WRITTEN FEEDBACK ON ENGLISH MAJORS' COMPOSITIONS AT GUIZHOU UNIVERSITY

Jun Wang

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การวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลย้อนกลับต่อเรียงความภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ มหาวิทยาลัยกุ้ยโจว

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Suranaree University of Technology has approved this thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

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การให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับต่องานเขียนของนักศึกษาโดยครูผู้สอนถือว่าเป็นสิ่งจำเป็นในการพัฒนาทักษะการเขียน การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อ (1) จำแนกประเภทของการให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับของครูผู้สอน (2) ศึกษาการนำข้อมูลย้อนกลับของครูไปใช้ในการปรับปรุงแก้ไขงานเขียนของนักศึกษา และ (3) ศึกษาความคิดเห็นของนักศึกษาต่อการให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับแต่ละประเภท ข้อมูลที่ใช้ในการศึกษาครั้งนี้ คือ งานเขียน 864 ชิ้น ของนักศึกษาวิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษ ชั้นปีที่ 1 มหาวิทยาลัยกุ้ยโจว ประเทศสาธารณรัฐประชาชนจีน จำนวน 150 คน งานเขียนทุกชิ้นมีข้อมูลย้อนกลับของครูผู้สอน ผลการวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลพบว่า ครูผู้สอนใช้วิธีเขียนคำตอบที่ถูกต้องให้ด้วยตนเองมากที่สุด ตามด้วยการบอกตำแหน่งของข้อผิดพลาด การบอกใบ้หรือใช้สัญลักษณ์เกี่ยวกับข้อผิดพลาด การอธิบายสั้นๆ เกี่ยวกับข้อผิดพลาดในที่ว่างด้านซ้ายหรือขวาของบรรทัด และการเขียนข้อวิพากย์ตอนท้ายของงานเขียนตามลำดับ

จากการศึกษาแบบสอบถาม และการสัมภาษณ์ พบว่านักศึกษาส่วนใหญ่นำข้อมูลย้อนกลับของครูผู้สอนไปใช้ในการปรับปรุงแก้ไขงานเขียนของตนเอง และนักศึกษาชอบการให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับโดยการวิพากย์ตอนท้ายงานเขียน และการบอกใบ้หรือใช้สัญลักษณ์เกี่ยวกับข้อผิดพลาดมากที่สุด

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Teacher response to student writing is an important aspect of EFL composition research. Error feedback on writing, in particular, is still a subject of lively debate. This present study focused on what major types of written feedback were often given by EFL writing teachers, how the students made use of teacher written feedback in their revisions, and the students' preferences to different types of feedback. Eight hundred and sixty-four pieces of writing drafts by one hundred and fifty second year English major students at Guizhou University, P.R.C., provided with teacher written feedback by five teaching assistants, were analyzed and categorized in order to find out the main types of feedback. It was found that Direct Correction was used most by the teachers, followed by Error Location, Verbal Cue, Marginal Commentary and End Commentary, respectively. However, students liked End Commentary and Verbal Cue most. The study raised several implications for English writing instruction in the similar level to this research context.

School of English

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Jun Wang

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This study is a report of main types of teacher written feedback used by the English writing teachers at Guizhou University, People's Republic of China (P.R.C.). The first chapter presents the statement of the problem, defines the context, the purposes, significance, scope and limitations of the study. Key terms are finally defined.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

As contrasted with the narrower notion of "error correction," teacher feedback is an inevitable constituent of students' writing interaction, for no matter what the teacher does, learners derive information about their behavior from the teacher's reaction, or lack of one, to their behavior (Chaudron, 1988). To Hyland (2001), teacher feedback is focused on an important aspect, which is the summary comment at the end of student's assignment, whose functions serve as praises, criticisms, and suggestions. It "has largely been seen as informational, a means of channeling reactions and advice to facilitate improvements" (Hyland, 2001, p.186) and teacher's comments, as he states, "…go far beyond simple decisions to address form or content or to praise mechanics or criticize organization" (p. 208).

Teacher written feedback in writing is still a subject of lively debate. Attitudes towards error feedback have evolved from the strict avoidance of errors and hence quick and direct error feedback before the 1960s, to the condemnation of error feedback as harmful and unnecessary in the late 1960s, and to a more critical view of the need and value of error feedback in the 1970s and 1980s (Lee, 1997). The controversy over the topic of error feedback, however, remains unsolved until now.

The first issue under debate is that of feedback focus. Although it has been agreed that teacher written feedback should be given on form, content and organization, which of these three should be emphasized is still debatable. According to Ferris (2002), grammar comes first since it can help students improve their language accuracy in the short term. This short-term improvement is necessary for the student's long-term progress. Similarly, Reid (1993) advocates that error feedback "must help students improve their writing by communicating feedback detailed enough to allow students to act, to commit to change in their writings" (p. 218).

The notion of emphasizing on "form" sounds reasonable since L2 writers, though following the same writing process as the L1 counterparts, are significantly different from native speakers in their linguistic, rhetorical and cultural knowledge. L2 students' lexical, morphological, and syntactic accuracy is important because of a lack of accuracy may both interfere with the comprehensibility of their message and mark them as inadequate users of the language (Hyland, 1998).

However, some researchers take a quite different attitude towards teacher error feedback. They point out that excessive attention to student errors may be offensive and discouraging student writers. And itt may be ultimately harmful to them because it deflects teachers and students' time and attention away from more important aspects

of writing, such as process, development of ideas, and organization (Krashen, 1984; Zamel, 1985). Truscott (1996) takes up a radical stance and argues for the abandonment of grammar correction in the L2 writing classroom. He holds that grammar correction is both ineffective and harmful and, therefore, it has no place in the writing classroom.

Meanwhile, how teachers effectively provide written feedback, in other words, what types of feedback are helpful in students' revision or their future writing, has become another important issue. What types of written feedback or their combinations yield the best results are still inconclusive since each has its own merits and drawbacks (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997a; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Hyland, 2001; Chandler, 2003). Cardelle and Corno (1981) give four types of feedback and conclude that giving a combination of criticism and praise brought about the biggest gains. Criticism of errors alone is not as effective as combining criticism with praise. Robb (1986) compares four different types of corrective feedback and concludes that direct correction of surface error is no better than the other less time-consuming methods.

Students' reactions and preferences to teacher written feedback are also a crucial issue. Many studies show that students value their teacher written feedback on their errors and do want the errors in their writing to be corrected, otherwise, they may be frustrated if this does not happen (Cohen, 1987; Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris 1995b; Ferris & Roberts 2001; Leki 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988). In her study on students' reactions to teacher response, Ferris (1995a, p. 47) concludes, "…ESL writing students in general take their teachers' feedback quite seriously and pay a lot of attention to it." Despite such a positive attitude, not all students make full use of

their teachers' feedback for various reasons varying from misinterpretation, misunderstanding, not understanding, to pure neglect (Semke, 1984; Zamel, 1985; Cohen, 1987; Truscott, 1996; Hyland. F., 1998).

A majority of researchers and teachers insist on seeking more effective methods to help L2 students improve their language compositions (Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997a) and, instructors need to work hard to find out the best ways to help them become "independent self-editors" of their own work (Lane & Lange, 1993). To do so, it is necessary to take into account seriously what types of teacher written feedback are most frequently used, how the students make use of the feedback, and students' preferences to their teacher written feedback.

1.3 Context of the Present Study

This present classroom-based research project was conducted among the second-year English-major students in the first semester of academic year 2004 at Guizhou University in China. According to the current *English Curriculum for College English Majors in China* (Curriculum for College English Majors of Higher Education in P.R.C., 2000), the students are required to study *English Writing Course* from Level I to Level 4, two hours a week for four semesters. This research was carried out during *English Writing Course I.*

After this first-semester writing practice, based on the given topics, guidelines, graphic, or other information, students are expected to be able to:

1. rewrite the texts;

2. write letters, notices and notes at the length of 60 words in the correct forms;

3. write a short passage of 120 to 150 words in 30 minutes with a good focus on topic;

4. the structure is clear and the language is correct.

The objectives of *English Writing I* are:

1. the content should be relevant to the assigned topic;
2. the organization should be clear;
3. almost no grammatical inaccuracies;
4. the language is fluent, and
5. the words are appropriately chosen.

(Curriculum for College English Majors of Higher Education in P.R.C., 2001)

One major instructor and five teaching assistants who are MA students in English major normally teach the class of about 150 students, which consists of 30 students in each of the 5 sections. The five teaching assistants independently provide written feedback on student's written work in each section to help their students achieve the course objectives. It is, therefore, necessary to find out how each teaching assistant gives written feedback and how the students make use of such written feedback when they revise their work.

Taking the present situation into consideration, the researcher, as a language teacher, believes that the answers to the following questions will pave ways to how Guizhou University English teachers can help their students write more effectively:

(1) What types of written feedback will be effective on the students' writing?

(2) Do the students pay any attention to teacher written feedback?

(3) If the answer is 'Yes', how do they make use of it?

1.4 Purposes of the Study

This study aims to:

1. categorize main types of teacher written feedback focusing on form, content and organization on *English Writing I* students' papers;

2. investigate students' reactions to such teacher written feedback;

3. investigate students' preferences to teacher written feedback.

The following research questions have been raised for this study:

1. What major kinds of written feedback are used by English writing teachers in the English Department of Guizhou University?
2. How do the students make use of their teacher's written feedback in the revisions?
3. What types of teacher written feedback do the students prefer and why?

1.5 Significance of the Study

In order to find out how English teachers at Guizhou University can most effectively give feedback on their students' writing, it's necessary to learn the basic background information on different types of feedback the teachers give, how students make use of the feedback, and their preferences on the feedback.

1.6 Scope and Limitations of the Study

The subjects of this study were teachers and second year English major students in the English Department at Guizhou University in P.R.C. Therefore, the results of

this study cannot be representative of other teachers and students at the same level in other universities.

The present study investigated the main types of teacher written feedback from English writing teachers. It only focused on analyzing what types of teacher written feedback the teachers provided on their students' writing, with no concerns on the oral or some other feedback. In addition, it explored the students' response to their teacher written feedback and what types of teacher written feedback they preferred to use. The effects of teacher written feedback on the improvement of students' writing in the long run could not be evaluated in this present study, either, since the data was collected within only 4 of the 20-week semester.

1.7 Expected Outcomes

The research findings were expected to shed some light on what certain types of teacher written feedback would be often used by English writing teachers, and which types of feedback could mostly attract students' attention and meet their preferences.

1.8 Definitions of Key Terms

1.8.1 Main English Writing Instructor means the teacher who is responsible for the course of *English Writing I*. She teaches five sections in this academic year.

1.8.2 Five TAs mean the five teaching assistants who are responsible for reading and providing written feedback on students' writing papers.

1.8.3 English Language Department Students mean the second year major students in the English Language Department at Guizhou University, PRC. They are normally 18 to 20 years old.

1.8.4 Preferences mean the students' favorites.

1.8.5 Form means the errors on grammar, spelling, punctuation and so on.

1.8.9 Content means the main ideas the student describes in his/her paper.

1.8.10 Organization means the format of writing a letter.

1.9 Summary

In this chapter, the researcher has given a description of the statement of the problem. This is followed by research definitions, context of the present study, purposes of the study and its significance. Then, scope and limitations, expected outcomes and finally the definitions of key terms are presented.

CHAPTER 2

RELEVANT LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the literature related to teacher written feedback on students' compositions. It presents in detail about teacher feedback on product versus process approaches, teacher written feedback focus-on form versus focus-on meaning, and direct versus indirect, students' reactions and preferences to teacher written feedback. Lastly, this chapter concludes with the significance of teacher written feedback.

2.2 Teacher Feedback: Product Versus Process Approaches

Writing is far from being a simple matter of transcribing oral language into written symbols no matter in L1 or L2. It is a complex, cognitive process that requires sustained intellectual effort over a considerable period of time. It is a thinking process in its own right (White and Arndt, 1991).

Among prominent authorities, Jordan (1997) has given an insightful sketch of the EFL/ESL writing history. It has undergone an interesting development. In the1960s, the dominant writing approaches in the USA and Britain can be summarized as **controlled** or **guided** composition, with its emphasis on the manipulation of language structures and sentence patterns, and the "**current traditional rhetoric**" or **functional approach**, which concerns the logical arrangement of discourse forms in the context of the paragraph (Silva, 1990). Both of them are subsumed under the term

product approach. Product-oriented approaches focus on the final product, the coherent and the error-free text (Nunan, 1999). Thus, writing teachers used to treat students' texts as finished products and responded to and evaluated that product. As a consequence, teacher feedback focused on correcting forms for essays, paragraphs, and sentences. In the 1970s, because of the limitations of this approach, students were restricted in what they could write or how they could write it (Jordan, 1997), the **process approach** began to develop. This approach is concerned with the processes of writing that enable the product to be achieved. Proponents of process writing recognize and accept the reality that there will never be the perfect text, but that one can get closer to perfection through producing, reflecting on, discussing, and reworking successive drafts of a text. In this approach, teacher feedback focuses on the development of successive drafts of a text and on quantity rather than on quality.

