

**WRITTEN SUPERVISORY FEEDBACK AND ITS  
INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS' UPTAKE AND  
PERCEPTIONS IN EFL ENGLISH MAJORS'  
BACHELOR'S THESIS WRITING**



**A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English Language Studies**

**Suranaree University of Technology**

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การให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับเป็นลายลักษณ์อักษรจากอาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาและผลกระทบ  
ที่มีต่อการแก้ไขงานและความคิดเห็นในการเขียนวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรี  
เอกภาษาอังกฤษของนักศึกษาที่ใช้ภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

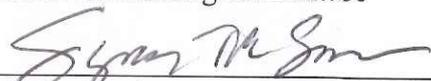


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MAJORS' BACHELOR'S THESIS WRITING**

Suranaree University of Technology has approved this thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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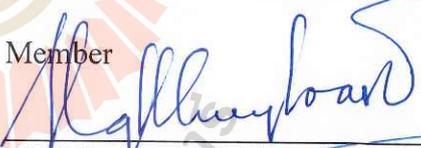
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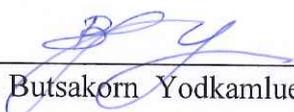
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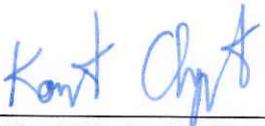
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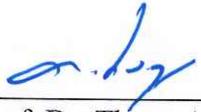
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ชีบิน เลย์ : การให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับเป็นลายลักษณ์อักษรจากอาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาและผลกระทบ  
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WRITING) อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษา : ผู้ช่วยศาสตราจารย์ ดร.อิสรา ประมุขสุข, 432 หน้า

ข้อเสนอแนะอย่างเป็นลายลักษณ์อักษร (WSF) มีบทบาทสำคัญในการให้การสนับสนุน  
และคำแนะนำแก่นักศึกษาในการเขียนวิทยานิพนธ์ อย่างไรก็ตาม การศึกษาน้อยมากเกี่ยวกับ WFS  
และอิทธิพลของ WFS ต่อการเขียนวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรีในบริบทภาษาจีน ในการศึกษา  
ครั้งนี้คุณลักษณะของ WFS และผลกระทบที่มีต่อการแก้ไขงานและความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับ WFS ของ  
นักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยในประเทศจีน การศึกษานี้จึงได้รวบรวมและวิเคราะห์วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับร่างที่  
ต่างกันจากนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีเอกภาษาอังกฤษ 32 คนและ WFS จากอาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาของ  
พวกเขาที่ให้แก่วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับร่าง WFS จากอาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาสำหรับวิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับร่างและ  
ฉบับแก้ไขใหม่ของนักศึกษาแต่ละรายการถูกเข้ารหัสและแยกหมวดหมู่เพื่อระบุคุณลักษณะของ  
WSF เกี่ยวกับการให้ความสำคัญ กลยุทธ์ และการให้คำอธิบาย และผลกระทบที่มีต่อการแก้ไขงาน  
ของนักศึกษาในขั้นตอนการร่างวิทยานิพนธ์ที่ต่างกันและในส่วนของบทความวิจัยที่ต่างกัน จากนั้น  
งานวิจัยนี้ใช้แบบสอบถามและการสัมภาษณ์แบบกึ่ง โครงสร้างเพื่อทำความเข้าใจเกี่ยวกับความ  
คิดเห็นของนักศึกษาเกี่ยวกับวิธีการให้ WFS จากอาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาของพวกเขา

จากการศึกษาพบว่าอาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาให้ความสำคัญอย่างมากกับไวยากรณ์ ข้อกำหนด และ  
เนื้อหา ใช้ยุทธศาสตร์ทางอ้อมมากกว่ายุทธศาสตร์ทางตรง และนิยมให้คำอธิบายที่เป็นกลางใน  
วิธีการให้ WFS ของตน นอกจากนี้จากการศึกษายังพบว่าวิธีการให้ความสำคัญกับการให้ WFS  
และยุทธศาสตร์ในการให้ WFS ของอาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาแตกต่างกันอย่างชัดเจนในวิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับ  
ร่างหลายฉบับและในวิทยานิพนธ์ที่แตกต่างกัน และการให้ความสำคัญกับการให้ WFS ตอบสนอง  
ต่อยุทธศาสตร์และการให้คำอธิบายเป็นบางรายการ

