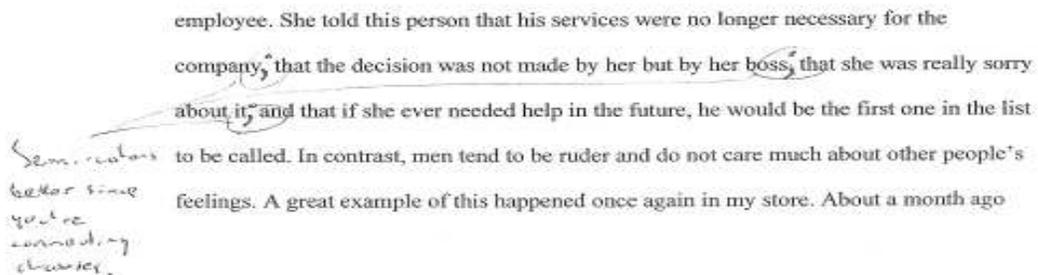
Figure 17. Circling, Recast, and Suggestion

In Figure 17, the teacher uses the textual marking of circling with the explicit correction of semi-colons; then, in the margins writes the qualitative comment "Semi-colons are better since you're connecting clauses".

The existence of these seven categories illustrates the wide variety of 'types of feedback' instructor written commentary employs when providing feedback to learners. Another variable that affects feedback practices is 'location of feedback'.

3.3.3 Data Analysis: Location of Feedback

After completion of the descriptive text analysis, step two entails constructing data charts which combined both type and location of feedback. Location of feedback is divided into three categories: intralineal, marginal, and summative. Intralineal feedback is defined as any in-text commentary appearing above, below, or within a line of the student's text. Marginal comments are defined as those which appear in the top, bottom, right or left-hand sides of a page, outside of the student's text. "Comments in the essay margins are both immediate and proximate, appearing at the exact point in the text where the issue occurs. This not only ensures relevance and creates a strong sense that the reader is responding to the text "on the fly", but is also more effective than an end comment in making sure that the student understands precisely what is referred to" (Hyland, 2003, p. 180-181). Summative feedback constitutes those comments which appear after the completed student's text. Therefore, these comments could have been written on the bottom half of the last page of text, on the back of a student's text or written on separate pages and attached to the student's essay. "[Summative feedback] allows more space and opportunities for the teacher to summarize and prioritize key points and to make general observations on the paper" (Hyland, 2003, p. 180). The excerpted student text (Figure 18), displays how the feedback was written by the teachers.

Figure 18. Example of Raw Data: Basmah

Table 3 illustrates how type of feedback and location of feedback are coded and organized.

Table 3. Coding of Type and Location of Feedback: Basmah

Teacher Comments	Textual Markings	U "transport"; B- 1 vertical line @ "because"; B- parenthesis around "and that's why"; SY- deletion above "and that's why"
	Explicit Correction	commute, "B", "s", ";", consequently, ","
	Qualitative Comments	run-on
	Location	**TM** & **EC**: intralineal **QC**: marginal

Key: U: Underline; B: Brackets; SY: editing symbol

While these charts were helpful when looking at the type and location of feedback, they only presented one side of the story. In order to more comprehensively understand what teachers were doing in their feedback, I analyzed the kinds of errors they were indicating to the students.

3.3.4 Data Analysis: Errors Indicated by Teacher Feedback

In order to accurately understand the errors being indicated by the teachers, I first had to define what the teachers meant as a result of how they commented on student essays. Even in the sixties and seventies when researchers used error analysis as a research tool "it was not entirely clear what constituted an 'error' and it proved difficult to prepare rigorous descriptions of errors" (Ellis, 1994, p.20). Because I too had difficulty coding the learners' essays, I needed to try to determine if the teachers themselves had a consensus about what they considered an error. The parameters of six categories are presented below (3.3.4.1 Error Parameters). Once I had an understanding of what the teachers were doing, then I could do I frequency count of the errors to

determine how much of the instructors' feedback centered around these six categories (3.3.4.2 Analysis of Draft 1 Essays).

3.3.4.1 Parameters for Error Categories

The error categories delineated below reflect the *teachers'* delimitations for the coding of these kinds of errors. Therefore, there may be inconsistencies between how the teachers commented and "standard" definitions of these kinds of errors. For example, in the utterance, *"He goed to school", the actual nature of the error is verb tense/ form of *goed, but if the teacher marked it as "word choice", then I coded as word choice.

The student utterances presented below represent the kind of error of teacher commentary for a given category; the underlined portion of the utterance is the comment representing the category. These excerpts are provided to assist the reader in understanding the parameters the teachers set for these categories. Accompanying these excerpts are student and teacher pseudonyms. In utterances where an interviewing student's excerpt is used, his or her code name is written; in cases where non-interviewing student essay excerpts are utilized, the student is labeled S1, S2, etc. Following the student's code, the teacher's pseudonym is provided. As such, after each excerpt, the student's information will precede the teacher's information as in (Cheng: Amisha) or (S1: James).

Word choice

A student's incorrect use of a word or set of words.

Examples:

1. The student used a word that had the wrong lexical meaning.

   It has changed my vision about English <u>or</u> other languages. (S1: James)

57

Two sisters should be similar to each other, and they <u>owned</u> their childhood memories. (Mai: Amisha)

2. The student used the wrong connotation of a lexical meaning.

…to <u>make</u> a specific meaning. (provide/ convey) (S1: James)

All campus has their own <u>safety department</u>… (security) (Cheng: Amisha)

3. The student employed a communication strategy that caused phrase-level confusion.

All <u>languages explain and clarify</u> their speakers' thoughts… (S1: James)

…<u>to let the students know</u> manners are very important… (S2: James)

Article use

A student's incorrect use of an article.

EXAMPLES:

1. The student did not write an article when an article should have been used

<u>With right</u> combination of words… (S1: James)

2. The student wrote the wrong article

…if they do not live in <u>a</u> same town (Mika: Amisha)

3. The student wrote an article when there should not have been an article

...children begin to make <u>a friend</u> while they are grown up. (S3: James)

Plurals

A student's incorrect use of a plural.

EXAMPLES:

1. The student wrote the noun in a singular form when it should have been written in the plural form

You can take language <u>course</u> in a school and study English,… (S1: James)
Sisters usually share their <u>secret</u> or exchange clothes (Mai: Amisha)

2. The student wrote a plural when there should have been a singular form of the noun

…everyone has to finish high school before <u>they</u> choose <u>their</u> major. (Desta: Amisha)

…their after school activities including sports activities, hobbies and <u>clubs</u> activities. (S3: James)

Prepositions

A student's incorrect use of a preposition.

EXAMPLES:

1. The student wrote the wrong preposition

…five to ten years of age difference <u>at</u> the same class… (Desta: Amisha)

2. The student failed to write a preposition

<u>xx</u> Rural area people live very scattered… (Desta: Amisha)

3. The student wrote a preposition when a preposition was not required.

One other difference in the time when each group affects <u>to</u> children's socialization. (S3: James)

Verb tense/ form

A student's incorrect use of a verb's tense or form. Because the instructors commented on verb tense and verb form separately from subject-verb agreement and verb omission errors, these errors were not included in this category.

EXAMPLES:

1. The student's utterance is missing the appropriate tense or form.

Even before school age children <u>send</u> to daycare if both parents work. (Desta: Amisha)

…everyone has to finish high school before <u>choose</u> a major. (Desta: Amisha)

2. The student used the wrong tense or form.

When time passes and children are adolesencts, the pyramid base is at the top, children <u>have received</u> many influences from peers… (Eduardo: James)

Normally all education consists of <u>study</u> and <u>practice</u>. (S1: James)

Consequently, peers' effects <u>will be increasing</u> gradually. (will increase) (S3: James)

Spelling

A student's incorrect spelling of a word.

EXAMPLES:

1. The student used the correct word, but misspelled it.

Of <u>coerce</u> this is a sentence… (S1: James)

Students often <u>straggle</u> on making this decision. (Cheng: Amisha)

2. The student had the correct spelling of a word, but it was the wrong choice for the context.

It is fascinating and <u>exiting</u> to have interesting experiences… (Mika: Amisha)

Even though my two cousins have the same parents, <u>there're</u>… (Mai: Amisha)

3.3.4.2 Analysis of Draft 1 Essays

After the parameters from the error categories were established, a data chart reflecting the frequency of these errors within the six sets of essays was conducted on initial drafts. Through this, six categories of comments emerged (listed in descending rank): article use, word choice, prepositions, plurals, spelling, and verb tense/form (Table 4). These error categories comprised 50- 62% of the individual instructor's commentary.

Table 4. Draft 1 Essays: Interview Students Only

Error Categories	Instructors						Percentage of Comments for all Instructors Per Category
	James	Amisha	John	Roshan	Grace	Olivia	
Article Use	7	21	6	33	15	4	20%
Word Choice	10	17	1	28	15	11	19%
Prepositions	7	16	12	23	10	10	18%
Plurals	4	14	0	27	15	8	16%
Spelling	13	9	6	12	12	7	14%
Verb Tense/ Form	5	22	4	12	10	4	13%
Percentage of Total Comments Per Instructor	58%	50%	50%	62%	61%	57%	

However, because the sample size (those students who participated in interviews *and* provided papers) varied between classes, ranging from three participants to eight participants, additional essays (students who did not interview *but* provided papers) underwent the frequency count analysis to determine if the sample size accurately represented the focus of the instructors' markings for their entire classes. After analysis of eight draft 1 papers for all six teachers, the following categories emerged (listed in descending rank): word choice, article use, prepositions, plurals, verb tense/form, and spelling. These commentary categories comprised 50%-65% of these instructors' total comments (Table 5).