In the context of ESL/EFL teaching, students need to be taught both how to use the process to their advantage as language learners and writers, and also how to produce an acceptable product on demand. What we need in the L2 writing classroom is both process and product. With the pendulum shifts from a **product-oriented** to a **process-oriented** approach to ESL/EFL writing, there comes a necessary change in teachers' approaches to giving feedback on student compositions.

2.3 Teacher Written Feedback

2.3.1 Introduction

Despite increasing emphasis on the importance of oral response and the use of peers as sources of feedback, teacher written feedback continues to play a central role in most L2 writing classes (Hyland, K., 2003). It is recognized as "…an interaction between responder and recipient through the medium of the written comment… a highly complex activity, constrained by the particular learning context in which it is embedded" (Freedman et al, 1985, p. 321). As mentioned earlier, it is still controversial whether teacher feedback should focus on form, content or organization. This section discusses this issue first and then moves to the other issue of how teachers provide feedback on their students' writing.

2.3.2 Where: Focus on Form Versus Focus on Meaning

It is generally accepted that L2 writing is different from L1 writing although they have a similar writing process that includes the same steps of planning, drafting, editing, and revising (Silva, 1988). Concerning the writing process, L2 students cannot express their ideas as freely as L1 students because they are not very familiar with the words and phrases in L2. As a result, L2 writing instructors need to focus on different factors and address different considerations rather than their L1 counterparts (Hyland. F., 1998). Since errors of grammar are an obvious problem for L2 writers, it is not surprising that teachers may feel the need to respond to form. Two prominent proponents of the grammatical accuracy hypothesis are Higgs and Clifford (1982), who claim that grammatical accuracy must be emphasized and consciously learned by language learners. According to this assumption, if learners acquire the

target language through communication-oriented instruction, which stresses the need to foster communicative competence before mastery of accurate grammatical structures, they will run the risk of "fossilizing" grammatical errors. These fossilized errors, or errors that have become ingrained language habits after prolonged usage, are extremely difficult, if not impossible, to subsequently eliminate.

Ferris (2002) states that because L2 students, in addition to becoming developing writers, are still in the process of acquiring the lexicon, morphological and syntactic systems, they need distinct and additional intervention from their writing teachers to make up these deficits and develop strategies for finding, correcting and avoiding errors. In a recent case study by Hyland (2003), the research findings suggest that despite the teachers' beliefs and teaching approaches, language accuracy was a very important focus for their feedback. Many research studies provide adequate evidence to prove this stance (Hendrickson, 1980; Santos, 1988; Venn, Meyer & Lorenz 1984; Chandler, 2003). From these research studies, it can be concluded that language accuracy cannot be ignored while writing teachers provide feedback in L2 students' compositions.

In recent years, the dynamic character of feedback as a medium of interaction has placed greater emphasis on the nature and content of teacher feedback. A great amount of research suggests that writing teachers, especially those in a second language environment, should shift their focus from error correction to content development when responding to student compositions (Vengadasamy, 2002). According to Krashen (1984), language learners can develop greater L2 communicative proficiency through instruction which provides sufficient amount of comprehensible input as well as opportunities for meaningful production of the target

language. It is believed that such instruction will eventually lead learners to the mastery of the target language in much the same way a child gradually acquires his or her mother language. Raimes (1983) suggests that teachers should look at content as well as errors in structure and focus on linguistic features after ideas have been fully developed. As proponents of process writing, White and Arndt (1991) emphasize that "grammar is important---but as a tool, a means, and not as an end in itself", instead that "focusing on language errors in writing improves neither grammatical accuracy nor writing fluency… it is through attention to meaning, and not just form, that language and writing improve" (pp.2-3). Hyland (2003) advocates that teachers should not excessively focus on eradicating errors while teaching, or neglect the form, either. He suggests that since language is a resource for making meanings, the form and the content cannot be realistically separated when responding to student's writing.

Meanwhile, most of the relevant research studies focus on the effects of teachers' error correction on students' final writing, by comparing the writing of students who have received a specific error correction technique over a period of time, with that of students who have not, and as a result, conclusions are drawn about the effectiveness of the specific technique (Semke, 1984; Robb, 1986). Fathman and Whalley (1990) discover that texts improve most when students receive feedback on both content and form, while Ferris (1997a) finds that teachers' attention to form leads to a reduction in errors in later assignments, particularly when it contains comments rather than correction. Similarly, in his study, Chandler (2003) uses experimental and control group data to show that students' correction of grammatical and lexical error between assignments reduces such error in subsequent writing over one semester without reducing fluency or quality. He concludes, "if students did make error

correction, their subsequent new writing was more accurate without a reduction in fluency" (p.280). In his study, Ashwell (2000) has the similar findings.

It is obvious that 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 the teaching writing cycle (Hyland, K., 2003). The issue is to what extent and how L2 writing teachers should emphasize when they give feedback on form, content and organization.

2.3.3 How: Direct Versus Indirect

Providing written feedback in student's writing is rather a difficult, time-consuming, frustrating and challenging task. How language-writing teachers effectively provide feedback on their students' compositions is another crucial issue. Ferris (2002) suggests that several options are often used in teacher written feedback, such as direct versus indirect, error location versus error identification, larger versus smaller categories of errors, codes versus symbols versus verbal comments, textual corrections versus end notes, and so on. In terms of teacher commentary, positive, specific with constructive suggestions are advocated by many researchers. In this section, two common types of feedback, direct and indirect, are discussed in detail.

Direct Feedback refers to overt correction of errors--that is, teachers provide the correct linguistic forms (words, morpheme, phrase, rewritten sentence, deleted words or morphemes) for students (Hendrickson, 1980; Ferris, 2002). This technique is "best for producing accurate revisions, and students prefer it because it is the fastest and easiest way for them" (Chandler, 2003, p. 267). Teachers are likely to provide direct feedback when the error falls into one of the untreatable categories, which the

student will need to utilize acquired knowledge of the language to self-correct (Ferris, 2002). If students are revising or rewriting their papers after receiving teacher written feedback, they are expected merely to transcribe the teachers' suggested corrections into their texts. However, it has the potential danger to misinterpret the student's original meaning if the teacher provides only the correction rather than to guide the student to do his/her own revising. As Ferris (2002) states, "Overuse of direct feedback may lead to teacher 'appropriation' of the student text" (p. 65). Ferris and Roberts (2001) study ESL students from a U.S. university and find that two groups that receive corrective feedback (either on type of error or on location) significantly outperform the control group (no feedback) on the self-editing task. Lalande (1982) investigates the effects of coded feedback and direct correction. He finds that indirect coded feedback is significantly effective in students' writing than direct correction.

Indirect Feedback covers two parts of student's written text: form and content. Indirect error feedback refers to the provision of feedback on errors—advising students about the location of errors by underlining the errors, by indicating the number of errors per line, by using correction code or making verbal cues (Robb, 1986).

Much research shows that teachers are far more likely to give indirect feedback in the case of treatable error types, which are normally "related to a linguistic structure that occurs in a rule-governed way" (Ferris, 2002, p. 23). Robb (1986) contrasts four methods of providing feedback on error in the writing work of 134 Japanese college EFL freshmen. The correction group receives direct correction of every error they make, while the coded feedback group is given coded information about their performance. For the uncoded feedback group, only the locations of errors are marked but no further information is provided. The marginal feedback group only receives

information about the number of errors per line. The results of their research do not support the efficacy of direct correction and suggest, "less time-consuming methods of directing student attention to surface error may suffice"(p. 91). Lee (1997) studies EFL college students in Hong Kong and finds that students are significantly more able to correct errors that are underlined than errors that are either not marked or only indicated by a check in the margin.

Indirect feedback on content includes marginal and end comments. It has been argued that indirect feedback is more helpful to student writers in most cases because it leads to greater cognitive engagement, reflection, and guided-learning and problem solving (Ferris, 2002; 2004; Chandler, 2003). However, in his study, Hyland (2001) mentions, "indirectness, in other words, can open the door to misinterpretation" (p. 207). He suggests that writing teachers should be careful in providing feedback in their students' writing texts. In other words, they must be aware of choosing appropriate ways to guide the students to their writing improvement.

2.4 Students Reactions and Preferences

As pointed out earlier, the literature clearly suggests that different types of teacher feedback influence student's writing differently. To some extent, teacher written feedback in L2 writing is necessary and helpful in the students' revised drafts (Fathman and Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1995a; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998; Lalande, 1982; Chandler, 2003). That is to say, if the student writers act upon the given comments, it can help them improve their writing ability in the long run (Ferris, 1999). At this point, it is worth looking into how EFL/ESL students react to teacher written feedback.

Many research studies on student attitude towards teacher written feedback conclude that the students "value teacher feedback on their errors and think that it helps them improve their writing"(Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcant, 1990; Ferris, 1995a; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988). Several different studies have surveyed and /or interviewed ESL and /or foreign language writing students to obtain their reaction to feedback (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994). These studies have pursued two areas: (1) studies of student preferences regarding teacher feedback (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Leki, 1991); and (2) studies of student response to feedback they have already received (Cohen, 1987).

In the first group of studies, students have been asked about the types of feedback they prefer to receive (both form and content). Ferris (1995a) reports that students pay the most attention to feedback on grammar, content and organization. Leki (1991) states similar results. A more recent study (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994) reports a more complex finding: foreign language students pay more attention to form, whereas ESL students are as interested in teacher feedback on content as they are in sentence-level comments and corrections.

In the second group of studies, students are asked about their perceptions of what their teachers actually focus on in responding to student essays and to discuss their own subsequence actions: Did they reread their papers when they were returned? Did they pay attention to their teacher's commentaries? What strategies did they make use of their teacher's feedback in the revisions? Did they have trouble understanding any teacher feedback, and if so, how did they deal with them? Cohen (1987) reports rather discouraging findings: although most of the students claim to have reread their papers and attended to their teacher's comments, a full 20% did not. Further, the

students in general report, “limited repertoire of strategies for processing teacher feedback” (p. 65). Most students claim that they merely “make a mental note” of their teachers’ feedback. Cohen concludes that his results “suggest that the activity of teacher feedback as currently constituted and realized may have a more limited impact on the learners that the teachers would desire” (p. 66).

Some studies (Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990) report more positive results that the students in general are happy with teacher written feedback they receive, pay attention to it, and find it helpful. Although some studies find that students report a variety of problems in understanding their teacher written feedback, they also utilize a great variety of strategies (e.g. asking the teacher for help, looking up corrections in a grammar book) to resolve difficulties and respond to the teacher feedback (Conard, 1999; Ferris, 1995b).

Other studies (Ferris, 1995a; Ferris & Robersts, 2001; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Leki, 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988) have consistently reported that student writers want such error feedback. According to Ferris and Roberts (2001), the most popular type of feedback is underlining with description, followed by direct correction and underlining is the third. Chandler (2003) states that although students prefer direct correction “because it is the fastest and easiest way for them, students feel they learn more from self-correction” (p. 267). By the teacher’s specific error corrections and explicit comments with an in-time implementation of teacher-student conferences on the process-oriented writing, the students will benefit most from the teacher’s written feedback in their revision (White and Arndt, 1991). Whether students’ errors should be corrected may not, however, depends entirely on their preferences although satisfaction of their perceived need may be important for a positive attitude (Ferris, 2002).

2.5 Significance of Teacher Written Feedback

Teacher written feedback has always played its significant role in the writing activity. No matter what type of teacher written feedback is given, it is more likely to benefit student writing if it comes primarily at intermediate, rather than final stages of the writing process--especially when students are allowed or even required to revise or rewrite their papers after receiving teacher's written feedback (Ferris, 1995a, 1997a; Krashen, 1984; Zamel, 1985). These perhaps are the real reasons why writing teachers spend a lot of time on correcting students' errors although it is a rather time-consuming and challenging task in teaching. What remains to be investigated is what types of written feedback provided by teachers are effective and how students make good use of them most effectively to help themselves to become better writers.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has provided some details of teacher written feedback on product versus process approaches, followed by a discussion on focus on form versus focus on meaning and direct versus indirect. Moreover, it extends over the details of students' reactions and preferences to teacher written feedback. Finally, it presents the significance of teacher written feedback.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the research methodology used in the present study. The research methodology includes the participants, procedures and instruments, data collection, and data analysis.

3.2 Participants

3.2.1 The Main Writing Instructor

The main English writing instructor was an experienced teacher of English compositions who had been teaching this course for more than ten years. She was considered as an exemplary teacher in Foreign Language Department at Guizhou University.