การศึกษานี้ยังแสดงด้วยว่าความถี่ของการแก้ไขงานที่สัมฤทธิ์ผลของนักศึกษาแตกต่างกัน  
ในวิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับร่างที่ต่างกันและในส่วนของวิทยานิพนธ์ที่ต่างกัน การศึกษาเผยว่ายุทธศาสตร์  
ทางตรงทำให้เกิดการแก้ไขงานที่สัมฤทธิ์ผลมากกว่ายุทธศาสตร์ทางอ้อม และการให้คำอธิบายเชิง  
ลบนำไปสู่การแก้ไขงานที่สัมฤทธิ์ผลน้อยกว่าการให้คำอธิบายที่เป็นกลาง นอกจากนี้ เนื้อหาและ  
ไวยากรณ์ใน WFS ยังทำให้เกิดการแก้ไขงานที่สัมฤทธิ์ผลเมื่อตอบสนองต่อยุทธศาสตร์ "การแก้ไข

หรือการเปลี่ยนรูปโดยตรง" (Dc) บ่อยครั้งมากกว่ายุทธศาสตร์อื่นใด และการให้คำอธิบายที่เป็นกลางทำให้เกิดการแก้ไขงานที่สัมฤทธิ์ผลเมื่อตอบสนองต่อเนื้อหาบ่อยครั้งน้อยกว่าการตอบสนองต่อการให้ความสำคัญอื่นใด

ผลการวิจัยนี้แสดงให้เห็นว่าผู้เข้าร่วมการวิจัยนิยม WSF ในเกือบทุกหมวดหมู่ อันได้แก่เนื้อหา ไวยากรณ์ ข้อกำหนด องค์กร และความถูกต้องเหมาะสมเชิงภาษาศาสตร์ และสำหรับยุทธศาสตร์ของ WSF ว่าด้วย "การแก้ไขหรือการเปลี่ยนรูปโดยตรงพร้อมคำอธิบาย" (Ds) และยุทธศาสตร์ว่าด้วย "ความเห็น โดยนัยที่แสดงข้อผิดพลาดหรือปัญหา" (Is) และมีการรับรู้ว่าการให้คำอธิบาย "เชิงบวก" และ "เป็นกลาง" เป็นที่นิยมมากที่สุด ผลการสัมภาษณ์แสดงให้เห็นว่าเหตุผลในความคิดเห็นของนักศึกษาเกี่ยวกับการให้ความสำคัญ ยุทธศาสตร์ และการให้คำอธิบายใน WSF ได้แก่ "ความก้าวหน้าทางวิชาการ" "ประสบการณ์ทางความรู้สึกร" "อิทธิพลทางสังคม" และ "ความต้องการส่วนบุคคล"

การศึกษานี้สรุปด้วยการให้นโยบายประการแก่อาจารย์ที่ปรึกษาการเขียนวิทยานิพนธ์ระดับปริญญาตรีเพื่อปรับปรุงและพัฒนาคุณภาพบทความวิจัยของนักศึกษาอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ



ZHIBIN LEI : WRITTEN SUPERVISORY FEEDBACK AND ITS  
INFLUENCE ON STUDENTS' UPTAKE AND PERCEPTIONS IN EFL  
ENGLISH MAJORS' BACHELOR'S THESIS WRITING. THESIS  
ADVISOR : ASST. PROF. ISSRA PRAMOOLSOOK, Ph.D., 432 PP.

BACHELOR'S THESIS/ ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS IN CHINA/  
STUDENTS' UPTAKE/ WRITTEN SUPERVISORY FEEDBACK

Written supervisory feedback (WSF) plays a crucial role in providing support and suggestions to students in thesis writing. However, few studies have been conducted on WSF and its effects on bachelor's thesis writing in the Chinese context. In order to investigate the characteristics of WSF, students' uptake and their perceptions of WSF in a Chinese university, this study collected and analyzed different thesis drafts from 32 English major undergraduates and their supervisors' WSF on the thesis drafts. Each instance of the supervisors' WSF on the thesis drafts and the students' revision were coded and categorized to identify the characteristics of WSF in terms of foci, strategies, and connotations and the students' uptake in different draft stages and different thesis sections. Then, a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews were utilized to understand students' perceptions of their supervisors' WSF practices.