Table 5. Draft 1 Essays: Interview & Non-Interview Students

Error Categories	Instructors						Percentage of Comments for all Instructors Per Category
	James	Amisha	John	Roshan	Grace	Olivia	
Word Choice	42	17	24	39	22	23	24%
Article Use	34	16	23	38	19	9	20%
Plurals	21	14	7	32	22	16	16%
Prepositions	16	21	19	24	10	19	15%
Verb Tense/ Form	12	22	16	17	17	18	14%
Spelling	18	9	6	14	16	13	11%
Percentage of Total Comments Per Instructor	65%	50%	63%	65%	60%	54%	

As can be seen, equal distribution confirms the kinds of errors found in Table 4 accurately depict the teachers' commentary focus. However, there are some slight changes in the frequencies of the errors. Word choice took first place, moving up from 19% of the teachers' comments to 24% of the teachers' comments. Article use moved to second place, however, the amount of commenting on articles remained the same at 20% of the time. Prepositions dropped slightly from 18% to 15%. Plurals, like article use, maintained its percentage of commentary, holding at 16%. Verb tense/ form had a nominal increase from 13% to 14%. Finally, comments on spelling errors took sixth place, experiencing a two percent decrease from 13% to 11%. Despite these slight changes, the interviewed students appears to provide a random and representative sample of the teachers' commentary. It should be noted that punctuation also showed up as an error frequently commented on; however, because the majority of errors are lexical, morphological or syntactical, and not mechanical, the six kinds of errors listed above consume the attention of the study.

3.3.5 Data Analysis: Comparative Analysis between Draft 1 and Draft 2 Essays

One way to investigate noticing is to talk with the students, as illustrated in section 2.4; a second way is to investigate the students' behaviors. To make conclusions about their actions, I also needed to analyze second drafts. However, only two of the six classes required revision. Therefore, these were the only sets of papers that were included in the next phase of analysis. One paper from each teacher was dropped because the second draft had not been commented on by the instructor, or the second draft was not included with the papers I received. Therefore, for this next phase, only seven papers per class are analyzed. The first step in this next phase also consisted of a frequency count of the instructors' comments. Table 6 displays the findings.

Table 6. Comparison of Frequency: Draft 1 and Draft 2 Error Commentary

Error Categories	Instructors			
	James		Amisha	
	Draft 1	Draft 2	Draft 1	Draft 2
Word Choice	42	27	17	21
Verb Tense	12	29	22	8
Article Use	34	18	16	19
Prepositions	16	15	21	23
Plurals	21	15	14	20
Spelling	18	8	9	8
Percentage of Total Comments	65%	53%	50%	45%

Table 6 recapitulates Draft 1 data presented in Table 5, and presents Draft 2 data. An initial look at this chart might suggest a reduction shown in the teacher's overall comments'; and as a result, one might make the conclusion that students are noticing their instructors' feedback and incorporating this feedback into their second drafts. To verify whether or not this is an accurate conclusion, first draft comments and second draft comments were compared.

3.3.6 Data Analysis: Interviews

The final step of the analysis involved student and teacher interviews. Student interviews centered around two main questions:

1. **Why do you think the teacher writes comments on your paper?**

2. **What do you usually do with your teacher's comments when you get your paper back?**

These questions were asked for the purpose of discovering the students' perspectives of written feedback. Once student interviews were completed, instructors were interviewed in order to ensure proper coding of their comments. Additionally, written comments that evoked student statements such as "I didn't know what to do here so I just deleted the underlined words" or "I don't know… I don't have any idea what I am supposed to do" were specifically asked to the instructor, so that he or she could articulate what he or she had intended the student to do. By consulting with the instructors, consistencies and inconsistencies in their methods of providing feedback could be brought to the surface and discussed. Additionally, their responses with regard to the written feedback they provided to students on their essays could be compared with the responses given by students during their interviews. Instructor interviews were approximately one hour in length. The interview process occurred over a six week period.

3.4 Results for Incorporation

3.4.1 Type of Feedback

The results for sections 3.4.1 (type of feedback) and 3.4.2 (location of feedback) are used in answering the second research question: To what extent does the type of feedback or

64

location of feedback facilitate an ESOL learner's ability to incorporate instructor written feedback into their second drafts?

Type of feedback refers to the categories established in the methodology (3.3) section: Textual Markings (TM), Qualitative Comments (QC), and Explicit Corrections (EC), as well as the four combination categories. Table 7 illustrates how these instructors commented on their students' essays.

Table 7. Type of Feedback: Draft 1

Instructors	TM Only	EC Only	TM & EC	TM & QC	QC Only	QC & EC	TM & EC & QC	Total Errors
James	205	19	64	39	30	0	1	358
Amisha	121	32	110	28	8	0	5	304
John	34	48	57	2	6	2	1	150
Roshan	56	86	153	2	0	0	0	297
Grace	82	4	47	31	12	1	8	185
Olivia	96	26	57	27	5	0	4	215
Overall	39%	14%	32%	9%	4%	0.2%	1%	1509

Generally speaking, 85% of these six teachers' provide their students with written feedback as Textual Markings, Explicit Corrections, or a combination of the two. Qualitative Comments, by themselves, combined with Textual Markings, or combined with Explicit Corrections, only account for 14% of the written commentary, while the combining of all three types of feedback only account for 1% of the teachers' comments.

Looking specifically at the teachers, James provided 57% of his written feedback as textual markings. Of this 57%, more than half of his comments (56%) consisted only of *an* abbreviation, underline, or editing symbol; the remaining comments (44%) involved two or more textual markings: typical combinations are underline and abbreviation, brackets and abbreviations, or underlining and an editing symbol. In contrast, only 23% of John's feedback is comprised of textual markings. For him, all 23% of his feedback is provided with a single textual

marking; no combinations are ever present in his feedback. Additionally, abbreviations were not part of his commentary. His textual markings only included crossed-out text, underlining and editing symbols.

As for Roshan, 81% of her feedback includes recasts; 52% of the recasts are accompanied by a textual marking, while 29% are only explicit corrections. She consistently provides students with academic vocabulary, and recasts portions of their sentences. On the other hand, Grace, only includes recasts in her feedback 27% of the time. These data show that teachers have very different ways of marking students' texts.

3.4.1.1 Textual Markings

For this set of teachers, textual markings are the most common way of indicating to a learner that an utterance contains an error. However, textual markings are also one of the types of comments most frequently misunderstood by students, particularly abbreviations and underlining.

Abbreviations

For some teachers, abbreviations are used as a matter of convenience. They distribute editing guides (Appendix A), require students to copy a list from the board, or write what the abbreviations stand for as summative comments. In all of these options, students are always given the option to ask for clarification when needed. Other teachers choose not to use abbreviations because they wanted to be as clear as possible, and feel that abbreviations can be confusing to students. This instructor's interview below (9) illustrates both sides.

(9) *R: I noticed in your essays you don't provide abbreviations. Can you tell me your rationale?*
T: I think abbreviations are more for the teacher than the students. [Writing

abbreviations] requires students to remember what "ro" stood for and usually requires them to hunt and find where the error is and try to figure out what makes it a run-on—what makes it wrong…. I don't think it does any good because I don't feel they take the time to look up the stuff.

One abbreviation that is especially troublesome for students is the abbreviation "wc" (word choice); it is used by teachers to designate errors in prepositions, articles, verb tense and verb form, in addition to being used to indicate incorrect lexeme connotation, wrong word, and incorrect wording at the phrasal level. During the instructor interviews, those who used the abbreviation "wc" were asked to define it and verify what scenarios they typically used with this abbreviation. Below are some excerpts of these interviews. Teacher comments (T) are in plain text; the researcher's comments (R) are italicized.

(10) T: [the students] used, or they may have used, the correct grammatical form, maybe not, but the main problem is that they have used the wrong word
R: Typically, then, when you use "wc" it's for… um, maybe they used "transport" when they needed to use "commute"
T: Yes, that's right.
R: Not like "differ" and "difference"
T: Right, I would use, I'm not sure if that carries here, but in that case I would use "wf", word form. They have the right word just not the correct grammatical form…

Even in this teacher's own definition he combines wrong word with word choice, which comprises two separate categories on his very own editing sheet, which is handed out to the students at the beginning of every semester. Additionally, towards the end of this excerpt, the instructor questions his own marking of "wc" on a particular utterance within the student's paper. This instructor's interview illustrates the level of ambiguity abbreviations can have.

When students are asked about abbreviations, many times they state that do not know what they mean. Two students illustrate this reality.

67

(11) *R: What does 'mm' mean?*
S: Actually, I forgot. She gave us a thing with all those symbols, but I never read it.

Additionally, interview (12) discusses the marginal abbreviation "RO".

(12) *R: What does this mean to you? (point to marginal comment)*
S: I do not know.
R: You don't know.
S: No. (5 seconds) It's got something to do with the whole paragraph.
R: And how do you know that?
S: The bracket covers the whole paragraph.

The combination of textual markings, a bracket and an abbreviation, did not facilitate the student's ability to identify the nature of the error; however, they did help the student identify the existence of the error. They did not help the student identify the boundary, only the bracket helped the student identify the boundary of the error.

Underlining

Another textual marking that is ambiguous to students is underlining. Often times this type of marking only indicated the existence of an error to the student, leaving the student unsure what to direct his or her attention and unable to determine the nature of the error (as evidenced in section 2.4). Therefore, underlining frequently led students to 1) delete the underlined segments because they did not know how to address the error, 2) attempt to correct the "error" by replacing the word or group of words with something as equally as wrong (unknowingly), or 3) misidentifying the error and replacing the underlined section with new text but text that did not correct the error.