3.2.2 Five Teaching Assistants (TAs)

With the supervision of the aforementioned main writing instructor, five graduate students, working toward their Master's Degree in English, were chosen to be her teaching assistants who were mainly responsible for reading the students' compositions and providing written feedback on them through the 2004 academic year. All of the five graduate students were chosen according to their excellent academic records after they entered the university. One was male with two-year teaching experience, while the other four were female with one-year teaching

experience. Each was teaching one group. In this research, the researcher defined that TA1 is responsible for Group 1, TA2 for Group 2, and so forth.

3.2.3 The Students

One hundred and fifty students (43 boys and 107 girls), who were all English majors in their second year at Guizhou University, were the subjects in this research. According to the English Curriculum for English majors in P.R.C. (2000), it is the first semester for the students to study *Writing Course I.* All of these students must study this course as one of the main courses in the first semester of Academic Year 2004.

Among the one hundred and fifty students, eighty-nine of them (Groups 1, 2 and 3) were qualified to study in the university according to the requirement of undergraduate students after they passed the National Entrance Examination in 2003. The first three groups are defined as High Group, which consists of 89 students. Sixty-one students (Groups 4 and 5) were those whose general performances in the National Entrance Examination were lower than those of the formers'. The last two groups are defined as Low Group. Regardless of their entrance examination scores, all of them were required to study the same courses based on the English Curriculum for English major students.

At the beginning of data collection, the researcher explained the purposes of the study to the students in each of the five groups. A written permission was sought to allow the researcher to collect their writing papers with teacher written feedback they received and their revisions after they used the teacher written feedback.

Table 3.1: General Information on the Research

Items	**No. of Participants**
Female	107
Male	43
Questionnaire I	116
Questionnaire II	108
Interview with the main teacher	1
Interview with teaching assistants	5
Interview with students	16
	No. of Drafts (pieces)
First drafts	864
Revised drafts	856
Comparable drafts	836

For the purpose of this study, the researcher regarded all the students from each group equally. All the data were documented, analyzed and categorized in exactly the same way. The general information on the participants and collected data are listed in Table 3.1. One hundred and fifty students participated in the research although not all of them fulfilled all of the research requirements due to their personal reasons. For an effective data analysis, the researcher gave up some off-task writing papers.

3.3 Procedures and Instruments

3.3.1 The Research Context

The research data were collected in a normal English language-teaching environment. The main writing instructor was asked to tell the students in the five groups to cooperate with this study and that the study would not disturb the normal teaching. The researcher selected this context for three reasons: First, *English Writing I* is a main course for English majors for one semester of the second academic year. There must be enough writing texts from the students to be investigated and adequate time for the researcher to carry out all the data collection. Second, one main writing instructor taught the course and five teaching assistants helped her to correct students' writing papers. Teacher feedback varied according to the individual teacher's needs and wants. They were free to construct their own feedback methods. As a result, there must be some interesting data in account of amount, focus and types of feedback provided to the students. Third, the researcher had a previous experience of English teaching in the same university for 18 years, and thus she was familiar with this course.

3.3.2 The Writing Course

English Writing I is a course for English major students to study in the first semester of their second academic year. According to the current *English Curriculum for College English Majors in China* (*Curriculum for College English Majors of Higher Education in P.R.C.*, 2000), after the first-semester writing practice, based on the given topic, guideline, graphic or other information, students are expected to be able to:

1. rewrite an article;
2. write letters, notices or notes at the length of 60 words in the correct forms;
3. write a short passage of 120 to 150 words in 30 minutes with a good focus on topic; the structure is clear and the language is correct.

The researcher started the data collection in the middle of the first term of the 2004 academic year. It lasted for nine weeks (See Table 3.2). Before the data collection, the researcher met the main writing instructor and the five TAs first to describe the purposes of the research and ask for their cooperation.

When the researcher started to collect the students' writing papers, the writing course was on the part of teaching how to write letters. The researcher observed the classroom teaching twice before collecting the data.

Table 3.2 Action Plan of Data Collection

Week 1: Preparation work
1.1 Meet the main writing instructor and the five TAs
1.2 Meet the students in each of five groups
Week 2: Collect the first students' writing papers
Week 3: Collect the second students' writing papers
Week 4: Collect the third students' writing papers
Week 5: 5.1 Read and analyze all the students' writing papers
5.2 Design the two students' questionnaires
5.3 Discuss with the main writing instructor about the writing course
5.4 Two expert teachers read the two questionnaires
Week 6: 6.1 Revise the two questionnaires

6.2 A trial of the questionnaires among 20 students, 4 from each group

6.3 Revise the questionnaires again

6.4 Discuss with the same two expert teachers

Week 7: 7.1 Carry out the two questionnaires among the students

7.2 Design the guided interview questions with the main writing instructor

7.3 Design the guided interview questions with the five TAs

7.4 Design the guided interview questions with some students

7.5 Discuss the guided questions of three interviews with two expert teachers

Weeks 8 and 9: Interview with the teachers and students

The course was especially designed to train undergraduate students to get familiar with different types of English writing and be capable of writing these conventions of messages or letters. Normally there were two hours a week for one class on writing activities, and through teacher's instruction of writing model passages, the students followed the format to write a short letter or message.

For example, when writing an invitation letter was taught, the main writing instructor would show some fixed expressions to the students in class before a similar assignment was given to the students, such as:

a. Fanny and I would like it very much if you would be our guests at dinner.
b. Could you come for dinner on June 6?
c. We'd like you to….
d. We'll be expecting you on May 5th, and so don't disappoint us.

Meanwhile, the main writing instructor read some examples of invitation letters to the students in class in order to give another impression on them. The students listened to the teacher's reading and noted down the general ideas of what they heard. Then the teacher assigned the students to write an invitation letter:

> *Directions: Mr. David Smith has just come back from France. He has lived there for many years. Write an invitation letter to invite him to come to your school to give a lecture about the French culture, traditions and customs.*

Through classroom observation, the researcher learned that all the assignments must be finished within a limited time in class. Normally, students were allowed to finish writing one piece of such a letter within 5-6 minutes. From the interview with the main writing instructor, one of the important reasons for such a requirement was that the students were trained to be used to the timed compositions so that they would be more capable and adjustable when they take part in the National Band-4 Exam, which is compulsory for graduation.

According to the Curriculum for College English Majors of Higher Education in P.R.C. (2001), the students were required to attain the following general testing goals after they study *English Writing I* in one semester:

1. the content should be relevant to the purposes;
2. the organization should be clear;
3. there are almost no grammatical inaccuracies;
4. the language is fluent, and the words are appropriately chosen.

Both accuracy and fluency were required in the writing.

3.3.3 The Instruments

Three data gathering instruments were used in this research. They were:

1. seven types of teacher written feedback were used to analyze the main types of feedback on the students' writing papers;

2. two students' questionnaires in Chinese;

3. two semi-structured interviews:

a : with the writing teacher and her five teaching assistants;

b: with 16 students chosen at random, about 3-4 from each group.

3.3.3.1 Seven Types of Teacher Written Feedback

The main writing instructor taught all five groups. Each group was taught two hours a week. One assignment including two short letters was required in class once a week.

Three types of six letters were collected consistently in three weeks from the 150 students of five groups. The six short letters included requesting, inviting, apologizing, congratulating, asking for information, and applying for a post. Each letter about 60 words in length must be finished within 5 to 6 minutes according to the writing instructor's requirement. Then from each class, the students' papers were collected and handed over to each of the TAs. Each TA read the students' papers, provided written feedback and marked them within less than one week. These corrected papers were returned to the main writing instructor before the next class in the following week. The TA reported verbally the main problems from the students' writing papers to the main writing instructor after he/she finished the work.

Subsequently, students revised their written texts in a permitted time in class. Each TA used his/her own method to give feedback. No special types of feedback were designed specially for this research; and the researcher made no interventions. Both of the first and the revised drafts were then collected, documented and categorized by the researcher. Six short letters are summarized as follows:

Letter 1 Requesting

Instructions: You are going to study in a university. You hope to rent an apartment near the campus. Write a short letter to the landlord/landlady to tell him/her what type of room you are looking for, the rent you can afford and your arrival time.

Letter 2 Inviting

Instructions: Mr. David Smith has just come back from France after he lived there for many years. Write an invitation letter to invite him to come to your school to give a lecture about some French culture, traditions, and customs.

Letter 3 Apologizing

Instructions: Your friend Mary Lee invited you to her birthday party this weekend. You cannot take part in because of your coming final exam. Write a short message to apologize and refuse.

Letter 4 Congratulating

Instructions: Your friend Jack Smith invited you to his wedding ceremony. You cannot be present because you have already made another appointment. Write a congratulating and apologizing letter to him and his bride.

Letter 5 Asking for information

Instructions: You have just graduated from Guizhou University and returned home. Now you wish to continue your graduate study in this university. Write a letter to ask for application information.

Letter 6 Applying for a post

Instructions: This summer vacation is round the corner. You came across an advertisement on a local newspaper stating a hotel restaurant is going to employ some waiters and waitresses. Write a letter to apply for the job.

The students wrote two letters in class within 10-12 minutes. The TAs collected the papers, gave written feedback, assigned marks, and returned the papers in the following class. This time the students revised their work, also in class, within 10-12 minutes. Finally, the researcher collected both of the first drafts and the revised drafts after the students finished revising.

3.3.3.2 The Questionnaires

To look into what students thought of their teacher written feedback and how they made use of them when they revised their compositions, two student questionnaires in Chinese were used. After the researcher analyzed and categorized the main types of teacher written feedback from the students' first drafts, the next two questions must be answered: how the students make use of their teacher written feedback in their revisions and what types of feedback they prefer and why.

The researcher specified some common phenomena to construct the two questionnaires. Two experts in the Foreign Language Department read all the questions and made some improvements. In Questionnaire I, there were thirteen

questions focusing on how the students considered their teacher written feedback and how they made use of such feedback. Four different scales were adopted to represent the student's different opinions to thirteen items. The four scales were: A= absolutely disagree, B= disagree, C= agree and D= strongly agree. In Questionnaire II, eight types of teacher written feedback were listed to ask for preferences from the students. Sixteen students tried out the two questionnaires first in order to make sure the students understand all of the questions. And the researcher discussed each question with the sixteen students. Some revisions were made. The students could list reasons for their choices. They were asked to give their personal information voluntarily, such as telephone number, e-mail addresses, and so on. Moreover, they were welcome to give their names so that the researcher could contact them for an interview. The researcher promised that all the collected data would be confidential. Both Questionnaires I and II were administered three weeks after the researcher finished analyzing the feedback. Of a total 150 students, 116 students answered Questionnaire I and 108 students answered Questionnaire II. The English versions of the questionnaires are shown in Appendixes C and D.

All the answer papers of the two questionnaires from 116 students were read first. In Questionnaire I, the researcher counted the total numbers of A, B, C, and D, which indicate the statements of different opinions ranging from *absolutely disagree*, *disagree, agree* to *strongly agree* scales. Then the percentage of each choice was calculated. Since C and D showed the similar positive opinions, the researcher considered both of them as one range.

3.3.3.3 The Semi-structured Interviews

Three retrospective interviews were carried out on both teachers and some students. One was with the main writing instructor, another with the five teaching assistants and the other with sixteen students from the five groups. All the guided questions were designed according to the results of feedback analysis and discussed with the two expert teachers in Foreign Language Department.

The intention of the interviews with the main writing instructor and the five teaching assistants sought the teachers' attitudes towards students' writing and how they provided feedback on their students' writing. The guided interview questions are shown in Appendixes A and B.

Sixteen students were interviewed as to find out how they made use of teacher written feedback while they were revising, their revising strategies, their preferences on their teacher written feedback, and their attitudes towards teacher written feedback.

The researcher tried to interview some students who represented some special types of the use of teacher written feedback from comparing the changes between the first draft and the second draft. For instance, some students did not use their teacher's direct correction in their revised drafts. The researcher was attracted to find out some possible reasons why these students ignored the easiest way to improve their writing. As a result, one of the students was chosen to be one interviewee. Originally, four students from each group were required to be interviewees according to the researcher's specific intentions; however, only sixteen students could come at last. There were at least two students from each group.

The researcher interviewed the sixteen students one by one at least twenty minutes each after they finished answering the questionnaires and noted down the significant information each time. The entire interview was carried on for two weeks.

All the guided questions were designed according to the students' written texts and revised drafts (see Appendix E.)

3.4 Validity and Reliability of the Research Instruments

In order to ensure validity and reliability of research instruments, the researcher first chose twenty pieces of students' writing papers at random, four pieces from each group. Then, these papers were carefully read, analyzed and categorized by the researcher. Some uncertain issues were discussed with two experienced English writing teachers in Foreign Language Department of Guizhou University until an agreement was reached ultimately. At the end, all the papers were carefully read to sort out the main types of teacher written feedback.