The study found that the supervisors paid much attention to Grammar, Requirements, and Content, used more indirect strategies than direct ones, and preferred neutral connotation in their WSF practices. In addition, the study also found that the supervisors' WSF foci and strategies varied markedly in the multi-drafts and in different thesis sections and that their WSF foci interacted with certain strategies and

connotations.

This study also showed that the frequency of the students' successful uptake varied in different thesis drafts and different thesis sections. It revealed that the direct strategies brought more successful uptake than indirect strategies and negative connotation led to less successful uptake than neutral connotation. Moreover, the Content and Grammar WSF resulted in higher frequencies of successful uptake when interacting with "direct correction or reformation" (Dc) strategy than any other strategy, and neutral connotation achieved a lower frequency of successful uptake when interacting with Content than with any other focus.

This research results revealed that the participants had a preference for the WSF on most categories including Content, Grammar, Requirements, Organization, and Linguistic Appropriateness, and for the WSF strategies of the "direct correction or reformulation with descriptions or explanations" (Ds) and "comments implicitly indicating errors or problems" (Is) strategies, and that the "positive" and "neutral" connotations were perceived as the most preferable. The interview results showed that the reasons for the students' perceptions of WSF foci, strategies, and connotations included "academic advancement," "affective experience," "social influence," and "individual needs."

The study concludes by providing some implications for the bachelor's thesis supervisors to effectively improve the students' thesis quality.

School of Foreign Languages

Academic Year 2020

Student's Signature Zhibin Lei

Advisor's Signature J. Promeeleech

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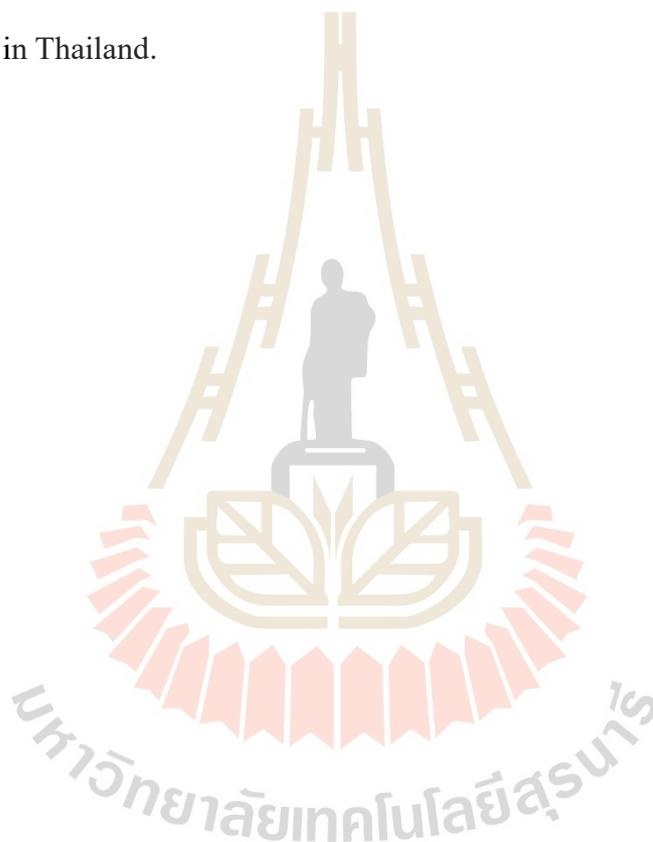
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Zhibin Lei