In Figure 19, the instructor underlines the word "child" three times: "child body", "child role", and "child identity" in this utterance. This error occurred in the student's draft 2 essay, and since the student wrote a third essay, he was able to talk about what he did.

On the other hand, adolescence is a period of losses because they lose their child body, child role, and their child identity. During this time, adolescents struggle building their

Figure 19. Example of Deletion: Eduardo

In the interview below (13), Eduardo discusses his difficulty in understanding the teacher's underlining on lines 1 and 2.

(13) *R: Can you read this sentence for me?*
      S: (Student reads sentence out loud).
      R: What is going on here (researcher points to the three underlines)?
      S: I didn't understand when I saw that. That's why in my last last [draft] I changed. I changed here (the first underline) "body child", I erased (points to second underline) to avoid talking about children, and put "their identity". I erased all "child" because I didn't know how to handle this; I used other way to explain same.

The student illustrates that an underline by itself is not sufficient feedback for him to use in his revision.   He did not understand what the teacher wanted; consequently, he deleted the underlined words.

Figures 20 and 21 illustrate the second scenario where students are not able to correctly incorporate their instructor's feedback. In the initial draft, the instructor underlines "impression for their speakers", writes the abbreviation "wc" with a question mark, and asks the student "What does this mean?" (all other writing are the student's brainstorming) (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Draft 1 Example of Incorrect Replacement

The student tries to resolve this error in the second draft, but replaces the text with something equally wrong. Again the teacher underlines the new text, writes the abbreviation "wc", and writes a qualitative comment stating that "Languages do not explain and clarify" (Figure 21).

All languages explain and clarify their speakers' thoughts, opinions, and beliefs.
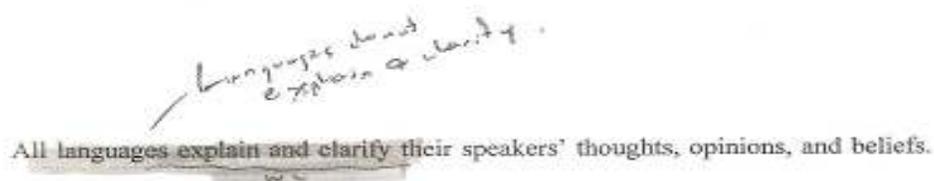
Figure 21. Draft 2 Example of Incorrect Replacement

Despite the student's attempts to correct this error, the student was unable to produce a target-like utterance as a result of the underline and other feedback provided.

Figure 22 and 23 exemplify the third scenario: students incorrectly identifying the nature of an error when the error is only marked with an underline.

It starts in May and finish in September
Figure 22. Draft 1 Example of Misidentified Nature of Error

In draft 1 (Figure 22), the instructor underlined the "sh" of "finish"; this was the only indication to the learner that something needed to change. So, the student takes out "finish" and writes "end" in draft 2 (Figure 23).

It starts in May and end in September,
Figure 23. Draft 2 Example of Misidentified Nature of Error

As evidenced by her second draft, this student thought that the error was a word choice error; as a result, replaced "finish" with "end". However, the student incorrectly identified the nature of the error, as the error was subject-verb agreement, not word choice. All three of these scenarios provide support that underlining often misdirects learners attention.

To understand the purpose of using an underline, instructors were asked what an underline meant to them and to describe when they used them. In the first instructor's interview (14), the instructor states that underlines are used only as a way to indicate the existence of an error to the students.

(14) *R: What does an underline mean to you?*
T: It's an indication to the student there's something you need to pay attention. It's either a linguistic error, usually it's a linguistic error, or it's an idea that's not clear, and usually I'll put a comment to the side. If it's an idea that's not clear, I'll usually give them some kind of indication what the problem is… "it's not clear" or "it's not developed well-enough" or "you need support for it." If it's a grammar issue, it's usually just simply an indication that here's an error, figure out what it is, and fix it. So, no, it doesn't necessarily mean the same thing.

It can be concluded from this excerpt that an underline does not indicate to the students that the same error has been made; rather, it is a way for the teacher to draw the student's attention to a particular word or phrase, and it is the responsibility of the student to determine what the error is and the best way to fix it. However, this intention on behalf of the teachers is not understood all students. Luz Elena's student interview below (15), illustrates this contradiction.

(15) *R: So what does [an] underline mean?*
S: I don't memorize all the signs that he do, so I have to check my [edit sheet] that he give us.
*R: Does an underline always mean the same thing?*
S: Most of the time yes. Some times he underlines one part and he puts letters under, and then the next one is gonna be same [error], and the next one… I understand like that.

According to this student's understanding then, an underline indicates the same error until another abbreviation is written. But what happens when an underline is the only comment given? As was seen in 2.4.1, the instructor only used underlines to indicate coordination, verb tense, pronoun reference, infinitive, missing article, incorrect use of a preposition, and the need for a semi-colon. As ESOL writing students are learning both English and writing this kind of feedback

71

causes confusion and incorrect identification of the nature of the errors, as evidenced in 2.4, even for advanced-level learners.

3.4.1.2 Explicit Corrections

One aspect of feedback that seems particularly helpful to students is recasts. Many might think this to be true because it's an "easy way out" for the students (e.g. Ferris 2002). However, the students appreciated this type of feedback because it provided them with an opportunity to *evaluate* the feedback more effectively. They could decide whether or not the teacher had understood their intentions.
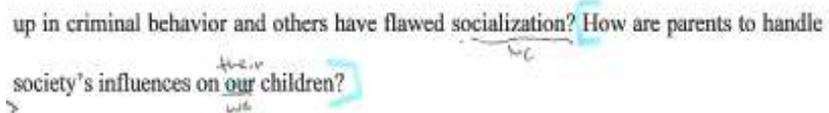
Figure 24. Teacher Feedback Does Not Equal Student Intentions: Eduardo

Eduardo's interview below focuses on the utterance within the blue brackets (written by researcher). It illustrates a time when the teacher misunderstood the intentions of the student.

(16) *R: Why did the teacher write 'their' and crossed out "our"?*
S: I wanted to be included [that's why I used "our"] because I was talking about adolescences. I wanted to put in some of my own experiences… My daughter is adolescence, and wanted to talk in general.

By the teacher supplying a recast, an explicit correction of a pronoun in this case, the student could evaluate whether or not the "correction" upheld the meaning that the student wanted to convey. In this case, the student stated that the recast did not express his intentions. Below, in Figure 27, the teacher supplies a correction that the student agrees better conveys the intention of the sentence and her argument.

In modern times, lots of teens have been in drug abuse, and it is raising a social

Figure 25. Teacher Feedback Equals Student Intentions: Yun Hee

Yun Hee's interview (17) focuses on the recast "causing" written as an explicit correction of

"raising" found in the first sentence of the student's text. It illustrates a time when the instructor's

feedback upheld the student's intentions.

(17)   *R: Why did [your teacher] cross out "raising" and put "causing"? What do you*
      think she meant?
      S: I don't know. Still I like "raising".
      R: Why? What do you think "raising" illustrates to the reader more than "causing"?
      S: I think "causing" is better than "raising" because "causing" means here is some
        problem and some solution, something like that, we commonly use cause [for]
        reason. But "raise" is more wide; I can use this word (raise) but also used in
        other situations, so "causing" is better than "raising"
      R: because there is a reason
      S: Ya, that's right.

In this instance, despite the fact that the student "liked" her word better, she stated that "causing"

had a narrower connotation which better related to the sentential context. In both of these

examples, the students were able to think about their writing in a different way based on the

recasts their teachers provided. Even though they did not always agree with the recasts, being

able to evaluate a suggestion was more helpful to the students than underlining and

abbreviations.

3.4.1.3 Qualitative Comments

As compared with textual markings and explicit corrections, qualitative comments were

the least frequent. However, qualitative comments shed light into two specific areas of written

feedback: the use of metalanguage and the use of summative feedback.

73

Metalanguage

It is common to see metalinguistic terms used in written feedback. However, how accessible is the written feedback if students do not understand what these terms mean? Further investigation led to a mismatch between teacher and student perspectives on the use of metalanguage. Interview (18) presents one instructor's perspective.

> **(18)** *R: When you writing something like "parallel structure" in the side comments,*
> *and in the re-write they make the same mistake, do you think that [the students]*
> *don't understand [the comment] because they don't understand the grammar or*
> *because they don't understand the metalanguage?*
> T: They <u>do</u> understand. Sometimes it's not the understanding part, it's they lack
> the ability to have a similar word in adjective form or noun form.

While it may be true that students struggle with not knowing a single word in a variety of word forms, as articulated by the teacher above, students seem to suggest that they do in fact struggle with metalanguage. This is expressed in one student's interview, as inserted below (19). Figure 26 is the corresponding text with the teacher's commentary highlighted in the interview.

Figure 26. Example of Metalinguistic Commentary: Jose

Jose's interview below focuses on the marginal comment: "Parallelism- You need a noun phrase here not a clause".