Concerning the questionnaire and interview questions, two expert teachers, who have been teaching this course for more than ten years, first read both of them. Sixteen students from five groups tried out the questionnaire first. Then the researcher discussed each question with these students in order to ensure total understanding. Finally, the questionnaires were carried out among all the other students. Forty answer sheets were chosen at random to calculate the reliability coefficient. As a result, a 0.63 reliability coefficient was achieved. It implied the thirteen questions were reliable. The statements in the second questionnaire were designed as open-ended.

3.5 Data Collection

All the data were collected in the first term of academic year 2004. Original 864 pieces of writing with teacher written feedback on them were documented, analyzed and categorized in order to answer the first research question.

The researcher carefully documented and categorized different types of teacher written feedback based on Ferris's Correction Options (Ferris, 2002, p. 70). Each feedback point was numbered and defined based on the definition of each type of feedback on Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3 Types of Corrections

Example of original text portion (exerted from Ferris, 2002, p.70)

I never needed to worry about my parents because they knew everything and could go anywhere they **want.**

1**. Direct correction:** … could go anywhere they ~~**want.**~~ **wanted**

2. **Error location**:….. could go anywhere they **want.** (or: want ?, etc.)

3. **Error code:** …. could go anywhere they **want.** vt.

4. **Error symbol**:….. could go anywhere they **want.** **Δ**

5. **Verbal cue:**… could go anywhere they **want.** **tense**

6. **Marginal comments**:… could go anywhere they **want.** **tense?**

7. **End comments**

Sample end comment: *As you revise, be sure to check your verbs to see if they need to be in past or present tense. I have underlined some examples of verb tense errors throughout your paper so that you can see what I mean. (Or comment in Chinese.)*

All the numbers of each type of feedback were counted and accumulated.

To answer the second research question, 836 pieces of students' comparable papers of first and revised drafts were also carefully read, documented, the feedback points of Change and No-change were counted. First, the two drafts were compared; the points of Change or No-change were counted. The points of Change indicated that the student used the teacher's written feedback in his/her revision. For example:

Student's first draft:

I am just coming to the university.

Teacher's corrections:

I (1)~~ am~~ just (2)~~ coming~~ to the university.

have **come**

Student's revised draft:

I **have** just **come** to the university.

From this example, the student used the two feedback points from the teacher. Both of these points were counted as Change points.

The researcher did not consider whether the student made a correct change or not since this was not a purpose of this research. Under such a circumstance, the students probably made new errors from the teacher's indirect feedback, such as Error Location, error code, etc. Take the following case as an example:

Student's first draft:

I'm very glad to know you have come back from **Frence.**

Teacher's correction:

I'm very glad to know you have come back from **Frence.**

Student's Revised Draft:

I’m very glad to know you have come back from **French.**

In this example, the teacher provided Error Location feedback with underlining the word “*Frence*” on the first draft. In the revised draft, the student changed the word into “French”. This point was also regarded as the Change point of feedback without concerning whether the change was correct or not.

In order to get more convincing data in different perspectives to answer the second and the third research questions, two questionnaires in Chinese were carried out among the students. One hundred and sixteen students answered Questionnaire I, and one hundred and eight students answered Questionnaire II. In addition, an interview with 16 students chosen at random from the five classes was used and all the writing teachers were also interviewed.

3. 6 Data Analysis

All the collected data were analyzed and interpreted by using the data analysis methods as follow:

3.6.1 Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data included the data from students’ first drafts, revised drafts and students’ Questionnaire I.

3.6.1.1 Analysis of the First Drafts

Statistic frequency method was used to count the number of teacher feedback points. Then the percentage of each type of teacher written feedback was calculated.

3.6.1.2 Comparison of the First and the Second Drafts

The same statistic method was used to count how many changes on students' second drafts were made after the feedback. Then the percentage of Change or No- change points was calculated.

3.6.1.3 Data from Questionnaire I

The data from 4-rating scale were calculated for the percentage of each item. The negative answer was "absolutely disagree" and "disagree," and the positive answer included "agree" and "strongly agree."

3.6.2 Qualitative Data Analysis

Qualitative data included the data from Questionnaire I and II, and interviews with the main writing instructor, five TAs and sixteen students.

3.6.2.1 Data from Questionnaire II

In Questionnaire II, eight types of teacher written feedback were listed. The students were asked to decide whether they **Like** or **Dislike** on each item. Further reasons in support of their answers were encouraged if they wished. The researcher read through all answer sheets from the 108 students. Then the main reasons for **Like** were made into order to see which one represented most students' attitudes. The **Dislike** items were treated in the same way.

3.6.2.2 Data from the Interview with the Main Writing Instructor

The purpose of the interview with the main writing teacher was to search for some information related to the entire teaching course, such as how the main writing instructor bridged the possible "gap" between the five TAs and the students. The researcher combined the data from the observation of the classroom

teaching with the five TAs' written feedback, and as a consequence, some confusing problems could be easily solved.

3.6.2.3 Data from the Interview with Five TAs

The purpose of the interview with the five TAs was to investigate their attitudes and preferences when they provided feedback on students' writing. The researcher noted down the main specific opinions from each TA and compared them with the other TAs'.

3.6.2.4 Data from the Interview with 16 Students

Originally, twenty students, four from each group, were required to be interviewed. Actually, only sixteen students, at least two from each group, participated while the others could not for personal reasons. The researcher focused on some specific situations that represented the most frequently found phenomena among the students, such as some students did not use the teacher's **Direct Correction** feedback, which was considered as the easiest way to use in the revision. The analysis of sixteen students' interview revealed some important information that was restrained from the other data in this research.

3.7 Summary

This chapter presents a research methodology. It describes the participants, the research procedures, and the instruments employed. In addition, the steps of data collection are presented. Lastly, the reliability and validity of the research

data and the data analysis are described. The following chapter will present the result of the research and the discussion.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the research and reflects back to the purpose as states in Chapter I. The study aims to:

1. categorize main types of teacher written feedback focusing on form, content and organization on *English Writing I* students' papers at Guizhou University;

2. investigate students' responses to such teacher written feedback;

3. investigate students' preferences to teacher written feedback.

The findings are presented in three main parts. The first part presents the results of the main types of teacher written feedback from students' first drafts. The second part presents the students' responses to teacher written feedback, and the third part presents students' preferences to teacher written feedback.

4.2 Results and Discussions

4.2.1 Main Types of Teacher Written Feedback

In order to answer the first research question, that is, what major types of written feedback were used by English teachers in the English Language Department of Guizhou University, students' first drafts were collected, analyzed, coded and categorize according to the options from Table 3.3. In practice, each student was required to finish six pieces of writing during a 3-week period, which

meant that the total number should have been nine hundred pieces. However, only eight hundred and sixty-four pieces of first drafts were collected from one hundred and fifty students, some of whom were absent or some unknown reasons.

The data obtained from the first drafts were analyzed as below:

First of all, the teacher written feedback was divided into feedback points. Each feedback point focusing on a different language item was regarded as a separate point. These feedback points included eight main types: Direct Correction, Error Location, Error Symbol, Error Code, Verbal Cue, Marginal Commentary, End Commentary, and Marks. Error Code and Error Symbol were not considered since all of the five TAs seldom used them when correcting student work. Although some teachers used some symbols sometimes, these symbols could only be included in the type of Error Location. Moreover, the five TAs claimed that they did not use special codes or symbols to indicate students' different errors. Most of the symbols used in their written feedback were universal, as they said when they were interviewed, which meant that those symbols were only used to attract the students' attention to that part of error. From the interview with the sixteen students, most of them mentioned that these symbols were easy to understand with teacher's verbal cue. As a result, some symbols, such as "_____", "?" or "∧", etc., were treated only as symbols of Error Location by the researcher.

Two examples were taken to show how these types of feedback points were categorized at the analyzing stage.

Example 1:

Student First Draft:

Dear Mr. Smith:

(a) ***In*** 7th. May, 2004, (1) I recived you notice to tell me (2) ~~at~~ 25th 2004 into ***on*** the new school for study. (*b*) ***Now write for thank you*** and I want to know some information about (3) live. Do you have a single or double (4) room***s*** (5) ~~to book~~ for me?

↑***accommodation***

If you have, how much should I pay? Hope∧ (6) ***to get*** your answer.

Yours,

Cindy Lee

(7) ***Hope you pay more attention to your language expression and try to read and remember more English patterns***. (*Translated from teacher's Chinese version.)*

In this example, seven teacher written feedback points were counted:

(1) underlined the whole sentence from "I" to "….study;"

(2) corrected "at" into "on";

(3) corrected "live" into "accommodation";

(4) added "s" after "room";

(5) deleted "to book";

(6) added "to get" after "hope".

(7) An end comment:

Interpretation of these types of feedback points is:

No. 1 was defined as an Error Location. It implied that the teacher reminded the student there was something wrong with this sentence, or, the teacher was confused by this sentence.

No.2, 3, 4, 5, 6 were defined as Direct Corrections.

No.7 was defined as an End Commentary.

As for the italicized errors (a) and (b), the teacher did not provide any feedback on either of them. Some similar situations were found in some other writing papers. In the interview with the five TAs, when they were asked why they ignored some errors while giving feedback, one of them claimed, "It is impossible to correct every single error in each paper. Some errors resulted from the student's carelessness. The student can correct such errors in his/her revisions. Some minor errors are not necessary to be corrected." Another reason, perhaps, is that there are too many language errors in the writing. The teacher decided not to point out all of them. As a result, "I only correct some of the most serious ones," another TA said.

In the interview with the sixteen students, when asked whether they trusted their teacher feedback, some of them expressed that they did not absolutely trust their teachers' corrections. One of the students said, "I do not trust my teacher's corrections 100%. Sometimes my teacher made some errors, too."

The following example, Example 2, shows the Verbal Cue and Marginal Comment.

Example 2:

Student First Draft:

Dear Mr. Yang:

Four years ago, I left (1) ~~the~~ Guizhou University for work. I (2) have just study for four years. At that time, I *(a)* ***want*** to (3) go on study, but I *(b)* ***haven't*** enough money. Now, I can (4) go on study, (5) ~~because I earn enough money~~. So, I want to ∧(6) *be* back to school (7) go on study. My name is Cindy, and I'm 26 years old. I'm (8) a English major. I want to (9) go on study English. If you could help me, please

Article?

tell me before May 1st.

Thanks a lot.

(10) ***Repeat too many "go on study!"***

(*Translated from teacher's Chinese comment*.)

Yours,

Candy Lee

There are ten teacher written feedback points on this writing paper:

(1) deleted "the"

(2) underlined "have …study"

(3) underlined "go on study"

(4) underlined "go on study"

(5) deleted "because I earn enough money"

(6) added "be" after "to"

(7) underlined "go on study"

(8) underlined "a", and provided Verbal Cue: article?

(9) underlined “go on study”

(10) comment in the margin

Interpretation of these types of feedback points is:

No. 1, 5, 6 were defined as Direct Corrections;

No.2, 3, 4, 7, 9 were defined as Error Locations;

No. 8 was defined as Verbal Cue;

No. 10 was defined as a Marginal Commentary.

Similarly, the teacher ignored two errors in (a) and (b), which are italicized parts.

Then, the researcher carefully read all the 864 pieces of first drafts. Different types of written feedback points were counted and calculated through frequency to obtain overall totals. And the number of error items for each sub-category of errors was divided by the total number of errors in each item to obtain the percentage of each type. Finally, the overall types of each category were determined by explanatory description to identify types of written feedback.

Table 4.1 Types of Teacher Written Feedback

One extracted sentence from one draft:

*I heard from your friend Bob that you’**ve** just **came** back from France.*

No.	**Options**	**Definition**	**Examples**
1.	Direct Correction	Provide the direct answer: ……you’**ve** just ~~**came**~~ back	***come***
2.	Error location	Point out the error:……..you’**ve** just **<u>came</u>** back	***a. underline the word..***

b: a "?"mark beside "came"

3. Error Code Use code to indicate error: …….you'**ve** just **<u>came</u>** back

vt

4. Error symbol Use symbol to indicate error; ….you'**ve** just **came** back

<u>Δ</u>

5. Verbal cue Use language to provide clue: ….you'**ve** just **came** back

verb form, correct?

6. Marginal commentary Use comments in the marginal:.….you'**ve** just **came** back

***→ Pay attention to the tense and the verb form*!**

7. End commentary General comment at the end.

e.g. Go to look up in your grammar book and revise the errors I underlined in your composition.

8. Marks Judge the composition by scores.

Judge the whole composition by 80 points besides written feedback or no other feedback.

One sentence was taken from a piece of student's writing to define eight types of feedback in this study. Although the last item "Marks" was regarded as one type of written feedback on the whole general composition, it was not analyzed in this research since this kind of feedback was adopted to judge the student's writing quality holistically based on each teacher's criteria. It was used as a record of performance in this course based on the teaching curriculum at this university. After the analysis of the 864 pieces of first writing drafts, the most frequently used types of written

feedback from these five TAs were categorized. Tables 4.2, 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.4, and 4.5 show different types of teacher written feedback used in details.