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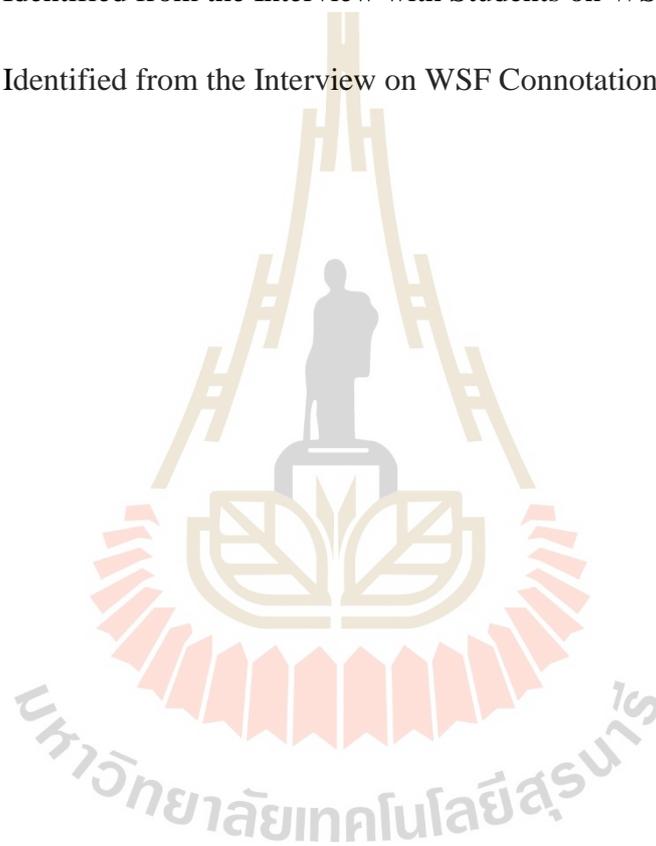
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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A. P.	=	Associate Professor
A. T.	=	Assistant teacher
BA thesis	=	Thesis for a degree of Bachelor of Arts
CF	=	Corrective feedback
EFL	=	English as a Foreign Language
EM-students	=	English Major Students
F. P.	=	Full Professor
HNFNU	=	Hunan First Normal University
ILrMRDC	=	Introduction Literature Review Methodology Results and Discussion Conclusions
L.	=	Lecturer
L2	=	Second language
P. E. E.	=	Primary English Education
SFL	=	The School of Foreign Languages
TEM-4	=	Test for English Majors-Band 4
WCF	=	Written Corrective Feedback
WSF	=	Written Supervisory Feedback

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

The present study aims at investigating the characteristics of the EFL supervisors' written supervisory feedback (WSF) on English major undergraduates' Bachelor's multiple thesis drafts, the students' uptake of their supervisors' WSF, and the students' perceptions of their supervisors' WSF in a Chinese university. This chapter first introduces the background of the study, and then describes the research purposes, the research questions, and the significance of the study. Lastly, it gives the working definitions to the key terms of the research and the limitations of this study as well.

### 1.1 Background of Study

English is taught as a foreign language in China and there are about 200,000 English major undergraduates enrolled in university each year. All the English major students are required to complete a bachelor's thesis under supervisors as a compulsory course for the final year of their university study and as a requisite for their Bachelors' degree. Despite the fact that the supervisors diligently correct and give feedback on the students' thesis drafts, the quality of the English majors' Bachelor's theses is still

unsatisfying (Sun, 2004; Zhang et al., 2007; Zhang, 2008; Gu, 2009; Song, 2013), and this aspect of teachers' work is "often fraught with frustration and uncertainty" (Ferris, 2014, p. 6). Therefore, providing written feedback has long become a tedious and unrewarding task for bachelor's thesis supervisors. However, the importance of written feedback in students' thesis writing can never be exaggerated. Supervisors are acting as instructors, evaluators, proofreaders, facilitators and readers simultaneously in the process of giving written feedback (Leki, 1990; Reid, 1994; Wen & Wang, 2003; Wang, 2007). Therefore, this research attempts to investigate the characteristics of Chinese supervisors' written feedback on English majors' bachelor's thesis drafts, the students' uptake of the supervisors' written feedback and the students' perceptions of their supervisors' written feedback.

### **1.1.1 Roles of Bachelor's Thesis in China**

In China, each undergraduate student is required to complete a successful project design or thesis if he or she expects to be granted a Bachelor's Degree. A "project design" refers to the drawing of a new design, the report on job practice or the description of an invention, etc. for science and engineering students, or a practice report for the students of fine art or medicine, while a "thesis" refers to a research paper for arts students (Liu & Hu, 2008). *The Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Academic Degrees* (The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of