> **(19)** *R: What does this comment mean to you?*
> *R: (Student struggles to read the comment, so the researcher reads it aloud). It*
> *says, "parallelism: You need a noun phrase here not a clause." So can you tell*
> *me where the clause is?*
> S: I think right here (student points to underlined section) is where I made the
> error, politeness is another difference (student uses the word *difference* instead
> of the word *one*, as it is written)

74

R: Is that a clause or a phrase?
S. …that's a phrase.
R: And how do you know that?
S: just [by] looking at it.
R: What does a 'phrase' need?
S: Subject and verb.
R: Okay. So you said, "politeness is another difference", where's the subject and where's the verb?
S: Subject would be "politeness" and verb would be "is".
--break—
R: Let's work backwards for a second. (Researcher reads student's text)
        "There are many aspects that differentiate men and women regarding to their language but the most outstanding ones are"
    what does he want you to do here?
S: put a colon
R: (Researcher continues to read) how different they express themselves (Researcher stops reading and waits for student to pick up)…
S: how polite they are
R: (Researcher continues to read) and of course
S: the type of topics they have in conversation. (Student finished reading)
R: Now, how is that what you just said, "how polite they are", different from "politeness is another one"?
S: They refer to the same thing.
R: Do you think both of them are clauses?
S: No, I don't know the difference.

The student confirms that students "understand", as the teacher suggested in interview (18), the grammatical aspects of "parallel structure". To illustrate, when I began reading the paragraph, paying no attention to the marginal comment, the student was able to apply the "how the …" structure of the previous noun phrase, to the underlined, problematic utterance and create a parallel noun phrase without hesitation. However, when asked what the differences were between "how polite they are" and "politeness is another one", the student was unable to identify which of these utterances was a noun phrase and which of these utterances was a noun clause. This dimension of the student's interview contradicts the teacher's comments that metalanguage is not problematic for students.

Summative Feedback

While qualitative comments did appear as marginal comments, most were written as summative feedback, thus were not analyzed as they did not contain linguistic-specific feedback. Nonetheless, students were asked about them. Students who were in writing classes without writing conferences stated that end-comments were the teacher's "summary of mistakes" for a given paper. However, students who were in classes which held writing conferences preferred partaking in a conference versus reading extensive summative comments (Appendix B). Of the eight original classes, four of the classes held writing conferences. It is important to note, however, that the writing conferences were not all conducted in the same way; the implementation of conferences greatly affected the student attitudes towards writing and their writing performance. However, these differences can not be discussed here, as that is not the scope of this study.

Of the two classes that required revision, one of them also required student-teacher conferences. For this class, even when students were provided with multiple pages of summative comments which outlined organizational and grammatical areas of their essays, students stated that they would rather be able to talk with their instructor and take their own notes than have pages of written teacher feedback. For one, they said, the written feedback was "too far" from their texts, consequently they found it to be confusing at times. In Cheng's interview below (20), he states that intralineal and marginal comments are more helpful than the summative comments because of proximity.

(20)   *R: [Are summative comments] more helpful than the circling and underling [your teacher does within your essay]?*
S: I think the circling and underlining, the mistakes I've made and she write the answer right next to it, I think those are more helpful than just write out a whole

76

page of mistakes because sometimes even though I look at it, I know, but when I go back to read it again I would still miss the mistake.

In this interview the student states that he prefers intralineal and marginal comments because they are closer to the error.

Secondly, students were asked about the differences between written summative comments and writing conferences. Students stated that student-teacher writing conferences provided them with the opportunity to clarify what the teacher meant and ask additional questions if necessary. In Basmah's interview below (21), she articulates the benefits of being able to discuss her ideas and clarify the instructor's comments.

(21) *R: How do the comments help?*
S: Well, she asked if we want to meet [with] her. Last semester I got a lot of comments back on my papers (from a different instructor), but I didn't get that much out of it. But when I met her (current teacher) and we started talking what does she mean, she say, like, word choice or run-on or whatever, she tell me I did wrong and discussing the ideas and sometimes explain what I mean and she understands, "Okay this sentence makes more sense" when I tell her what's my idea, and she tells me how to did it right. So meeting with her was more helpful then those comments.
--break--
S: (recalling a past conference) My first paragraph, I don't remember what it was about, my sentences were just choppy: subject, verb, whatever, and period. When I met with her she tell me to write more complicated sentences, and I went home and re-wrote [the introduction] completely different.

For these students, being able to interact with the teacher, question the teacher's comments, and elaborate upon an idea that had been presented in their essays was much more helpful than simply receiving extensive summative comments. The students felt that they were able to get more out of the feedback when they had the opportunity to clarify textual markings, like word choice and run-on errors, than if they had only been given the commentary without the opportunity to meet one-on-one.

The instructor confirms the students' perspectives as she discusses her reasons for holding student-teacher conferences in the interview below (22).

(22) *R: In addition to [the extensive summative] comments that you provide, you also hold conferences. What do you think the benefit of that is verses just having [the students] read your comments?*

T: Because some of them don't read the comments. And, if you noticed maybe a couple of places the same mistakes I've corrected in the first paper and again the same mistakes you can see in the second draft also, so sitting with them and showing them, it's kind of again teaching them and, sometimes they really do not know. They know gerunds but they don't know gerunds can be subject position, object position or gerunds should always be singular; they don't know some of the factors… so sitting with them really helps them… [during the writing conferences] I tell them, "Take a piece of paper [and] as we go through your essay write down [your errors]". So they were writing down where the subject-verb agreement was wrong… they took notes…that way they were kind of digesting their mistakes so its easy for them to realize [them]… personally sitting down with someone and helping them is the best thing I can provide. I can help more than I do in class because [I can address their concerns and check to see if they personally understand].

The instructor and students seem to completely agree with each other. As the two previous students articulated, and the instructor reiterated, the teacher is able to work independently with the students, addressing their specific concerns. By making them responsible for taking their own notes during the conference, rather than administering the conference in another way, the students understand the written commentary more completely.

The student excerpt below (23) offers additional support to the instructor's notion that one-on-one time gives students the opportunity to really digest their mistakes.

(23) S: Whenever she just write all the corrections on the paper, I look at it, but it doesn't really register in my head. If I actually talking to her one on one, and she points out all these mistakes, and give more examples, its more helpful (than written comments) and it actually registers in my head.

The student's words-- "it actually registers in my head"-- confirms the instructor's beliefs that one-on-one interaction facilitates the students understanding of written commentary overall.

3.4.2 Location of Feedback

Intralineal and marginal comments were the comments explored because of their rich linguistic-focused feedback. For this study, intralineal comments are defined as those in-text comments which occurred above, below, or within a line of student's text. Marginal comments are defined as comments that were written in the top, bottom, right, or left sides of a page, outside of the student's text. Occasionally, instructors utilize both intralineal and marginal comments to supply feedback on the same error; in these cases the parameters set for by the individual definitions are upheld.

3.4.2.1 Intralineal Feedback

All six instructors agreed that intralineal comments were used to give localized feedback, most frequently attending to grammatical errors.

(24) T: Usually my markings in the inside are more little, minor things. You know, you used the wrong word ending, you used the wrong verb tense here, or you misspelled a word…. Most of my corrections are small, so they can fit above or below the line.

Intralineal comments were the most common location for teachers to provide feedback. Intralineal comments constituted 86% of Amisha's written feedback on first drafts. 94% of James's comments were intralineal.

3.4.2.2 Marginal Feedback

Unlike intralineal comments, marginal comments were seen to have two distinct purposes by the teachers. Some instructors used marginal comments as a way to justify their evaluations to their students.

(25) T: I'd probably say [students] pay very little attention to what's on the side- that's more for me than for them so that when I do my grading assessment I can identify the kinds of mistakes they are making.

79

Others used marginal comments to communicate to the learner, often attempting to direct the student's attention to a suprasentential error.

(26) T: Usually my side comments are for something big. It covers a bigger issue and I have to bracket several lines to indicate what I am talking about.

For Amisha, marginal comments only comprised 5% of her draft 1 commentary. James marginal commentary constituted 6% of his draft 1 written feedback.

For instructors who used commentary to justify their evaluation, much more commentary was used when compared to instructors who used marginal commentary to converse with students. Their commentary tended to be textual markings, mainly abbreviations, while the latter group's commentary tended to be qualitative comments.

Occasionally, teachers combined both intralineal and marginal comments to draw a student's attention to an error; however, this was by far the least common way of indicating an error to a student. For Amisha, 8% of her commentary on first draft essays combined intralineal and marginal comments, while James only used this combination 0.5% of the time.

3.4.2.3 Summative Feedback

Although initially included in this study's original design, summative feedback was eliminated from the analysis because, for all but one of the teachers, it consisted of motivating comments and general statements recapping the marginal and intralineal comments in prose form. As such, there was not sufficient evidence in the writing samples provided that summative feedback consisted of feedback which focused on linguistic features; its inclusion did not assist in answering the study's central research question.

<u>3.4.3 Providing and Receiving Feedback</u>

As illustrated in the literature review on written feedback, there are many factors to consider when providing written commentary. First teachers must decide what utterances in students' essays are erroneous, and then they must set parameters.

(27) *R: What do you consider to be an error?*
T: For grammar anything that breaks the accepted formal rules; anything that creates ambiguity. For organization, [if the student is] not responding to the required task, [if the] expression and arrangement of ideas are incomprehensible or chaotic, [or if there are] insufficient details and examples.

This instructor considers both sentence-level and discourse-level errors to important when responding to students, and alludes to correcting student essays on the basis of error gravity and comprehensibility. In interview (28), the instructor shares what he considers when deciding how to comment on a student's essay.