Table 4.2 Types of Feedback on First Drafts (From 864 Pieces of Writing)

Types	Number of each item	Percentage
1. Direct correction	2115	72.06
2. Error location	659	22.45
3. End commentaries	124	4.23
4. Marginal commentaries	20	0.68
5. Verbal cue	17	0.58
	Total No.: 2935	

The result from Table 4.2 shows five main types of teacher written feedback used by the five TAs. The most frequently used was Direct Correction (72.06%), followed by Error Location (22.45%), End Commentary (4.23%), Marginal Commentary (0.68%) and Verbal Cue (0.58%), respectively. When the five TAs were interviewed what types of feedback they often used, all of them chose Direct Correction as their favorite. They claimed, “Direct Correction was the best way to reduce the student’s grammar errors in their writing. It was easy, understandable, time-saving and less-confusing to the students.” They also thought that this type of feedback was the most useful on their student’s revisions. One TA stated that she

found that most students reduced their grammar errors in their later writing after they had received teacher direct correction.

Among the five main types of feedback, Error Location came the second. Most of the TAs used underlining to point out the errors. Besides, some symbols, such as, "?", "←", " >", were often used to locate an error. When asked whether they were sure the students understood the meaning of these symbols, all of them said, "Yes," because "all the symbols are universally used by English writing teachers generation by generation." At least, these symbols gave clues to the errors made. When the students were asked the same question, all of them said that they understood what their teacher meant, even though sometimes they did not know how to correct them. When they tried to correct, they still were not sure whether this correction was right or wrong. Most students ignored some Error Locations in their revision if they really did not understand.

End Commentaries came third on the list. They were used to give an overall comment on the entire piece of writing, such as "Good!," "Well done!," "You have improved a lot!," and so on. It was found that most of End Commentaries were not specific on a certain language item. Despite the fact that some End Commentaries focused on a certain grammar error, they were not specific enough to be used by the students in their revisions. Such commentaries were translated from Chinese into English as follow:

1. Pay more attention to your basic English knowledge.
2. Be careful when you choose a proper tense.
3. Please try to use native-like patterns in your writing.
4. Try your best to avoid using Chinese English.

Table 4.2 shows that only 124 of 2,935 of feedback points (4.23%) were End Commentaries. It was a small percentage compared to the first two types. From the results of Questionnaire II, 77.80% students chose the "Like" item (See Table 4.7.2). There existed a gap between the teachers and the students' opinions. On the one hand, the teachers seldom gave End Commentaries on their students' writing, but on the other hand, the students preferred to have this type of feedback from their teachers. In the interview with the sixteen students, most of them said that not only were they eager to have end comments on their writing papers, but they also wished their teachers would provide text-specific, objective and clear commentaries. The other two types of feedback, Marginal Commentary and Verbal Cue, were rarely used.

A closer investigation into how each TA gave written feedback gives an interesting picture as shown in Table 4.3.1.

Table 4.3.1 Points of Feedback from Five TAs (From 864 Pieces of Writing)

Types	**TA1**	**TA2**	**TA3**	**TA4**	**TA5**	**Total**
1. Direct Correction:	191	309	248	651	716	2115
%	9.03	14.61	11.73	30.78	33.85	
2.Error Location:	283	130	86	116	44	659
%	42.94	19.73	13.05	17.60	6.68	
3. End C.:	14	27	12	27	44	124
%	11.29	21.77	9.68	21.77	35.48	
4. Marginal C.:	2	5	8	4	1	20
%	10.00	25.00	40.00	20.00	5.00	

5. Verbal Cue:	0	5	0	7	5	17
%	0	29.41	0	41.18	29.41	

A comparison of each TA's feedback points of each type of feedback (Table 4.3.1) shows that TA4 and TA5 used Direct Correction most frequently. The reason was perhaps that the students from these two groups were those with lower English proficiency undergraduates, whose English language ability was lower than that of the students in the first three groups. In contrast, Group 1 was regarded as the best class, whose English level was higher than that of the others. As a consequence, TA1 gave this group only 9.03% of 2115 points of Direct Correction and 42.94% of 659 points of Error Location. Meanwhile, TA5 used 44 commentary notes on six letters. It took 35.48% among 124 commentary notes from all. Presumably, this result indicates that the students from this group had more problems on their language and content of writing.

A comparison of the types of feedback between the High and Low Groups provides an interesting different picture.

Table 4.3.2

Comparison of Feedback Points between High Group and Low Group

	High Group		**Low Group**		
Types	No. of feedback p.	%	No. of feedback p.	%	Total
1. Direct Correction	748	35.37	1367	64.63	2115
2. Error Location	499	75.72	160	24.28	659
3. End C.	53	42.74	71	57.26	124

4. Marginal C.	15	75.00	5	25.00	20
5. Verbal Cue	5	29.41	12	70.59	17
Total points:	1320	44.97	1615	55.03	2935

As shown above, Direct Correction was used more frequently in Low Group (64.63%) than it was used in High Group (35.37%). In contrast, Error Location was used more in High Group (75.72%) than that in Low Group (24.28%). Marginal Commentary and Verbal Cue show the very opposite results between the two groups. Regardless of TAs' personal favorites, these results indicate that the TAs gave more direct feedback with the lower language ability students than those whose language ability was comparatively higher. Although teacher commentary took a small percentage among the five main types of feedback, its important role in teacher written feedback could not be ignored. Table 4.4 shows the main types of commentary, its focus and purpose.

Table 4.4

Teacher Marginal and End Commentaries (144 Notes from 864 Pieces of Writing)

Commentary	**No. of Each Item**	**Percentage**
A: Commentary focus		
1. Relevance and adequacy of content	20	13.8
2. Adequacy of vocabulary for purpose	8	5.56
3. Grammar	37	25.69
4. Mechanical accuracy I (punctuation, handwriting)	3	2.08

5. Mechanical accuracy II (spelling)	10	6.94
6. Overall impression	44	30.56
7. Requirement	22	15.28
B: Commentary purpose		
1. Asking for information	12	8.33
2.Giving information	54	37.50
3.Making suggestion	26	18.06
4.Encouragement	52	36.11

The teachers' commentaries found on the students' first drafts fall into two categories: Marginal Commentary and End Commentary.

First, the researchers read all the first drafts and recorded the entire teacher written comments, including comments in the margin and those in the end. This study focused on two characteristics of the commentary: Commentary Focus and Commentary Purpose. Commentary Focus consisted of seven types, which showed how much the teacher paid his/her attention to a certain language point. Commentary Purpose was on teacher's intention when this commentary was provided. The survey of teacher commentary revealed some clues of teacher's attitudes toward the student's writing.

From 144 commentary notes from the teachers as shown in Table 4.4, 30.56% were Overall Impression comments on the whole piece of writing, such as "Good!, " "Well done!, " "Much progress!, "or "You should study hard!," and so on. This general feedback could be regarded as teacher's encouragement to the students. All of

them were not specific. Meanwhile, teacher commentaries mostly focused on students' grammar (25.69%).

In terms of teachers' purposes, they preferred to give information on students' writing. This showed that the teachers played a dominant role in giving feedback on student's writing papers. Whether the teachers' given information was accepted by the students or not was not a focal point of this research.

It is obvious that most commentaries were written in the form of statement. This shows that the teachers seldom discussed with their students about their drawbacks in their writing. Instead, they pointed out their shortcomings on the stand of being authoritative.

As reported earlier in Table 4.2, among the main five types of written feedback from teachers, Direct Correction was used most frequently. It was interesting to learn what language points the teachers provided when using direct corrections on student's compositions. Table 4.5 shows the results. The data could provide more convincing evidence to show what types of written feedback teacher often used and what language points they normally focused on. From Table 4.5, the five TAs provided Direct Corrections mostly on Word Choice (14.52%). It could be concluded that the students were not familiar with English set phrases. The teachers directly gave them the right answers. Word Appropriation (14.14%) and Sentence Appropriation (13.76%) took the second and the third. It seemed that the teachers preferred to offer their authoritative suggestions on the students' writing because they felt the students just did not know the right words or sentences to express the meaning. Ferris (2002) sorts grammar errors into two kinds: treatable or untreatable. Those which were "related to linguistic structure that occurs in a rule-governed way," such as errors on Tense and

forms, Subject-verb agreement, etc., were defined as *Treatable Errors*. The other kind was *Untreatable Errors*, such as those on word choice, possible exception of some pronoun and preposition usage, or unidiomatic sentence structures. According to Ferris (2002), teachers are likely to provide direct feedback when the error falls into one the untreatable categories, which the student will need to utilize acquired knowledge of the language to self-correct.

Table 4.5 Direct Corrections on Main Language Points

No.	Language Points	Total No. each item	Percentage %
1	Word choice	307	14.52
2	Word appropriation	299	14.14
3	Sentence appropriation	291	13.76
4	Spelling	276	13.05
5	Verb tense	177	8.37
6	Verb form	151	7.14
7	Sentence structure	131	6.19
8	Articles/Determines	111	5.25
9	Fragment	88	4.16
10	Pronoun	87	4.11
11	Punctuation	77	3.64
12	Plural	70	3.31
13	Subject-verb agreement	50	2.36

Total: 2115

Spelling was emphasized in the teachers' Direct Correction feedback. It was interesting to find out that some students repeated the same misspelling on their revised papers although the teacher corrected that wrong word a couple of times in the same paper. Some implied reasons should be sought except for the student's carelessness.

Looking back at Table 4.3.1, one can see that Direct Correction came first among the five types of feedback. Since the TAs treated students' writing texts as finished products and responded to and evaluated this product, it was certain that they must focus on correcting forms. Errors of grammars are obvious problems for the students in this language level. As a result, it is not surprising that most of the teachers felt the need to respond to them. This type of feedback is the fastest and easiest way (Chandler, 2003), but it is no better than the other less time-consuming methods (Robb, 1986).

When five TAs were interviewed what types of feedback they often used, all of them chose Direct Correction as their favorite. They claimed that it was the best way to reduce the students' grammar errors in their writing. In addition, it was easy, understandable, time-saving and less confusing to the students. They also thought that this type of feedback was the most useful on their students' revisions. One TA stated that she found that most students reduced their grammar errors in their later writing after they received teacher direct correction. Meanwhile, this type of feedback was also regarded as one of the most favorites by 62.03% of 108 students from Questionnaire II (Table 4.7.2). In particular, 79.55% of students from the Low Group chose Direct Correction as Like, which came first with End Commentary, among the eight types for the students in the Low Group (Table 4.8.1).

Besides the Direct Correction, the five TAs preferred to use Error Location and Verbal Cue. They believed that the students could correct these errors by themselves. The reason why some errors located by the teacher was simply that this error made the teacher confused. When the TAs were asked, "If you didn't understand what the students wanted to express, how did you deal with it?," all of them agreed that they usually underlined the sentence, or provided a sentence like "What do you mean?" or simply put a question mark to ask for clearer information. As a result, some error location with symbols like "_____", "?" or "∧", etc, were the only clues which indicated the teacher's confusion.

In summary, through the analysis of 864 pieces of students' first drafts with teacher written feedback, five main types of feedback, Direct Correction, Error Location, End Commentaries, Marginal Commentaries and Verbal Cue respectively, were most frequently used by the five TAs at Guizhou University. It was also revealed that Direct Correction was used more frequently in Low Group than in High Group. In contrast, Error Location was used more frequently in High Group than in Low Group.

4.2.2 Students' Responses to Teacher Written Feedback

To answer the second research question, "H*ow do the students make use of their teacher written feedback in their revisions?,"* eight hundred and thirty six pieces of first drafts and their second drafts were carefully read and compared. This section first describes how to define the Change Points and No Change Points from the first drafts to the second drafts, and then the results.

Of the 864 pieces of first drafts, 28 without their revised drafts could not be used. Both of the first draft and the revised draft of the remaining 836 comparable pieces were carefully read and analyzed first, then the two drafts were compared, and finally the changes points were recorded. As a limitation of this research, the focuses of correct or incorrect changes were not investigated. The changed points and unchanged points were counted and calculated in numbers so that they could provide some information to what extent the students made use of their teacher written feedback. It was necessary to look into what the students thought of their teacher written feedback when they revised. Such questions were included in the two questionnaires and interview with 16 students.

The researcher considered some written feedback provided was not "usable" in the students' revisions, such as some of the teachers' end comments on the whole writing like "Good!," "You have improved a lot!," or final marks. A good or not so good comment on the whole paper, a higher or a lower grade, perhaps either one of them would influence some student's mood when the papers were returned to the students to revise. However, neither the general comments nor the final marks could be calculated from the students' revisions. As a result, they were classified as "unusable" in this research.

Take a look at the revised versions of the same example from two students.