People's Republic of China, 1981) is the guiding law for degree issuing. The law states that the Bachelor's degree shall be awarded to undergraduates who have "good academic records" and have a good grasp of "basic theories", "specialized knowledge" and "basic skills", and have the ability to "undertake scientific research" or "engage in a special work". *The Provisional Measures for the Implementation of the Regulations of the People's Republic of China on Academic Degrees* clearly states the Bachelor's project/thesis is a necessary condition for awarding a bachelor's degree:

*Bachelor's degree shall be conferred on undergraduates who have completed the courses required by the syllabus and have been approved for graduation, and the results of all the courses and bachelor's thesis (project or other types of practice) indicate they have a relatively good grasp of basic theories of the discipline and have initially acquired the ability to undertake scientific research or to engage in a special technical work (Ministry of Education, 2004).*

Therefore, a bachelor's thesis is an indispensable part of the requirements for a Bachelor's degree in Chinese universities, and any undergraduate student of arts (including English major) has to complete his or her bachelor's thesis in the senior year. A bachelor's thesis plays an important role in measuring a student's academic ability and it decides whether the student is worthy of a bachelor's degree or not.

### **1.1.2 Bachelor's Thesis for English Major Students (BA thesis) in China**

Bachelor's thesis for English major students (hereafter as BA thesis) is a necessary condition for Bachelor's degree in China. The thesis should be written in

3000-5000 English words with well-organized structure and substantial contents. In assessing the thesis, such elements are much considered as whether the English language is smooth and natural, the idea expressed clear and logical, and the view independent and innovative (Ministry of Education, 2000).

To have a better understanding of supervisors' written feedback on BA thesis drafts, it is essential to have a thorough understanding of the status, the communicative purposes, the topic areas and the structures of BA thesis in China.

#### **1.1.2.1 Status of BA Thesis in China**

In alignment to the state's requirements, the English major students in the senior year (hereafter refers to EM-students) need to complete a qualified bachelor's thesis as a partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts (hereafter refers to BA thesis in this study). The purpose of BA thesis is to enhance both the EM-students' basic research ability and their language proficiency in the competitive world (Ministry of Education, 2000). The *English Teaching Syllabus for English Majors of Higher Education in China* (hereafter the *Syllabus*) has explained the importance and requirements on BA thesis to the EM-students:

*[BA] thesis writing is an important way to assess students' comprehensive language ability and academic research ability. It should be written in English with 3000 to 5000 words, and should be fluent, clear and informative with independent ideas. (Ministry of Education, 2000)*

In accordance with the *Syllabus* and the state's documents as well as the law for degree granting, Chinese universities have prescribed BA thesis writing as a practical course (compared to theory courses such as English Listening, American and British Literature, etc.) for EM-students and a qualified BA thesis as an indispensable condition for an EM-student to get a Bachelor's degree. Therefore, BA thesis is not only an essential part for a completion of a Bachelor's degree, but also a compulsory course for all EM-students, possessing a high status in cultivating EM-students' research and academic abilities.

In order to ensure the quality of the EM-students' Bachelor's theses, the aforementioned documents and the *Syllabus* also emphasize the role of supervisors in bachelor's thesis writing, requiring universities to establish rules to enhance supervisors' sense of responsibility and advocating setting up supervisor teams with both internal and external members. The number of EM-students in China has been increasing and reaches over 200,000 each year recently. According to the annual statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics, there were 201,115 English major graduates in the year of 2012, 200,312 in 2013, 200,266 in 2014, and 201,988 in 2015 as shown in Table 1.1. Due to the great number of EM-students, universities adopt a single supervisor model, which allows a student to be supervised by only one supervisor. There is a two-way selection between supervisors and supervisees in theory,

but in practice there will be some coordination from the faculty (or School of Foreign Languages) to avoid an extensive selection for some supervisors.

**Table 1.1** Numbers of English Major Students and English Graduates in China

Year	No. of English Major Students	No. of English Graduates
2012	810, 846	201, 115
2013	813, 777	200, 312
2014	801, 342	200, 266
2015	790, 795	201, 988

Note. *English major students refer to the Grade 1-4 undergraduate students in English major on campus, while English graduates stands for the Grade 4 undergraduates who are obtaining their bachelor degree in English major.*

There are four professional ranks for teachers in Chinese universities, i.e., assistant teacher, lecturer, associate professor, and full professor. Each professional rank is further divided into three or four levels and there are thirteen levels of professional ranks in total (Ministry of Education, 1986; Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security of the People's Republic of China, 2007). The qualifications for being a supervisor differ from university to university, but in common the potential supervisors should be associate professors or full professors in professional ranks, or lecturers in professional rank with a master's degree, or assistant teachers in professional rank with a doctoral degree. The number of supervisees under one supervisor varies according to his/her professional rank, usually the supervisors with higher professional ranks will supervise more EM-students than those with lower ones.