(28) *R: How do you decide to mark one error over another?*
T: Proficiency-level accessibility, type (grammatical verses semantic), salience, and effect on general comprehensibility. Proficiency-level accessibility, I mark errors that students at a defined level will understand and can be expected to correct. For example, I would probably not correct clause-level errors in a beginning-level class. Errors which can be corrected by application of rules, grammatical in nature, are errors that I typically <u>mark</u>, not <u>correct</u>. This is especially true if we have covered the grammar structure in class. Errors which cannot be tied to rules, semantic in nature, are ones I often correct so as to avoid frustrating students and to provide them with more time to deal with errors they can most likely correct by themselves. Salience, if an error occurs repeated throughout a paper, I'll mark or correct the error once or twice, then ask the student to correct the remaining instances. Effect on general comprehensibility, if an error obscures meaning, I'm likely to mark or correct it.

This instructor indicates that he indirectly marks student's errors if he feels the student can come to a conclusion on his or her own. Additionally, this instructor seems to follow the suggestion put forth in the literature recommending teachers to indirectly correct errors that have generalizable

81

grammatical rules and directly correct errors that are atypical (cf. George, 1972; Hendrickson, 1978). Finally, the teacher indicates that he considers comprehensibility when deciding which errors to mark; this principle is reflected in both teachers' interviews.

Another factor teachers should consider when providing written feedback, as advocated by Hendrickson (1978) and Ferris (2002), is whether or not they are going to provide selective or comprehensive feedback. Teachers and students alike have varying perspectives when it comes to the issue of error correction. Some students feel that it is the teacher's responsibility to correct everything, while some teachers feel that their primary role is not "editor". Additionally, some students feel that it should be their responsibility for finding errors in their papers; teachers typically agreed with this perspective. Finally, other students say that they are happy when they find errors the teacher did not mark because it symbolized to them that they are learning; this perspective was unexpected by the teachers. What ensues is a discussion of these perspectives, first from the teachers and then from the students.

3.4.3.1 Perspectives on Providing and Receiving Feedback

Writing instructors often must grapple with what they are going to correct and how they are going to correct it in their students' writings. The excerpt below (29) illustrates this very struggle.

> **(29)** T: I'm not really happy with the way I correct sometimes and make comments because there are so many [errors]. If there are one or two in a paragraph, then I can easily write so many comments in the back, but sometimes there's too many in a paragraph…by the time I make a comment [the student's] next sentence is also wrong… maybe sometimes its difficult for the students to understand all of their mistakes and all the comments I make...

As highlighted in this excerpt, teachers struggle when determining how they are going to comment on students essays and how they are going to focus their students' attention. This

82

instructor seems to indicate that she needs to comprehensively respond to students' essays, yet she raises concern about overwhelming the students.

However, other teachers suggest a more selective approach, wanting to encourage their students to take more responsible for their learning and have less dependency upon them as the instructor.

Student views on their teachers comprehensively or selectively marking their papers varied greatly. Some students feel that if the teacher does not mark anything, nothing is wrong with the utterance; others say they would be very concerned and they might be confused because they would not know which of their utterances were correct. A different set of students stated that selective marking was okay with them because they saw it as an advantage if they could identify their own errors. Cheng's interview (30) embodies the first perspective.

(30) *R: For example, in this first sentence, [your teacher] didn't mark anything. Would you possibly still change that sentence?*
S: Probably not. I'd just leave it alone; if she agrees with me in what I wrote, then that means that sentence must be alright. So, I won't even try to mess around with it again.

This student seems to embrace the idea that the teacher is responsible for commenting on everything, and if it's not commented on, then nothing is wrong. However, this becomes problematic when teachers are inconsistent in their feedback, as illustrated in 4.4.1.

In the next example, the student expresses a level of concern and confusion if her teacher were not to mark everything. The interview (31) draws upon an utterance found in Cari's writing in which she makes a subject-verb agreement error: "The tenses in the Spanish language differs…"

(31) *R: Let's take this example here, where you put an 's' here (subject-verb agreement error), let's say it happened again in the paper but [your teacher] didn't mark it…*

S: Well, I might notice that, "Oh, wow I did the same but she didn't notice"; I wouldn't tell her.

R: Would you look for it in other places or if she doesn't mark it, you don't think about it?

S: Oh, I be worried, worried about where are the others, [worried] if I have more mistakes that she haven't noticed. I will go and ask her, "Is that a mistake?" if I have some confusion. If I find other sentence with this kind of mistake, I will say her, "Is there a difference between these two mistakes?" cause maybe I can get confused where I have to use this or where I don't.

This student seems to suggest that if she were to discover an error not marked by the teacher, she would need to talk with the instructor to determine why the error wasn't marked, and in what scenarios it should be marked. If selective marking were employed on this student's essay, she indicated that confusion might result.

In the final example, the student expresses in interview (32) that it is okay with her when her instructor selectively corrects her errors.

(32) *R: So what happens when you make a mistake but he doesn't point it out to you?*

S: Well sometimes, you know, checking word by word I think is hard, but sometimes I catch myself, that he didn't catch that error [and it feels great]! I'm glad when I can catch [my errors] because that means I'm learning.

This student illustrates a completely different attitude than the previous students. If she can find an error that the teacher failed to find, or mark, then it motivates her. She feels that if she can identify her own errors then she is learning!

From these various perspectives presented- both from the teachers and from the students- it can be concluded that there is mismatch between what teachers want to correct and what students want their teachers to correct.

Three basic questions needed to be addressed in the analysis in order to address the fourth research question: "Do students respond consistently to all types of feedback?" These are:

1) How many of the marked errors are *correctly* incorporated by the student?

2) How many of the marked errors are *incorrectly* incorporated by the student?

3) How many of the marked errors are *not* incorporated by the student?

For an utterance to be considered "correctly incorporated" the student had to fulfill the intentions of the teacher's feedback; this was not my interpretation or judgment on the correctness of the nature of the error. The answers to these questions might provide evidence of reformulation, thereby providing preliminary evidence of noticing as well as intake. To answer these questions, first drafts were compared to second drafts and coded accordingly. As a result of the comparison, a fourth category emerged, as not all of the draft 1 errors were applicable to the second draft because the students had made substantial revisions and eliminated the commented-on errors (Table 8).

Table 8. Student Actions with Draft 1 Feedback on Draft 2 Essays

Instructor	Correctly Incorporated	Incorrectly Incorporated	Not Incorporated	Irrelevant Because of the Student's Draft 2 Revisions	Total Comments
Amisha	167	21	56	50	298
James	183	30	50	45	308

While 56% of Amisha's feedback is correctly incorporated into her students' essays, 26% of her feedback is incorrectly or not incorporated at all by her students as evidenced by the second drafts of the students' essays. Of these 77 problematic errors, 52% of them are commented on only with Textual Markings. 27% are commented on with a combination of Textual Markings and

Explicit Corrections, and 9% are commented on with a combination of Textual Markings and Qualitative Comments.

A similar pattern emerges for James. 59% of his feedback is incorporated correctly, while 26% of his feedback is incorrectly or not incorporated at all by his students. Of these 80 problematic errors, 64% are marked only with Textual markings. 15% are marked with a combination of Textual markings and Explicit corrections, while 8% were marked with a combination of Textual markings and Qualitative comments.

These two instructors differed greatly in how frequently students were able to correctly incorporate their Explicit Corrections. For Amisha, 16% of the 77 errors marked with Explicit Corrections errors were incorrectly or not incorporated at all by the students. On the other hand, only 3% of James Explicit Corrections experienced this.

3.4.4.1 Perspectives on Incorporating Feedback

Instructors are in complete agreement when asked what they thought students did with their feedback. Amisha's interview illustrates this unified perspective most concisely (33).

(33) *R: Do you expect [the students] to incorporate all of your feedback?*
T: No, I don't expect them to; I want them to, but my experience tells me that they don't.
-break-
T: My suggestions are taken quite well and made use of only by those students who really want to work hard… I can guide [the students] but if [they] don't put in the effort it's not going to work.

The teachers in this study all seem to agree that providing feedback is a tool for students, and those who use the tool, benefit from it, and those who do not, have the option of that choice. The instructors also expressed a desire to instill in their students that learning is a two sided process: the teachers give, but the students need to take responsibility for their own learning.

Students, on the other hand, had a variety of perspectives when it came to incorporating their instructor's feedback. One perspective was to incorporate everything. Ramona's interview (34) illustrates this perspective.

> **(34)** *R: When you go to revise, do you use her comments?*
> S: Yes, I used everything. I take my [writing] out and put hers in.
> *R: So whatever she corrects*
> S: that's what I do

This seems to contradict the point presented by the instructor above; however, because second drafts were not provided for this particular student's essay, there is no way to confirm what the student actually *does*. From the two classes which required revision, the teacher's comment concerning the amount of feedback students incorporate was confirmed: none of the students incorporated 100% of the feedback provided to them.

Another student perspective involved the students evaluating the feedback, before deciding which aspects of the feedback to incorporate. Cari's interview (35) demonstrates this perspective.

> **(35)** *R: How do you decide which of [your teacher's] comments to keep and which*
> *   ones*
> S: not keep it?
> *R: Ya.*
> S: If I see that she has a reason then, yeah [I do it], or if I feel it sounds better or I
>   feel I'm missing something, I will take them. But I think it's not a problem there,
>   then I will talk with her and we compare. She tells me what she think is wrong,
>   and I tell her why I think it's not a problem. Maybe I will check with another
>   teacher, and see if she think it's a problem. Sometimes, I don't know, teachers
>   correct papers in a very different ways.

As is evidenced by this student, she does not always incorporate all of her teacher's feedback; rather, she makes sure there is a reason for making the change rather than comprehensively incorporating everything. This student added that she seeks other people's perspectives from

outside of the class in order to determine whether or not her teacher's comment is valid or not.