Revised Version of Example 1:

Dear Mr. Smith:

I'm a new English major student of Guizhou (a) ***university.*** Before the new term (b) ***start,*** I hope you can help me find a single or double (1) **rooms.** If you get it (c) please (d) ***to get your answer for me*** and tell me (e) ***how much should I pay****?*

Yours,

Cindy Lee

Among the seven feedback points, six of them were useable except *No. (7).* In the revised version of Example 1, the student used only one feedback point, that is, No. (1). It was a changed point based on the feedback point on the first draft, but the other feedback points were not used. Moreover, the only used feedback point was not the exact original sentence from the first draft. And from the revised version, some new errors were made:

(a) "university" should be capitalized;

(b) "start" should be "starts";

(c) a comma is required after the clause;

(d) *"to get your answer for me" is* confusing;

(e) "how much should I pay" should be "how much I should pay"

It was obvious that the student avoided most of teacher feedback and wrote almost a new composition. This phenomenon was very apparent in a lot of students' writing.

When this student was interviewed why he did not follow the teacher' direct corrections, she described:

> *When I revised my draft, I thought it was not well organized. So, I decided to write a new letter. In my new draft, I don't need those words from my teacher. That's why I did not use those words that my teacher wrote in my paper* (Translated).

Revised Version of Example 2:

Dear Mr. Yang,

Four years ago, I left (1) Guizhou University for work. (a) *At that time, I haven't enough money to study.* So, (2) I have just study four years. But now, I have enough money for it. So, I want to go back to school. My name is Candy Lee, and I'm 26 years old. I'm (3) a**n** English major. I want to (4) go on study English. If you could help me, please tell me before May 1st.

Thanks a lot for your help.

Your sincerely,

Candy Lee

From the revised draft from Example 2, the student made the following revisions:

(1) deleted "the" ---a change point

(2) "have …study"---a no change point

(3) an ----a change point

(4) "go on study"---used only once, a change point

Comparing the first draft with the revised one, one can see that the student changed No.(1), that is, he deleted "the," as the teacher did in his paper. Then he also changed No.(8) to (3), that is, "an" with teacher's verbal cue. No. (2) was an error location from the teacher, but the student did not change it in the revised version. Another change point was that the student followed the teacher's marginal comment (10) in the revised version, which he used only once, in the revision--"go on study".

In the second sentence of the revision, the student reduced the repetition of "go on study" as suggested. However, he insisted on using an impropriate tense, No. (2) "have…study" although it was underlined by the teacher. In the first draft paper, the sentence "*At that time, I **want** to go on study, but I **haven't** enough money*" which the

tense was not appropriate. Neither of them was spotted by the teacher. As a result, the student kept the sentence in his revised draft. From this example, it can be concluded that this student, like many others, may believe that unspotted mistakes were correct, which is one of the drawbacks of not correcting all errors.

In order to see clearly how the students made use of their teacher written feedback, a sentence is taken as an example to show the details.

Student's First Draft:

I hope two room enough with some funitues.

Teacher Written Feedback:

I (1**)** **hope** (2) **two room** enough with some (3) **funitues.**

The teacher underlined three parts in the sentence.

In the revision, the students wrote a sentence as below:

I'm writing to ask if there are two rooms, besides kitchen and bathroom near our school.

From this example, the student used "I'm writing to ask" to substitute the verb "hope" and changed the single form "room" into plural form "rooms". And it was clear to see the student avoided the sentence structure "I hope to " and the spelling of the word "furniture".

When the student was interviewed, he claimed: "I know that this word 'funitues' is miss-spelt, but I had no time to look it up in the dictionary in class because I had to revise my composition within 5 minutes. So, I did not use it in my revision. And, although I know 'I hope two room' is not suitable, I still don't know how to correct it."(Translated from the interview record.). This result of the research

echoes what Hyland (2001) describes: the indirectness can open the door to misinterpretation.

Although five main types of written feedback were most frequently used by the five TAs, only the numbers of Change and No Change points in the student's revised drafts from only four types were counted. In this research, the researcher considered most of teachers' End Commentaries as overall comments or positive encouragements through the analysis on the students' first drafts. This type of feedback is not easy to see how the students made use of them in their succeeding revisions. As a consequence, only four types of feedback were used. A comparison of the students' first and revised drafts reveals how the students made use of teacher feedback shown in Table 4.6.1 and 4.6.2. Table 4.6.1 shows that the students used 73.65% of the entire teacher written feedback although some of the revised parts could not be guaranteed to be correct. It implied that students took their teacher written feedback seriously and made most use of them in their revisions. This finding matches some other studies which report that students in general are happy with teacher written feedback and pay enough attention to it (Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990).

Table 4.6.1

Change or No Change of Written Feedback from First Drafts to the Revised Drafts (From 836 Pieces of Writing Papers)

Item	Each No.	Changes	%	No changes	%
1.DC	2045	1585	77.50	460	22.50
2. EL	631	393	62.29	238	37.71
3. VC	32	18	56.25	14	43.75

4. MC	17	11	64.70	6	35.30
Total:	**2725**	**2007**	**73.65**	**718**	**26.35**

It is obvious that Direct Correction was used most among the four. 1, 585 of 2045 (77.50%) were Change Points of direct correction shown in Table 4.6.1. It was simply because this type of feedback was obvious, understandable, convenient, direct and time-saving (Chandler, 2003). This result also matches what Ferris and Robers (2001) find that direct correction is one of the most popular types of feedback among the underlining with description, followed by direct correction and underlining. However, the students did not use 460 of 2045 of Direct Correction points (22.50%). A comparison of Change points and No change points between High Group and Low Group (Table 4.6.2) revealed that the Low Group used more Direct Correction feedback points than the High Group.

Table 4.6.2

Comparison of Change Points of Feedback between High Group and Low Group

	High Group			**Low Group**		
	Feedback p.	Change p.	%	Feedback p.	Change p.	%
1. DC:	729	524	71.88	1316	1061	80.62
2. EL:	480	314	65.42	151	79	52.38
3. VC:	21	13	61.90	11	5	45.45
4. MC:	9	7	77.78	8	5	62.50
Total:	**1239**	**858**	**69.25**	**1486**	**1150**	**77.39**

It is interesting to learn why the students did not use such easy feedback in their revisions. One of the reasons might be that they did not like the Direct Correction as shown in Table 4.7.2 that 37.97% among 108 students showed they did not like it. Another reason could be that the students did not think this type of feedback was useful in their writing. In the interview with sixteen students, one of them claimed, "This kind of feedback could not provide me a chance to think over why I made such a mistake. So, it could not impress me much. I perhaps may make such a similar mistake next time." Another student described his experience like this: "I make some errors because of my carelessness. I can correct them by myself if I have enough time to check. In addition, it's not good for self-correction." Some other reasons from the interview with the students were: "I think my first draft is not well conceited. In this revision, I wrote a new letter. I don't need to use those corrections any more;" and "I don't trust my teacher's correction on that part."

Regardless of other reasons why a few students did not use some of teacher direct correction in their revised draft, this type of feedback is "best for producing accurate revisions, and students prefer it because it is the fastest and easiest way for them." (Chandler, 2003, p.267).

Although the five TAs seldom used Marginal Commentaries, only 0.68% shown in Table 4.2, many students made good use of them. This type of feedback was used secondly best by the students in their revised drafts (64.70%). The students from both the High Group (77.78%) and the Low Group (62.50%) made good use of this type of feedback in their revisions (Table 4.6.2).

Error Location was used as the third by the students although it was second most frequently used by the five TAs among the five types of feedback. In the revised

drafts, the students used 62.29% of feedback points. This implied that they paid enough attention to their teachers' error location although not all of their revisions were correct. Table 4.6.2 shows that the students in the High Group (65.42%) made better use of Error Location than those did in the Low Group (52.38%). In the results of Questionnaire II (Table 4.7.2), 62.03% of 108 students showed that they liked this type of feedback.

The five TAs seldom used Verbal Cue and Marginal Commentary, only 0.58% and 0.68% respectively, as shown in Table 4.2. However, the students made good use of them. Table 4.6.1 shows that 56.25% of Change Points were made from Verbal Cue and 64.70% from Marginal Comments in their revisions. This could due to the students' attitudes as shown in Table 4.7.2; 75.93% of the students liked Verbal Cue feedback. The Change points of Verbal Cue were used as the fourth in the students' revisions (56.25%).

However, 37.71% of **No Change** in the revisions implied some profound meanings. Many reasons were from two questionnaires and the interview with the students. The following were typical: "Because of the limited time to revise in class, I have no time to look it up in my dictionary or even ask my classmate; as a result, I use a new word to replace the wrong word;" "I learn that the underlined part is not correct, but I still don't know how to correct;" "I don't understand my teacher's intention;" " It wastes my time to find the answer. So, I prefer to choose a new word;" "I don't understand what that symbol means;" and " I don't think it is an error."

It is apparent that the students both from the High Group and the Low Group paid considerable attention to their teacher's Direct Correction, Marginal Commentaries, Error Location and Verbal Cue. A majority of them made good use of

the main types of feedback in their revisions. A comparison of the High Group and the Low Group (Table 4.6.2) clearly shows that the students from the High Group made use of Marginal Commentaries, Error Location and Verbal Cue more than those from the Low Group except for Direct Correction. Although most of the students were good at using the teachers' Marginal Commentaries and Verbal Cue, unfortunately, these types of feedback were rarely used by the five TAs.

4.2.3 Students' Preferences to Teacher Written Feedback

The third research question sought what types of teacher written feedback the students preferred and why. To do so, two questionnaires were constructed. The first one asked their perceptions of teacher written feedback, their preferences and responses to such feedback. The second asked them to express their "Like" or "Dislike" to eight types of feedback and give some reasons to support their choices. The following results show the whole group's preferences with explanations and then a comparison between the High and the Low groups. The data from the students' two questionnaires confirmed that they appreciated their teachers' feedback.

As shown in Table 4.7.1, it is obvious that the students valued their teacher written feedback. 37.93% agreed and 46.55% strongly agreed with the statement "I benefit from my teacher's written feedback on my English writing" (Item 1). 49.14% and 30.17% absolutely disagreed and disagreed with the statement "If my teacher only provides a final score on my composition without any feedback, then I suppose that there are few mistakes."(Item 2). Also, 43.10% and 11.21% strongly agreed and agreed with the statement "I think that the scores from my teacher accurately indicate the level of my writing ability."(Item 3). Their opinions on the last two items meant

that they trusted their teachers' feedback. This research finding matches many studies on student attitude towards teacher written feedback, which conclude that the students value teacher feedback on their errors and think that it helps them improve their writing (Cohen 1987; Cohen & Cavalcant, 1990; Ferris, 1995a; Ferris & Robberst, 2001; Leki, 1991; Radeki & Swales, 1988).

Table 4.7.1

Questionnaire I:
Students' Perceptions of Teacher Written Feedback and their Preferences and Responses to such Feedback (N=116)
A= absolutely disagree; B= disagree; C= agree; D= strongly agree

Item	A %	B %	C %	D %
Part A: Perceptions				
1	0.86	14.66	37.93	46.55
2	49.14	30.17	13.80	6.70
3	7.76	37.93	43.10	11.21
4	22.41	46.55	24.14	6.90
Part B: Preferences				
5	2.59	9.48	37.93	50.00
6	4.31	4.31	21.55	69.83
7	57.76	32.76	7.76	1.72
8	15.52	21.56	29.31	33.62
9	17.24	40.52	23.28	18.97

Part C: Responses

10	3.45	52.59	33.62	10.34
11	10.34	40.52	34.48	14.66
12	2.59	44.83	44.83	7.76
13	12.93	48.28	26.72	12.07

Table 4.7.2 reveals the whole group's preferences to teacher written feedback.

Table 4.7.2 Questionnaire II

Students' Attitudes towards 8 Types of Teacher Written Feedback (N=108)

Types	Like		Dislike	
	Students	%	Students	%
1. End commentary	84	77.80	24	22.20
2. Verbal cue	82	75.93	26	24.07
3. Marks	77	71.30	31	28.70
4. Direct correction	67	62.03	41	37.97
5. Error location	67	62.03	41	37.97
6. Marginal commentary	50	46.30	58	53.70
7. Error code	40	37.04	68	62.96
8. Error symbol	27	25.00	81	75.00

Among the different types of feedback used by the five TAs, the students liked End Commentary most (77.80%), and then followed by Verbal Cue (75.93%), Marks (71.30%), Direct Correction and Error Location (62.03%), Marginal Commentaries

(46.30%), respectively. The teachers rarely used the last two types of feedback, Error Code and Error Symbol; as a result, most students were not familiar with them. This was probably one of the reasons why 62.96% and 75.00% of the students disliked either one of them.