The Chinese authorities have been trying to improve students' academic writing in the past decades. The quality of BA theses and the process of supervising BA thesis students have come under scrutiny by the *Evaluation Scales for Undergraduate Education Programs (Trial)* (Ministry of Education, 2011) and universities in China have set up the course of "Academic Writing for English Majors" or similar courses "aiming at preparing EM-students for their BA thesis writing" (Xiong, 2012, p. 1). However, much research has shown that the current situation of the EM-students' BA theses is far from satisfactory with severe problems in thesis structure, topic selection, style, mechanics, citation, documentation, grammar and so on (Sun, 2004; Zhang, He, & Han, 2007; Zhang, 2008; Gu, 2009). In addition, despite their great efforts, a considerable number of EM-students did not think BA thesis writing process rewarding (Sun, 2004) because they felt they had not improved their academic writing or research ability much after the BA thesis writing.

#### **1.1.2.2 Communicative Purposes of BA Thesis**

Bachelor's theses are different from those compositions that the EM-students write in class or the course papers in which they mainly gather information from books and other resources. It is a kind of research paper that "should draw on original conclusion based on information derived from research" (Tian, 2006), and it should be formal, scientific, academic and original (Huang, 2011).

According to the *Syllabus*, bachelor's thesis writing is "an important form to check students' comprehensive competence and to assess their study performance", "for English undergraduates, their thesis should have smooth wording, clear thought, substantive contents and innovative idea" (Ministry of Education, 2000). In other words, the purpose and significance of writing a thesis lie in developing students' comprehensive language ability, enabling them to master scientific research methods and improving their academic writing ability, as well as raising their awareness of originality.

Firstly, bachelor's thesis writing is an important approach to measure students' comprehensive language ability. To decide a research topic for a bachelor's thesis, students have to search, read, comprehend, analyze or synthesize many resources to find out what is a proper trend and what people have done before on this trend. During this research topic preparation stage, students will practice the information retrieval techniques, reading skills, comprehension and analysis strategies they have been trained. After the students decide on the topic and begin writing, communicating their ideas in English is a great challenge because English is a foreign language to them. Therefore, a complete bachelor's thesis, involving activities including identifying a research topic, gathering and reviewing previous research, assimilating others' findings and formulating one's own views, developing the ideas

clearly and convincingly with supporting materials, and then defending the thesis orally, is a means to measure the EM-students' comprehensive language ability, especially reading, writing and speaking abilities.

Secondly, bachelor's thesis writing is an effective way to assess how much the EM-students master scientific research methods. As Tian (2006) claimed, bachelor's thesis is a kind of research paper. A research paper is the systemic application of scientific methods to the study of academic problems, or a systemic approach of finding answers to questions. During the research and writing process, under the supervision of their supervisors, the EM-students practice how to solve a problem, make a decision or analyze a situation to reach a conclusion by applying different data collection techniques and data analysis methods. Therefore, there is no better way to understanding basic research methods than writing a research paper, and bachelor's theses are the good opportunity to examine the EM-students' research methods and ability.

Thirdly, a bachelor's thesis can also reflect students' academic writing ability. Although not so much advanced in research depth and scale, a bachelor's thesis is a research paper written for members of the discipline community; therefore, it should meet the expectations in this community. For example, it should undergo a process of literature review, data exploration and analysis, and formulation of

an independent and convincing conclusion. It should meet the standard and the specifications set by the university or college about its length, formats, bibliography and binding sequence, and it should be presented in a clear, concise and logical way, in an objective tone and supported with specific materials, including quotations, documentation, endnotes, or footnotes and a list of works cited. Therefore, a bachelor's thesis can reveal to what extent an EM-student gets familiar with the expectations in their research field.

Fourthly, a bachelor's thesis can test the EM-students' originality in doing research. The EM-students could use someone else's words or ideas, but they need to tell clearly in their thesis where they take it from. A bachelor's thesis can help the EM-students to be very careful about the citation and avoid any kinds of plagiarism.