Other students, who shared this perspective, also stated that they would consult with previous

teachers or books as a means to evaluate the written feedback they had received.

*3.4.4.2 Inconsistencies with Between-Draft Feedback*

Based on the comparison of teacher commentary between first and second drafts, six

factors influenced teacher inconsistencies. For one, the same text was presented in both draft 1

and draft 2, however, the teacher only commented on the error in one of the drafts.
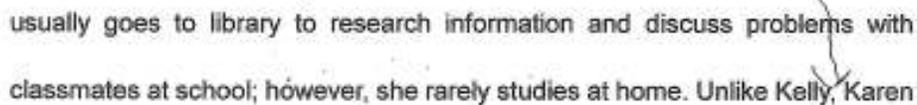
usually goes to library to research information and discuss problems with

classmates at school; however, she rarely studies at home. Unlike Kelly, Karen

Figure 27. No Indication of Error: Draft 1

As Figure 27 and Figure 28 illustrate, the same text was present in both drafts. In the first draft,

the instructor did not mark anything in the utterance "goes to library to research information and

discuss problems with classmates at school".
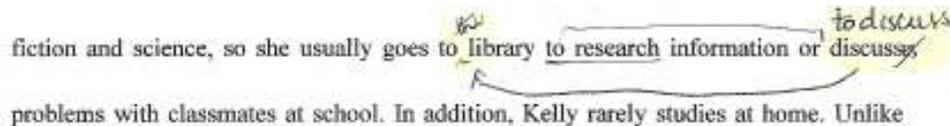
fiction and science, so she usually goes to library to research information or discuss

problems with classmates at school. In addition, Kelly rarely studies at home. Unlike

Figure 28. Indication of Two Errors: Draft 2

However, in the second draft, the instructor inserts an article between "to" and "library" and

corrects "discusses" so that it is parallel with "to research". (Highlighting and arrow done by

researcher).

A second factor that influenced what the instructor commented on was the presence or

absence of an error between draft 1 and draft 2 essays. This situation is illustrated in Figures 29

and 30.
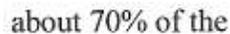
about 70% of the

Figure 29. Absence of Error: Draft 1

In Figure 29, there is not an error in the student's utterance "about 70% of the" in draft 1. However, in draft 2 the student inserts the article "a" before "70%", which is then commented on by the instructor (Figure 30).

about a 70% of

Figure 30. Presence of Error: Draft 2

A third factor was that the teacher focused on different types of errors within each draft. In the example below, the teacher focused on the plural form of respect as well as the preposition "of". However, in the second draft, the instructor addresses the expression "in terms of".

on people's socialization are different in respects of diversity, time, and
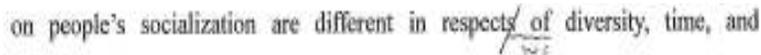
Figure 31. Teacher Indicates Correction of Individual Words: Draft 1

In draft 1 the teacher crossed out the "s" from "respects", and marked "of" as an incorrect word choice. When the student revised his essay, he wrote: "in the matter of diversity". Then, in draft 2's feedback, the instructor crossed out "the matter" and replaced it with "terms". Additionally, the instructor provided a marginal comment that informed the student of a new vocabulary word.

through the life long process. There are many agents of socialization including family, school, peer groups, workplaces and mass media. The relative effects of parents and peers on people's socialization are different in the matter of diversity, time, and
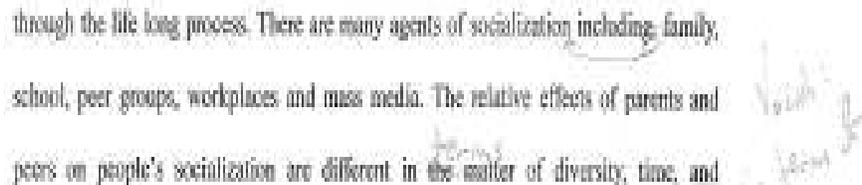
**Figure 32.** Teacher Indicates Correction of Phrase: Draft 2

A fourth type of comment that contributed to the marking inconsistencies, was that, occasionally, a teacher would mark an error one way in the first draft, the student would

incorporate the comment, and then the teacher would mark the same word (or set of words) again. As is illustrated below, the teacher bracketed "which makes", put a deletion symbol above the brackets, and wrote an explicit correction.
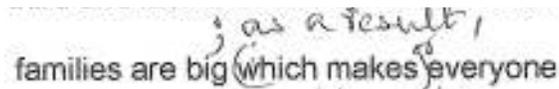

Figure 33. Teacher Supplies Explicit Correction: Draft 1

When the student re-wrote her paper, she utilized all of the teacher's commentary. However, in draft 2, the instructor wrote an explicit correction over the same set of words, essentially correcting her own correction.
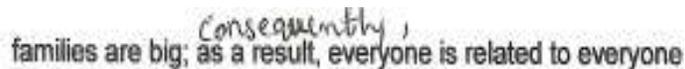
Figure 34. Teacher "Corrects" the Explicit Correction: Draft 2

At other times, the comments made in the first draft are repeated by the teacher in the second draft because the student took no action. In Figure 35, the teacher underlined the words "to caused", in order to signal to the student that something needed to be changed. (Highlighting and boxing done by the researcher).

Figure 35. Teacher Indicates Error: Draft 1

However, the student did not take any action towards this error in the second draft, so the instructor, again underlined the same set of words. Additionally, the instructor wrote a comment in the margins requesting that the student revisit his first draft.

you may have to pay more attention to your own safety when you off campus. Usually,

live off campus students have the tendency to caused troubles, such as drinking in the

apartment and drug use. Therefore, students who live off campus would have to be

Figure 36. Teacher Indicates Same Error: Draft 2

Finally, in other cases, the teacher commented on an utterance in draft 1, the student

took no action in draft 2, and the teacher did not comment on the utterance in draft 2.

background, economical ability, etc. Most children

Figure 37. Teacher Indicates Word Form and Word Choice Errors: Draft 1

The teacher indicates to the student that the "al" suffix from the word "economical" needs to be

deleted, and he marks "ability" as a word choice error.

background, economic ability. Most children

Figure 38. Teacher Indicates Conjunction Error: Draft 2

In the second draft, the student changes the word form of "economical" to "economic", as

indicated by the instructor, but does not address the word choice error concerning "ability".

However, the instructor does not mark "ability" as a word choice in this draft. With this evidence,

it would be hazardous to make claims about the findings in Table 6 because the decreases

illustrated in the comparison of draft 1 and draft 2 cannot necessarily be attributed to correct

reformulations or correct incorporation of the teachers' feedback by the students.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

4.1 Background

The study's overarching question-- What written feedback do learners notice and incorporate into subsequent drafts?-- was addressed from a multi-dimensional perspective in order to attempt to describe the "whole picture." The first piece of the picture was to determine what the students were noticing from their teachers' feedback, so that I could get another piece of the picture, and see what they were incorporating. However, I could not make any conclusions about what the students were incorporating until I knew what errors the teachers were focusing on in their written feedback. And, finally, the last piece of this picture required me to investigate what the teachers and students perceived to be going on and determine the degree their actions actually represented their thoughts.

4.2 Findings

Below each of the study's four research questions are answered individually.

4.2.1 Research Question 1

Research question one asked: To what extent can an ESOL learner identify the existence, boundary, and nature of an error based on the written feedback received for a given error by his or her writing instructor?

I broke up noticing into three levels to reflect Schmidt's (1990) sub-levels of "consciousness as awareness": Perception, Noticing, and Understanding. What I found was that teacher feedback facilitated the student's ability to correctly identify the existence of an error 75%

92

of the time. However, teacher feedback led to students falsely identifying the boundary and

nature of an error 50% of the time. These results are important because they show, at least

preliminarily, higher levels of noticing are only being facilitated half of the time by current

feedback practices employed by instructors. What this could mean then, is that students *are not*

"noticing the gap" (Schmidt & Frota, 1986) between the written production of their interlanguage

and target language features. To put this in Schmidt's (1990) terms, students seem to be able to

"perceive" an error, but are only able to "notice" and "understand" the error 50% of the time.

<u>4.2.2 Research Question 2</u>

Research question two deals with how teachers provide feedback, and as such, asks: To

what extent does the type of feedback (textual marking, qualitative comment, or explicit

corrections) or location of feedback (intralineal, marginal, or summative) facilitate an ESOL

learner's ability to incorporate instructor written feedback into their second drafts? Below are the

relevant findings which address this question.

Intralineal feedback seemed to be most helpful to students because it was very localized

and specific for a particular grammatical error. Textual markings seemed to help students identify

the existence of an error; students said that this type of localized feedback helped them to notice

the existence of an error even if they were not able to identify the nature of the error, and even

when they also had difficulties identifying the boundaries of the error. Their comments seem to

confirm Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis in the regard that students must first notice the feedback

before they can act on it.

However, while Hyland (2003) argues that "minimal marking makes correction neater and

less threatening than masses of red ink and helps students to find and identify their mistakes" (p.

181), sometimes it drew the student's attention away from the actual error the teacher was trying to get the student to address (refer to section 2.4). Recall that the student thought the underline under "bias" related to the comma right next to "bias", and caused him to think that the textual marking was indicating a punctuation error. However, the teacher was intending to direct the student's ill-formed verb tense.

Another type of feedback that students perceived to be beneficial was explicit corrections because they were not ambiguous; consequently, the learners felt they could evaluate it and were more in control of what they were incorporating, or not incorporating. This contradicts Ferris (2002) when she claims that students prefer explicit correction because it is "easier" and "requires less work on [the students'] part to make corrections" (p. 65). Based on these findings, the students were actually doing more work because they could accurately analyze and understand what the teacher wanted them to do.