End Commentary came first on the list. Students explained some reasons why they liked this type of feedback: "I feel so good because it seems that my teacher is talking to me;" "It gives me an opportunity to learn my shortcomings and how I can improve my writing;" "Psychologically, my teacher paid attention to me;" and "My teacher's commentary can greatly help me see the level of my writing at present. Then I learn how to improve my writing." The results from Questionnaire II also confirmed that 77.80% of the students regarded End Commentary as their most favorites. In Questionnaire I, for Statement 6, "I wish my teacher would comment on my whole composition so that I can improve my writing ability in the future," 69.83% of them chose "strongly agree" and 21.55% "agree."

However, only 124 of 2,935 of feedback points (4.23%) were End Commentaries (Table 4.2). In the interview with sixteen students, one of them expressed: "My teacher seldom wrote End Commentary on my writing. However, I sincerely wished that my teacher commented on my compositions, not only on my drawbacks, but also on my good points. Teacher's comments should be objective, accurate and specific." Many students said that their teacher did not pay enough attention to the content of their writing. In fact, both the form and the content cannot be realistically separated when responding to students' writing since language is a resource for making meanings (Hyland, 200).

Verbal Cue came the second most favorite among the eight types of written feedback by 75.93% of the students. The main reasons for this were given: "It pointed out in detail why I made such an error;" " It's clearer for me to correct;" "It gives a clue to me, so I know how to correct;" "It always attracts my attention to read and think why;" "It is helpful to think over with the help of my teacher's verbal cue. It can impress me in the long run," "It is clearer than Error Location alone," and so on. Moreover, in the interview with the sixteen students, many of them agreed that this type of feedback could help them learn more than simply locating the errors. To some extent, indirect feedback is significantly effective in student's writing than direct correction (Lalande, 1982). In fact, the previous analysis of students' responses to teacher written feedback clearly revealed that the students made quite good use of teacher Verbal Cue (Table 4.6.1). A few students showed they disliked this kind of feedback simply because "My teacher's Verbal Cue on my writing is not clear enough;" "It cannot help the lower English ability student like me;" and "Although I understand my teacher's intention, I still don't know how to correct the error." Some students even expressed their "sympathy" for their teacher's hard work. "Too much trouble and time-consuming," one said. These statements showed that lower language ability students needed more detailed feedback than those did whose language ability was comparatively higher.

A good number of students showed great optimism on Marks feedback. Although this type of feedback is not analyzed in this study, it must be mentioned here for some important reasons. In terms of students' attitude towards this type of feedback, 71.30% of them chose "Like." One of the reasons was that the points on their compositions resulted in their final academic record. Another reason was

probably related to the circumstance in China, where the students have already been accustomed to be judged by scores on their academic performances. Interestingly, however, 57.75% strongly disagreed and 32.75% disagreed with the statement "I care more about my final scores than about my teacher feedback."(Item 7). This finding confirms that students value their teacher written feedback on their errors and do want the errors in their writing to be corrected; otherwise, they may be frustrated if this does not happen (Cohen, 1987; Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris 1995b; Ferris & Roberts 2001; Leki 1991; Radecki & Swales, 1988). It also implies that the students expected detailed written feedback from their teachers although academic records were important to them. 43.10% agreed and 11.21% strongly agreed with the statement "I think that the scores from my teacher accurately indicate the level of my writing ability."(Item 3). This finding confirms that many students take teacher's final Marks a criterion to judge their writing to a certain extent. In the interview, one student expressed, "Marks mean everything in my academic performance."

Direct Correction and Error Location came together as the students' fourth most favorites. 62.03% of the students agreed that they liked Direct Correction and Error Location, respectively. One of the reasons was that Direct Correction was obvious, understandable, convenient, direct and time-saving. In addition, it was easy to copy. In terms of students' preferences to these two types of feedback, for the statement "I prefer my teacher corrects my errors directly and provides the right answer"(Item 8), 33.62% of them chose "strongly agree" and 29.31% "agree." 17.24% absolutely disagreed and 40.52% disagreed with the statement "I prefer my teacher only point out my errors and let me correct them myself"(Item 9). It was clear that the students preferred Direct Correction to Error Location although they liked

both of them. In the interview with the sixteen students, one student from the Low Group explained that Direct Correction was most useful in his revision while another student from the High Group claimed, “I prefer my teacher point out my errors and let me correct myself. This type of feedback can impress me more deeply than Direct Correction.” Some other reasons included “Error Location offers me enough space to think critically. It encourages me to think why this located part is not correct;” “I solve the problem by myself. It impresses me more than Direct Correction;” “It’s good to improve my writing;” and “I can look up the incorrect word in the dictionary with my teacher’s error location.” In the interview with the sixteen students, most of them said with the help of their teacher’s error location, they could correct some errors, such as spelling, punctuation, and some grammar problems. This research finding matched what Chandler (2003) stated that although students prefer direct correction, they feel they learn more from self-correction. This research result showed that the students preferred their teachers to give them Direct Correction if they really had no ideas how to correct, and they could consider Error Location if they could solve the problems.

Almost half to half students chose “Like” and “Dislike” for Marginal Commentaries. Most students said that this type of feedback could show them a clue to find the reason why they made such an error. As one student described, “Marginal Commentary is impressive, clear, text specific and easy to understand. Not only does it lead me a right way to go, but also gives me enough space to think over. It attracts my attention and helps me avoid repeating the same mistake.” On the other hand, some students disliked it because they thought, “it is troublesome, unclear, complex and confusing,” “it seems good to help me correct, but it wastes my time to look for

the right answer." And quite a lot of them expressed that they "sometimes don't understand and even misunderstand." Some of them simply said, "I am not used to it." This implies that their teachers seldom use this type of feedback on the students' writing paper.

A comparison of the High and the Low Groups' preferences to teacher written feedback reveals an interesting picture as shown in Tables 4.8.1, and 4.8.2.

Table 4.8 .1 Questionnaire II

Students' Attitudes towards 8 Types of Teacher Written Feedback

Comparison of High Group and Low Group

Types	High Gr. (64 students)		Low Gr. (44 students)	
	Like	%	Like	%
1. End commentary	49	76.56	35	79.55
2. Verbal cue	46	71.88	36	81.82
3. Marks	48	75.00	29	65.91
4. Direct correction	32	50.00	35	79.55
5. Error location	46	71.88	21	47.73
6. Marginal commentary	30	46.88	20	45.45
7. Error code	28	43.75	12	27.27
8. Error symbol	19	29.69	8	18.19

Both the High Group (76.56%) and the Low Group (79.55%) liked End Commentary. Similarly, the High Group (71.88%) and the Low Group (81.82%) liked

Verbal Cue. In short, the findings confirmed the whole group's attitudes towards these two types of teacher written feedback (Table 4.7.2). The findings were supported by the data from Table 4.8.2, which showed similar results.

Table 4.8.2 Questionnaire I

Students' Preferences to Teacher Written Feedback

Comparison of High Group and Low Group

	High Gr. (68 students)		Low Gr. (48 students)	
Item	Disagree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Agree %
5	7.35	92.65	18.75	81.25
6	7.35	92.65	10.42	89.59
7	92.65	7.35	87.50	12.50
8	44.12	55.88	27.08	72.92
9	42.65	57.35	79.17	20.83

As for Marks, 75.00% of the High Group students were in favor of it, and 65.91% of the Low Group liked it. This probably mean that the latter needed more specific feedback points because of their low language proficiency. One of the main reasons why a majority of students liked this type of feedback might be related to their final academic performances. 92.65% from the High Group and 87.50% from the Low Group disagreed with the statement "I cared more about my final scores than about my teacher feedback" (Item 7). The result revealed that although final Marks

were critically important in students' academic career, they still valued their teacher's detailed written feedback in improving their language writing.

Considerable differences between the High and the Low Groups' preferences on Direct Correction and Error Location confirm that the higher language proficiency students preferred Error Location to Direct Correction, while the lower language proficiency students preferred Direct Correction to Error Location. 79.55% of students from the Low Group chose "Like" on Direct Correction while 50.00% from the High Group chose "Like." And 71.88% of students chose "Like" on Error Location, while only 47.73% from the Low Group chose "Like." From Questionnaire I, for the statement "I prefer my teacher corrects my errors directly and provides the right answers"(Item 8), 55.88% of students from the High Group chose "Agree", while 72.92% of students from the Low Group did. By contrast, 57.35% students from the High Group agreed with the statement "I prefer my teacher only point out my errors and let me correct them by myself" (Item 9), only 20.83% of students from the Low Group did. This showed that the students whose language ability was higher preferred indirect feedback compared to those whose language ability was comparatively lower. It proved that the students learn more from self-correction despite their favor for Direct Correction (Chandler, 2003). It also echoes that language accuracy is very important to L2 student since they are still in the process of acquiring the lexicon, morphological and syntactic systems (Ferris, 2002).

As for Marginal Commentary, both groups showed no significant differences. However, while the High Group students thought that they might use Error Code and Error Symbol, the Low Group did not appear so. This could mean that the first were more confident in their English than the latter to handle their revision.

From the results discussed so far, the five TAs normally used five main types of teacher written feedback on their students' writing, and the students liked End Commentary, Verbal Cue, Direct Correction and Error Location, and Marginal Commentary. The findings of this research were similar to the research results from Ferris and Roberts (2001), which state that the most popular type of feedback is underlining with description, followed by direct correction and underlining is the third. From the comparison of Like attitudes towards eight types of feedback between the High Group and the Low Group (Table 4.8.1), different preferences exist. For the High Group, End Commentary still came first, followed by Marks, Verbal Cue and Error Location, Direct Correction and Marginal Commentary. Meanwhile, Verbal Cue was the most favorite of the Low Group, followed by End Commentary and Direct Correction, Marks, Error Location and Marginal Commentary, respectively.

When the students made use of the feedback in their revisions, they responded differently. In Questionnaire I, 52.59% disagreed with the statement "I totally understand my teacher's correction symbols" (Item 10). This showed that not all of them totally understood their teacher's correction intentions on their writing. 29.31% of the students agreed and 12.06% strongly agreed with the statement "Because I did not understand my teacher's intention, I normally did not use the feedback. Instead, I wrote a new word or a new sentence" (Item 13). These results showed that some students could not make full use of their teacher written feedback due to some personal reasons. Perhaps the students did not understand the intention of the feedback, or perhaps they misunderstood, or even though they understood, they still did not know how to correct because of their limited language ability.

When the students were asked whether they could tolerate their teacher's "super correction" which meant the teacher corrects every error in their writing, most students said they could accept that. They wished that their teachers had pointed out some good points in their compositions. In short, not only did the students need their teacher's criticizing feedback, but they were also eager to see where their good points were in their writing.

In the interview with the sixteen students, many of them expressed that they wished they had had a chance to meet their teachers, who provided the feedback on their writing, that is, the five TAs. The purpose of meeting with the TAs was clear. As one student described, "I think some confusing errors could be easily corrected a face-to-face conference." In the Interview with the five TAs, the researcher learned that they had never met their students during the semester.

In the interview with the main writing instructor, it was found that although she required the five TAs to make a verbal report of feedback on the students' writing to her each week, and she summarized some common problems in class, it was still not enough to bridge the communication gap between the actual feedback providers, five TAs and the students.

The ultimate purpose of providing written feedback on students' writing is obvious, that is, to help students improve their writing ability in the long run. However, many factors must work harmoniously if this goal is to be attained in time. As stated by White and Arndt (1991), with the teacher's specific error corrections and explicit comments with an in-time implementation of teacher–student conferences on the process-oriented writing, the student will benefit most from the teacher's written feedback in their revision.

4.3 Summary

This chapter presents and discusses the results of this study, which answer the three research questions. Five main types of written feedback were most frequently used by English teachers at Guizhou University, the students paid much attention to their teacher's written feedback, and students preferred to use End Commentary, Verbal Cue, Direct Correction and Error Location, and Marginal Commentary respectively, in their revisions. The last chapter of this thesis, Chapter 5, will present a summary of these research findings and implications and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The last chapter of this study includes the purposes of the study, the participants, the procedures, the instrumentation, the results, and the recommendation for further research.

5.2 The Purposes of the Study

The purposes of this study were to categorize main types of teacher written feedback focusing on form, content and organization on *English Writing I* students' papers at Guizhou University, investigate students' responses to such teacher written feedback, and survey the students' preferences to teacher written feedback.

5.3 The Participants

The participants in this study include:

1. A main English writing instructor, who was considered an exemplary writing teacher in the institution;
2. Five teaching assistants who were selected from the graduate students according to their excellent performance in the previous academic year;

3. One hundred and fifty second-year English majors at Guizhou University, China. These students are from five sections of English Writing I, first term of 2004 academic year. At the end of the course, they should be able to write short letters, messages, or notices at the length of 60 words each in 5-6 minutes.