In sum, the major purposes of a bachelor's thesis are to prove to the thesis committee members that the author's language proficiency, research skills, academic writing as well as the originality awareness has reached the thesis requirement for a university degree.

### **1.1.2.3 Subject Areas of BA Thesis**

According to the *English Teaching Syllabus for English Majors of Higher Education in China*, a bachelor's thesis for EM-students should be specialized in "English field", that is, in the areas related to English language, culture and literature

or its comparison with Chinese language.

To begin with, the EM-students must decide on what to research into and what to write about, namely, to discover the subject for their research and choose the topic for their research paper. Traditionally, there are five broad subject areas for students to choose in their thesis writing: English literature, English linguistics, English language teaching and learning, English and Chinese translation, and English culture (Tian, 2006; Zhang, 2007). In recently years, some foreign language schools offer quite a few practical job-oriented courses to English majors such as international trade and business, so the study of business English wins the position to be an independent subject area in some universities. Therefore, there are generally six subject areas for bachelor's thesis writing in China as follows (Huang, 2011).

The subject of English Literature, or Literary Studies, focuses on the study of literary works or authors from the English-speaking countries including British, American, Australian, Canadian, southern African etc., or the comparisons with Chinese literature or authors.

The subject of English Linguistics, or English Language Studies, mainly focuses on the study of linguistic theories including English morphology, syntax, semantics, etymology, rhetoric, stylistics, pragmatics, socio-linguistics, all branches of English linguistics and their comparisons with the Chinese counterparts.

The subjects of English Language Teaching and Learning, or Application Studies, focuses on the study of English teaching in classroom including ESP (English for Specific Purposes) teaching, TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) or TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language), and any special expertise concerning English in use, or on the study of second/foreign language acquisition and learning theories.

The subject of English and Chinese Translation, or Translation Studies, covers a wide range of topics, including theories and mechanics, history of translation, contrastive translation between Chinese and English, written translation and oral interpretation, translation and artificial intelligence etc.

The subject of English Culture, or Intercultural Studies, foci on the analysis of culture in the English-speaking countries, including any English-speaking country's history, geography, economy, law, foreign policy or national culture and character, or the relationship between culture and English language. It can also focus on cultural differences or similarities between Chinese and English.

The subject of Business English foci on the study of the communication skills used in the workplace, or on the language and skills needed for typical business communication such as presentations, negotiations, meetings, small talk, socializing, correspondence, report writing, and a systematic approach.

In this study, due to the education purpose of the University (to cultivate teachers for basic education) and the social practices the EM-students have had, the bachelor's thesis topics mainly fall within the subject areas of English Literature, English Language Teaching and Learning, and English and Chinese Translation, with a few on other subject areas.

#### **1.1.2.4 Structures of BA Thesis**

In Chinese tertiary educational system, there are three types of academic degrees, namely, Bachelor's Degree, Master's Degree, and Doctorate Degree (Ministry of Education, 1981). A bachelor's thesis is written for the purpose of getting the Bachelor's degree. The structure of a bachelor's thesis is set up by universities, usually having the similar structure with a master's thesis or a doctorate dissertation in corresponding university, but different in length and depth of the research.

As those of a master's thesis or a doctorate dissertation, the structure of a bachelor's thesis mostly contains three parts: (1) the preliminaries or front matter, including Cover page, Title page, Table of Content, and Abstract; (2) the text or body of the thesis, including Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion, Conclusion; and (3) the reference materials or back matter, including Bibliography, Appendices (if there is), and acknowledgement. The structure of bachelor's thesis of this study contains all the three parts mentioned above.

### 1.1.3 Written Supervisory Feedback (WSF) on BA Thesis in China

Supervisors providing written feedback (called written supervisory feedback in this study, or WSF) on BA thesis drafts is the most common BA thesis supervision practices in the university settings in China. Firstly, the EM-students usually go out of their university for job practices and rarely stay on campus at work hours, so they have little time to conduct face-to-face conference with the supervisors. Secondly, “written feedback provides teachers with a means to address students’ individual needs, while also giving students a record of the information that they can save and go back to as needed” (Almendral, 2014, p. 11). In other words, written supervisory feedback provides the EM-students with a point of reference to which they can refer over time. Lastly, written feedback also provides the management authorities with a reference to examine and evaluate the supervisors’ work on BA thesis student supervision, which is a possible means to ensure the quality of BA thesis.