"In Hyland's (1998) study, students either followed a comment (usually a grammar correction) closely in their revision, used the feedback as an initial stimulus which triggered a number of revisions, or avoided the issues raised by the feedback by deleting the problematic text" (Hyland, 2003, p.179). All of these situations are confirmed in the findings of this study. Students tend to incorporate grammar corrections, even if they did not understand the nature of the error, especially if the accompanying commentary included a recast. Additionally, as illustrated by Table 8, teachers' written feedback spurred other revisions beyond the original intention of the commentary. Finally, as evidenced in section 3.4.1.1 (Underlining), students often deleted portions of texts when they did not understand what the teacher's comment was

94

attempting to direct their attention to; this most frequently occurred when the comment was a textual marking of some kind.

4.2.3 Research Question 3

Research question number three focuses on what teachers comment on. As such, it asks: What errors do teachers consider to be salient as manifest in their correction habits?

Hyland (2003) argues that instructors should provide written commentary that indicates errors in relationship to the material studied by the students in class at the time; this was also supported by Hendrickson (1978) and Ferris (2002). While the instructors *thought* they were doing this, they were not. As section 3.4 illustrated, teachers most commonly marked word choice, article use, prepositions, plurals, verb tense/ form, and spelling, despite the fact that the course material for the Spring 2007 semester included noun clauses, adjective clauses, adverbial clauses, gerunds, and infinitives.

Hyland (2003) also states that teachers should comprehensively comment on students' texts, making sure to address "the structure, organization, style, content, and presentation", but cautions teachers to not feel obligated to comment on all these aspects on every single draft. However, what I found in my study was that teachers were directing their students' attention to the same kinds of errors regardless of the draft they were commenting on, those primarily being sentence-level grammatical errors. That is *not* to say that the instructors did not comment on the organization, style, content, or presentation, but that is to say that collectively these six teachers commented most often on structure.

4.2.4 Research Question 4

Research question four investigates how students respond to the feedback they are provided. As such, it asks: Do students respond consistently to all types of feedback? What I found was that in fact students do *not* respond the same way. More specifically, students have the most trouble with understanding textual markings; 58% of the errors incorrectly incorporated or not incorporated were marked with textual markings, whereas when teachers combined textual markings with explicit corrections, the percentage dropped to 21%, and when the teachers combined textual markings with qualitative comments, the percentage dropped to 8.5%. These results seem to indicate that teachers may need to be more systematic and clear when using textual markings. Additionally, these findings may indicate that if written feedback is systematic, then it can facilitate higher levels of noticing which could result in higher levels of consciousness (Schmidt 1990), and could become intake and eventually uptake.

4.3 Pedagogical Advocacy

4.3.1 Systematic Feedback

Literature states that feedback should be systematic and should consider the individual needs of the learner. However, the feedback practices of these teachers' seem to reflect the general practices Zamel (1985) referenced in her article, as both sets of data suggest that teachers' "seem to read and react to a text as a series of separate sentences or even clauses, rather than as a whole unit of discourse. [As a result] they often correct these [local linguistic problems] without realizing that a much larger meaning-related problem has totally escaped their notice" (Zamel, 1985, p. 86). Additionally, based on the number of different types of teacher inconsistencies present within this study, it gives some indication that teachers are not very

systematic in their feedback processes. Another indication is the overlap abbreviations such as "wc" had within the feedback. Additionally, some students thought that an underline always meant the same error; however, the teachers were using an underline to simply indicate that something was wrong. This mismatch could have been why some of the students did not correctly identify the higher levels of noticing; therefore, teachers need to pick a system for their feedback, and repeatedly communicate that system to their students.

4.3.2 Clarify Feedback

Abbreviations are one of the textual markings which gave students a lot of difficulty when identifying higher levels of noticing. Given that abbreviations were often not identified by students, and often disregarded by students, teachers may consider not using them at all. However, if teachers are set on utilizing an editing guide, students said that a short list of their main errors found within a given paper and the meaning of the abbreviation at the end of every paper would be helpful. This is different from editing guides, which received "mixed reviews". By implementing mini-error lists at the conclusion of each student's essay, students might be encouraged to become more autonomous in their editing and proof-reading stages, and may provide an opportunity for the teacher to take on the role of "collaborator" rather than strictly the role of "evaluator" or editor.

4.3.3 Interactive Feedback

Students confirmed a current trend in literature which suggests that language students prefer feedback to be interactive (student-teacher conferences) rather than static (written commentary). Specifically, they confirmed Robinson's (1995) notion that learners need to interact with the input in order to really notice it, as well as Long's interaction hypothesis which

indicates that interactive feedback is more valuable and desired by learners than pre-modified input. As a result, summative feedback is not preferred when students are given the option of participating in student-teacher conferences. These students stated that negotiating changes in their revisions far exceeded the benefits they received when reading the comments independently. For example, the students felt they were able to clarify the teacher's commentary, as well as clarify their intentions in the written production of their language when talking with the instructor. As a result of this, they felt more empowered and more confident about how to proceed with their revisions.

4.3.4 ESOL Writing Classroom

Both Swain (1985) and Hyland (2003) attend to the issue that teachers' feedback also needs to help students improve the accuracy of their production. However, as Ellis (1994) points out, "evidence that learners improve the grammaticality of their utterances when pushed does not of course constitute evidence that acquisition takes place" (p. 283). As section 2.4 exemplifies, most students were not able to identify the nature of the error indicated in the teacher's feedback, and as the tables in section 3.4 show, teacher commentary focused on the same kinds of errors in both draft one and draft two essays. This seems to support the notion presented by Ellis in that students have not acquired the linguistic features focused on in the written commentary. It also seems to demonstrate that teachers are not responding as "collaborator", rather they continue to respond to student writing as "evaluator" regardless of which part of the writing process is being explored at the time.

Interestingly though, 75% of the classes I observed engaged in liner writing (Figure 1) despite what current literature states. Most teachers said that they do not require revision

because there are too many other things (typically referring to grammar points) to cover. This could be an indication that many programs are combining grammar and writing classes. Of the eight classes I observed, seven of them jointly held grammar and writing instruction, and over 50% of the time grammar instruction consumed the entire class period, and writing tasks were assigned as homework.

Many times teachers expressed that the only reason they provided written feedback on students' essays was to justify their evaluation; many teachers questioned whether or not there was any long term value in corrective feedback, and more often than not took the position that it did not; this finding supports Lee's (2003) claim that teachers see little long-term value in providing feedback. By understanding the current program constraints and the teachers' hesitation toward the value of feedback, we can have more insight into what teachers are focusing on and why; their actions confirm Zamel's (1985) articulation that instructors focus on localized linguistic features. Because this is the habit of teachers, it could indicate that feedback can have long-term effects as it could facilitate a learner's ability to reformulate an interlanguage hypothesis. However, such conclusions are beyond the scope of this research. The extent to which students noticing of teacher feedback facilitates uptake, could only be addressed in a multi-term/ multi-year study. However, the revealing of these habits, also may indicate that higher level discourse issues are not being addressed in most ESOL writing classes. Additionally, as a result of the compromised position writing actually has in grammar and writing classes, process writing does not seem to be prevalent method of writing in ESOL writing classes, despite what current literature suggests.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

It is my hope that these findings will illuminate the realities of today's ESOL writing classroom, and will encourage teachers to reconsider their theoretical assumptions and re-evaluate how those assumptions shape their pedagogical practices.

5.1 About the Participants

These teachers were all perceived by their students as highly accessible, and readily available to answer any questions the student may have had. Students expressed that they could go to their teachers, before or after class, send them an email, or meet with them on a non-class meeting day when they had questions.   Nonetheless, time seemed to be a factor for everyone. All of the six teachers taught other classes; some of them were spouses, parents, department chairs, department advisors, and active members in professional organizations. As a result, the amount of time they had to dedicate to their feedback practices were not as much as they would have liked it to be. The intent of this thesis was to raise the awareness of these teachers' practices and empower them, along with others, with the findings, as ESOL writing instructors attempt to address the feedback needs of their students worldwide.

Time also affected the students. Most of the students worked at least one job, were parents, spouses, and taking other classes. As a result, students repeatedly stated that they never had time to proof-read their essays before turning them in. They also articulated that they did not feel they had enough time to write their assignments because of the frequency of the

assignments. Some of the classes had to write essays for each chapter of vocabulary in addition to the core expository writings. For students who wrote revisions, all of them wrote at least one follow-up draft (second draft), but some times students wrote many more. Consequently, many of the students felt overwhelmed at times because they did not feel they had time to "process."

5.2 Areas for Future Research

This study revealed the need for additional research in six main areas: student-teacher conferencing, proof-reading and revision, focused feedback, electronic feedback, vocabulary acquisition, peer feedback.

5.2.1 Student-Teacher Writing Conferences

Three of the seven instructors held writing conferences; however, each one was conducted in a different style and had a different focus. It would be insightful to investigate the way student conferences are conducted so as to determine what kind of conference students prefer. Also, investigating the role student-teacher writing conferences have in developing student attitudes towards writing would be beneficial information for writing instructors.

5.2.2 Proof-reading and Revision

Two of the seven writing instructors required revision. The students in these classes seemed to be more receptive to their instructors' commentary, and their essays were more linguistically complex and had greater development. However, across the board, students stated that they didn't have the time or take the time to proof-read. Occasionally in the interview, a student would say, "oh yeah, I know that" when I pointed to a correction, and then would say, "I never read my papers before I hand them in". If a study could incorporate proof-reading into class activities, I wonder if there would be a reduction in the linguistic commentary that teachers

provide, and would result in a more comprehensive revision, rather than students engaging in editing.