5.4 The Instrumentation

Three data gathering instruments were used in this study. They were:

1. Eight types of teacher written feedback were used to analyze the main types of feedback on eight hundred and sixty four pieces of students' first writing papers in order to answer the first research question;

2. Two questionnaires in Chinese carried out among 116 students and an interview with sixteen students chosen at random were used to find out more information to answer the second and the third research questions;

3. The main writing instructor and her five teaching assistants were interviewed to learn how the teachers provided their written feedback on students' writing. This offered the researcher another perspective to learn some details about different types of written feedback from the five TAs.

5.5 The Research Procedures

5.5.1 Study the research context

5.5.2 Collect students' first drafts with teacher written feedback

5.5.3 Collect students' revised drafts

5.5.4 Read and analyze the first and revised drafts of Essay One and discussed with expert teachers to attain agreement

5.5.5 Design students' questionnaires and interview questions after reading and analyzing both of the two drafts

5.5.6 Discuss with two expert teachers about the questionnaires and try out the questionnaires among sixteen students in order to ensure the reliability and validity

5.5.7 Analyze both of the first drafts and the revised ones

5.5.8 Analyze the data from the questionnaires and interview records.

5.6 The Results of the Research

5.6.1 Main Types of Teacher Written Feedback

English teachers in the English Language Department of Guizhou Univerity, P. R. C., used five main types of teacher written feedback, **Direct Correction, Error Location, Verbal Cue, Marginal Commentaries and End Commentaries,** respectively. **Error Code** and **Error Symbol** were seldom used by the five TAs in their correcting work. **Marks** feedback was only considered as an academic record on student's writing performance. This type of feedback was not analyzed in this research although it might have played some significant roles on the improvement of students' writing. A comparison of feedback points of each type between the High Group and the Low Group showed that Direct Correction was used more frequently in the Low Group than it was used in the High Group. In contrast, Error Location was used more in the High Group than in the Low Group. The results implied that the TAs gave more direct feedback with the lower language ability students than those whose language ability was comparatively higher.

5.6.2 Students' Responses to Teacher Written Feedback

Although five main types of written feedback were most frequently used by the five TAs, only four types could be utilized by the students in their revisions. **End Commentary** was considered as an overall comment or positive encouragement on the student's whole writing. It might have influenced the student's writing improvement in the long run to some extent, but it could not yet be proved useful in their immediate revision. The students revised well according to their teacher's **Direct Correction**. And **Error Location** was used well, too. Although **Marginal Commentary** and **Verbal Cue** were seldom used by the five TAs, they were totally understood by the students.

5.6.3 Students' Preferences to Teacher Written Feedback

The best liked feedback was End Commentary. Most of the students liked their teachers to provide **End Commentaries** on their compositions, followed by **Verbal Cue, Marks, Direct Correction**, **Error Location** and **Marginal Commentary,** respectively. However, the students' needs were not satisfactorily met by the five TAs. Concerning the student's different language abilities, the higher language ability students preferred to have **Indirect** feedback, whereas the lower language ability students preferred to have **Direct** feedback.

5.7 The Limitations of the Present Study

5.7.1 Oral and other types of feedback were ignored in this research.

5.7.2 Class operation is different from a conventional classroom practice. In this teaching context, one main teacher plus five TAs, who do not actually teach the

class, make the whole teaching process quite different. The five teaching assistants should have been instructed to use more different types of feedback on their students' writing papers.

5.7.3 The researcher should have observed the classroom activities more than twice during the study, especially when the students were revising their compositions in class. The wish could not be granted because the least interference was desired. In fact, the researcher should have given more opportunities to see what was actually going on in the classroom.

5.7.4 This teaching context is not an actual process-oriented instruction. Teacher written feedback did not really give the students an opportunity to improve their writing in order to get a better mark if this mark could be viewed as a sign to indicate their progress.

5.8 Implications for the Classroom Teaching

The results of the research imply some meaningful implications to the present classroom teaching.

First, in order to provide more effective written feedback on students' writing papers and to help the students improve their writing ability in the long run, teacher feedback should be better given on the process of students' writing, not only as a final product judgment.

Secondly, teachers should not only consider the language form but also pay enough attention to the content. Considering student's different language ability, teachers must take into account giving different types of feedback on their writing.

Then, concerning this special teaching format, one main writing instructor teaches the Writing Course with some TAs providing feedback on students' writing papers, it is necessary to have a frequent face-to-face talk between the main instructor and the five TAs. Moreover, the students need to be trained to make better use of their teacher written feedback. The necessity of meeting both of the main writing instructor and the TAs should be also considered for the students.

5.9 Suggestions for Further Research

5.9.1 Research on what types of teacher written feedback are effective on student's writing improvement should be done.

5.9.2 Further investigations should be conducted to find out whether EFL student writers' preferences on teacher feedback would enhance or affect their writing skills. In this research, the most frequently used feedback is **Direct Correction**, and the research findings showed that a majority of students preferred to use such a feedback in their revisions. The issue is to what extent this type of teacher written feedback could help students improve their writing in the long run.

5.9.3 Compare the most frequently used written feedbacks with those less frequently used and apply these different types of written feedback among the students with different English language proficiency levels to see how they can be most effectively employed.

5.8.4 Students' revising strategies should be considered so that they can make the most use of their teacher written feedback and get rewarded for their revision efforts.

5.9 Conclusion

This research sorted out the main five types of teacher written feedback in a natural classroom-teaching environment at Guizhou University in China, which include Direct Correction, Error Location, Verbal Cue, Marginal Commentaries, and End Commentaries, respectively. The students paid much attention to their teacher's written feedback. Most of them believed that teacher written feedback could help them improve their English writing in the long run. Among the most frequently used types of feedback from the five TAs, a majority of students preferred that their teachers provide End Commentaries on their compositions. In addition, the students expected that their teachers should not only focus on their grammar errors in their writing but also provide sound advice on the organization and content of their writing. Moreover, the students wished that they had had a few opportunities to meet their feedback providers---the five TAs -- in order to solve some confusing points.

Under such teaching circumstances, in deciding which types of written feedback are practical for teachers to employ and meanwhile can best suit students' needs, some considerations should be taken into account.

Firstly, the TAs should be exposed to different types of written feedback to be more effective. Meanwhile, the main writing instructor should play a good link between the TAs and the students because of the special format of instruction context. On the one hand, the main instructor must ensure that the students understand the written feedback symbols or codes from the TAs. On the other hand, the TAs must be provided some chances to meet the students in order to reduce the misunderstanding between the TAs and the students. In other words, they should have been given enough time to read students' writing papers. Lastly, the communication between the main

writing teacher and the TAs should be enhanced. Lacking either one of the communications would reduce the possibility of helping student improve their writing in the succeeding revision at present or in the long run.

Since writing is an intensely personal activity and the students admit that they benefit from their teacher's written feedback, however, it is not easy for teachers to provide feedback that will cater for all students' expectations. As a result, English as a foreign language writing teachers should try to exploit the potential of better-written feedback to help their students write better.

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APPENDIX A

Interview Questions with the Main Writing Teacher

1. According to the writing class directions, students are required to finish their writing in 5-6 minutes in class. What is the main purpose of such a requirement?
2. How many pieces of writing must be finished in one term?
3. How do your TAs (teaching assistants) help you provide feedback on students' compositions?
4. Are you satisfied with all the TAs' performances? Please give some reasons.
5. Do you always tell your students about their grammar errors corrected by the TAs in class?
6. How do you supervise your TAs?
7. How often do you meet with your TAs?
8. Have you found any problems in your TAs written feedback? If so, describe the problems and how you deal with them.

APPENDIX B

Interview Questions with Teaching Assistants

1. What types of feedback do you often use?
2. What types of feedback are your favorites? Why?
3. What types of feedback do you think are the most useful on your student's revision draft?
4. What types of feedback do you think your students like most? Please name some.
5. Are you sure your students understand the meaning of correction symbols, such as "____", " ? " , "＞" , and so on ? How do you know this?
6. If the students don't understand or misunderstand your correction intension, how do you feel about your time-consuming feedback on their compositions? Have you ever tried some of other methods?
7. How many minutes do you normally spend on one piece of writing at length of 60 -100 words?
8. Do you ignore some minor errors, such as spelling and punctuation, on students' writing papers?
9. Do you judge your student's writing paper at the first sight of a general impression?
10. Have you ever judged your student's composition based on his/her handwriting alone? Or at least the first sight always influences your judgment?

11. If you don't understand what the student wants to express in his/ her composition, how do you deal with it?
12. What do you expect from your students after you have provided them with your written feedback?
13. Do you think it is more important or necessary to pay attention to content or to grammatical errors in student's writing? Why or why not?
14. Are you sure your written feedback is helpful in the student's writing? How do you know this?
15. Do you think it's necessary to tell your students' shortcomings in their compositions orally?
16. Are you sure your students are satisfied with the final scores you give on their compositions? How do you know this?
17. How often do you talk with the main writing teacher about the students' writing?
18. Are you quite sure you make no errors in your correction? How do you avoid errors?
19. Do you think your students would be discouraged if you give them over error corrections on their compositions?

APPENDIX C

Questionnaire I

Students' Perceptions of Teacher Written Feedback and their Preferences and Responses to Such Feedback

Please read the following statements carefully and circle the letter A, B, C or D, which best indicate your opinion below.

A = I absolutely disagree with this statement

B = I disagree with this statement

C = I agree with this statement

D = I strongly agree with this statement

Part A: Perceptions

1. I benefit from my teacher's written feedback on my English writing.

A B C D

2. If my teacher only provides a final score on my composition without any feedback, then I suppose that there are few mistakes.

A B C D

3. I think that the scores from my teacher accurately indicate the level of my writing ability.

A B C D

4. I feel discouraged if my teacher makes many corrections on my composition.

A B C D

Part B: Preferences

5. I wish the TA not only point out my grammar errors but also pay more attention on my content.

A B C D

6. I wish my teacher would comment on my entire composition so that I can improve my writing ability in the future.

A B C D

7. I cared more about my final scores than about my teacher written feedback.

A B C D

8. I prefer my teacher corrects my errors directly and provides the right answers.

A B C D

9. I prefer my teacher only point out my errors and let me correct them by myself.

A B C D

Part C: Responses

10. I totally understand my teacher correction symbols.

A B C D

11. I always revise my composition based upon my teacher written feedback.

A B C D

12. Even when I understood my teacher written feedback, I still didn't know how to correct the error in my revision.

    A B C D

13. Because I do not understand my teacher's intention, I normally do not use the feedback. Instead, I write a new word or a new sentence.

    A B C D

APPENDIX D

Questionnaire II

Students' Attitudes towards 8 Types of Teacher Written Feedback

Please carefully read each example of correction option, then tick either one of the two options and give reasons.

Example: I hear that you**'ve** just **came** back from France.

Teacher's correction options:

1. Direct correction: … you've just ~~came~~ back. **Like** **Dislike**

come

2. Error location:… you've just came back. **Like** **Dislike**

(or: come?, etc.)

3. Error code: …. you've just came back. **Like** **Dislike**

vt.

4. Error symbol:… you've just came back. **Like** **Dislike**

Δ

5. Verbal cue:… .you've just came back. **Like** **Dislike**

verb form, correct?

6. Marginal comments….you've just came back. **Like** **Dislike**

Is this correct?

7. Sample end comment:

As you revise, hope you check your verbs to see if their forms are correct or not. Look it up in your dictionary if needed.

Like **Dislike**

8. Teacher provides a final score on the composition without any corrections.

For example: 75.

Like **Dislike**

APPENDIX E

Guided Interview Questions with Students

1. What do you think of your teacher written feedback?
2. Are you satisfied with most of your teacher written feedback?
3. How do you follow your teacher written feedback?
4. What do you expect from your teacher?
5. If you don't understand your teacher written feedback, how do you normally do?
6. Do you often use dictionary or grammar books to help you revise?
7. Do you trust your teacher written feedback?
8. Can you guarantee you will never repeat the same mistake your teacher has corrected for you?
9. Which one do you care more, your teacher's commentaries or marks?
10. How do you feel if your teacher didn't provide any commentary or correction on your composition, but only a final score?
11. Which commentaries do you like better, positive or negative?
12. If you were allowed to revise your composition after class, would it be better comparing to do it in class?

BIOGRAPHY

The researcher has been teaching English since she graduated from the English Department at Guizhou University in the People's Republic of China in 1985. She loves her job as an English language teacher. She has learnt a lot of practical experiences in her long time teaching, especially in the field of classroom instruction. She is regarded as one of the most responsible and excellent teachers in the College English Department, Guizhou Universtiy. The longer she teaches, the more she dreams of improving her own language proficiency eagerly. In 2001, she met her present advisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Siriluck Usaha, who went to Guizhou University as a visiting instructor. Being impressed deeply by her advisor's excellent English proficiency, the researcher made a decision to pursue her Master's Degree in English Language Studies at Suranaree University of Technology in Nakhon Ratachasima, Thailand, in May 2003. Her research interest is on Language and Culture, English language teaching, EFL writing, especially on teacher written feedback on student's writing.