Additional support for investigating the role of proof-reading in the writing classroom is the high number of spelling errors found within the students essays. What was fascinating about the spelling errors was that the vast majority of the spelling errors were correct words, inappropriate for a given context. For example, one student wrote "...to build their lives when they will gout out from home". However, the student meant to write "get out". Another student wrote, "Man and women will not always share the same topics because were are different genders..." Here, the student meant to write "we're"; similar to the example above, "were", just like "gout", is a correctly spelled word, so spell check would not indicate to the student that there was a problem. What these spelling examples highlight is the need for students to proofread. Almost all of the students interviewed stated that they rarely re-read their papers when they finished writing them (even in classes where revision was a required course component). When asked why, many stated the lack of time as the primary reason- the lack of time to write and the lack of time because of their work schedules.

5.2.3 Focused Feedback

In the present study, feedback appeared to be unsystematic, varying a great deal between instructors' personal preferences, especially when it came to determining word choice "errors". A study that provided focused-feedback, say on two of the grammatical features being studied during that semester, might find a correlation between feedback and language acquisition.   If teachers engage in focused-feedback on a limited number of grammatical structures, there is a possibility that students will transition for controlled processing to automatic

processing because they will be aware of the stimuli, actively attending to the stimuli, and acting on the stimuli, which Schmidt argues are the keys to noticing the gap between one's own interlanguage and the target language.

5.2.4 Electronic Feedback

Two of the instructors engaged in electronic feedback. There comments tended to be longer and more interactive, while simultaneously addressing morphosyntactic feedback like their hand-writing counterparts. A further research project could investigate student/ teacher preferences and attitudes regarding implementation of electronic feedback. A study of this nature also might be fruitful given the current academic climate of distance learning courses, CALL, WebCT, and the ever-demanding instructor-student e-mail relationship.

5.2.5 Vocabulary Acquisition

Many of the teachers' written feedback centered around "word choice". At the core of "word choice" is the depth and breadth of one's vocabulary as well as the sociolinguistic usage of the language. One possible question worth further investigation could be how can the writing classroom facilitate vocabulary acquisition? With so many programs featuring "integrated skills" curriculum, ESOL teachers need to be confident in their abilities to create materials that develop all areas.

A slightly different take on vocabulary acquisition is that of "communication strategies". What communication strategies do learners use in their writing when they posses an idea or concept but are unable to produce the specific word? Many of the word choice errors were the students' attempts to articulate a concept for a lexeme or expression for which they did not possess. For example, one of the students wrote "considerable device for higher position" to

convey the idea of "status symbol". Investigating what students do in their writing to

communicate with their audience might show teachers new ways to respond to students' work

and new ways to develop a student's vocabulary.

<u>5.2.6 Peer Review/ Peer Feedback</u>

Students in only two of the eight classes that I observed engaged in peer work. When I

asked students from the other six classes what their thoughts were on peer review/ peer

feedback, I got some very insightful responses.

(36) *R: In this class do you ever get to read other classmates papers?*
S: No.
R: If you [had the opportunity to], what do you think you would look for?
S: I really like to see how people think about the same topic, you know different
ideas and everything. [But] I really don't know [what I would comment on]… I
have never done anything like that before.

This student viewed the thought of peer review as a way to gather and share ideas with

classmates, and at first seemed to embrace the idea, but when asked what she would comment

on, she expressed a level of fear and helplessness, claiming she had no idea how to provide

comments to another student. When the same questions were asked to another student, this

student expressed that the teacher would have to approve her comments before she wrote them

down on her (hypothetical) classmate's essay.

(37) *R: In this class do you ever get to read other classmates papers?*
S: No.
R: If you had the opportunity to, what do you think you would look for?
S: You mean if the teacher allowed me to? …Yeah, it's okay, I can read it. If I
see some mistake, I ask the teacher and if she tell me to put some mark I will.
R: You wouldn't just write something by yourself without talking to the teacher?
S: No. I have to ask the teacher. I have to ask permission to do that first.

It would be very revealing to investigate students' attitudes towards peer review, and see how the process-writing classroom can empower the individual student with the idea that everyone in the classroom can be a teacher.

5.3 Closing Thoughts

Many unexpected findings emerged in this research project. The one that struck home the most was the participants' reactions to the interviews. At the end of the interviews many of the students and teachers stated that the interview challenged them: for the students, they said that they had never looked at their papers line by line before or thought about the relationship one word had within a sentence or within a paragraph before; for the teachers, they said they increased their awareness of how they really comment on papers (not just how they thought they commented), and began to understand how some of the remarks they made could be confusing to students. The teachers that did not distribute editing/ code sheets stated that perhaps they would start, so that students had a base line, and they had something to refer to when commenting.

If this was the only result of the study it would have been more than enough! The central hope of this thesis was to bring awareness to the area of feedback. When I started this project, I was not sure what that awareness would look like, but being an ESOL writing instructor myself, I knew awareness was needed. Now that some more light has been shed into this area, teachers will hopefully take what has been presented here and apply it to their own situations.

The study confirmed that instructor comments, even those who distribute editing sheets, are inconsistent in what he or she marks and how he or she marks it. It also confirms that students misunderstand written feedback; however, by confirming that inconsistencies play a role

on between-draft feedback, teachers have greater awareness now than they did before the study. Being conscious of what written feedback in not doing, may help teachers continue to rethink of ways which make written feedback more accessible to students.

The finding that was very important to me was that even when an instructor underlined the error, theoretically making a clear indication to the student that something was wrong with X, 75% of the time students were able to identify the existence of an error, and half of the time were unable to identify the boundary or nature of the error. That is a great finding as it indicates that written feedback is being noticed; now we just need to employ systematic methods that are both clear and interactive, so that our feedback can increase our students noticing of the higher levels.

APPENDIX A

EXAMPLE OF INSTRUCTOR'S EDITING GUIDE

Editing Guide

Symbol	Explanation	Pp. in *U&UEG* for Explanation	Pp. in *UKFW* for Explanation
art	Incorrect use or lack of an article	112, 115	655-662
cond	Incorrect use or formation of a conditional sentence	412-415, 418, 423, 425	
conn	Incorrect or missing connector		
cp	Capitalization: capital letter needed, or not needed		556-560
cs	Comma splice: two independent clauses joined by a comma	355	358-364
frag	Fragment: incomplete sentence		346-358
modal	Incorrect use or formation of a modal verb	151, 199	
p	Punctuation incorrect or missing		497-554
pass	Incorrect use or formation of passive voice	208	416-421
pro agr	Pronoun agreement unclear or incorrect	134, 136	449-453
pro ref	Pronoun reference unclear or incorrect		442-448
ro	Run-on: two independent clauses joined with no punctuation	355	358-360
sp	Spelling error		564-582
sv	Incorrect subject-verb agreement	88-90, 92	421-442
vc	Incorrect use of verb complement (gerund vs. infinitive)	302, 311, 318-319	326-327
vf	Verb incorrectly formed		312, 387-400
vt	Incorrect verb tense	6-7	312, 401-416
wc	Wrong word choice		574-580, 617-634
wf	Wrong word form		307-317
wo	Incorrect or awkward word order		670-678, 646-647
?	Unclear message		
#	Problem with the singular or plural of a noun	100, 107-108, 112, 119	567, 648, 651-654
^	Add/Insert word(s)		
/	Add space(s)		

108

APPENDIX B

EXAMPLE OF INSTRUCTOR'S EXTENSIVE SUMMATIVE FEEDBACK

Introduction

Background information

Link – the United States and
Japan

Thesis:

{
The educational systems in the US
and Japan – topic

Even though similar – over all –
different

– controlling idea

Body P. 1 – block / block

some Similarities.

Differences – Japan – centralized

As a result,

1. text book / curriculum
2. data

⁴ The U.S.

110

Body # 2 .   Block / Block

1. Japan

2. the US .

Similarities, _ Similar to Japan
differences _ Unlike Japan,

Body P 3

Figure out the major support

Japan   { 1. entrance examination
connection { 2. easy to pass class
             3.

The US.   { 1. no entrance exam
                 SAT, GRE, TOEFL
           { 2. difficult to get good
                grades. need to work
                                hard).
              - demanding

111

You need to concentrate on
the following grammar points:

1. The use of articles - definite

2. Prepositions

3. Do not begin sentences with
   the conjunctions.

4. be + past participles
   get +   "

5. he/she
   (include both)

Punctuation.
   main clause⊘ dependent clause
   transitions①
      otherwise,

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BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Leilani Clark grew up in Italy and the United States. Upon completing high school in Tomball, Texas, she moved to Allentown, Pennsylvania where she attended Muhlenberg College. During her time at Muhlenberg, she was accepted into Middlebury College's Japanese Language Summer Institute, as well as interned in Washington D.C. as part of a political science semester exchange. In her junior year, she studied abroad in Tokyo, Japan at Sophia University. She graduated with honors in 2001 with a Bachelor of Arts in International Studies/ Asian Cultures and Civilizations.

Upon graduation, she taught English as a Second Language (ESL) in Japan, volunteered with the Peace Corps in Ghana, and returned to the United States to teach ESL to university students in Houston, Texas. In 2007 she graduated from the University of Texas at Arlington with a Master of Arts in TESOL.

Her research focuses include written feedback, ESOL writing, and student-teacher conferencing.