However, given the importance of providing WSF on BA thesis and the popularity of WSF, the Chinese supervisors have “received little training in English writing teaching before they became university teachers, let alone received training about how to comment on writing” (Liu, 2016, p. 18). The supervisors mainly provided WSF based on their own learning experience, or through learning from their training of exam-paper marking (ibid, p.18). As a result, very little literature has been published on

what and how Chinese supervisors give their WSF on BA thesis drafts, and what strategies used by Chinese EFL supervisors are also under-explored.

#### **1.1.4 Research Context of the Present Study**

After an introduction to the BA thesis writing and WSF in Chinese context, the research context will be narrowed down to the present study, concentrating on the setting of Hunan First Normal University (HNFNU) and its School of Foreign Languages (SFL), the characteristics of the EM-students and the BA thesis supervision in SFL.

1) The university setting. Hunan First Normal University (HNFNU) where the data were collected is located in the capital of Hunan, a central province of China. The university has a history over 100 years in teacher cultivation for basic education and now has a population of 20,000 students in eleven faculties. Among the eleven faculties, the School of Foreign Languages (SFL) offers classes to the EM-students, while the Department of Public English Teaching offers English classes to the non-English major students at the time when this research is being carried out. There are 70 faculty members in the SFL, and 44 faculty members in the Department of Public English Teaching in the academic year of 2017-2018. These 114 teachers were the possible supervisors for the EM-students in SFL for their BA thesis writing in 2017-2018 academic year. As statistics released by the SFL in 2017 showed, of the 114

faculty members, 8 are full professors, 28 are associate professors, 72 are lecturers, and 6 are assistant teachers.

Regarding to their degrees, 6 are Ph.D. holders, 97 are MA holders, 4 are studying for their Ph.D. degree, and the remaining 7 teachers are BA holders. Teachers with over- 5-year teaching experience account for most of faculty population in the SFL.

At last, with the two-way selection, 53 teachers were chosen as the supervisors for the 227 EM-students in the academic year 2017-2018. The distributions of the professional ranks, degrees and genders among the supervisors is revealed in Table 1.2. Among the supervisors, 5 are full professors, 17 are associate professors, 30 are lecturers and 1 is an assistant teacher. As for their degrees, 4 supervisors have doctoral degree, and regarding their genders, 7 are males and 46 are females.

**Table 1.2** Professional Rank, Degree and Gender Constitution of Supervisors in SFL in 2017-2018

Professional Rank				Degree			Gender	
F. P.	A. P.	L.	A. T.	BA	MA	Ph.D.	M	F
5	17	30	1	4	45 (2 Ph.D. candidates)	4	7	46

Note. *F. P.*= full professor; *A. P.* = associate professor; *L.* = lecturer; *A. T.* = assistant teacher; *M* = male; *F*= female.

2) The English major students in the senior year (EM-students). In the academic year of 2017-2018, the School of Foreign Languages owned a student population of 2,060 as shown in Table 1.3 (996 majoring in English, 123 majoring in

Translation, and 941 majoring in Primary English Education). In this study, the EM-students refer to the students majoring English in the senior year in the School of Foreign Languages. Of the 227 EM-students, about eighty percent of them came from the province in which the university is located, and the others were from different parts of China. Their ages ranged from 21 to 24, and they had studied English for 12 to 15 years.

**Table 1.3** Number of Students in SFL in 2017-2018

Major	No. of Students				
	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Subtotal
English	240	278	251	227	996
Translation	30	30	34	29	123
P. E. E.	204	201	266	270	941
Total					2060

Note. P. E. E. = Primary English Education.

According to the *Syllabus*, the English majors are required to take the Test for English Majors 4 (TEM-4) in the second year and the Test for English Majors 8 (TEM-8) in the fourth year. TEM is a national test assessing students' comprehensive English proficiency and it is mandatory for English majors. The requirements of TEM-4 in writing skill are:

*To be able to write a short essay with a length of 150-200 words in 30 minutes with relevant content, well-organized structure, correct grammar, smooth language and appropriate expressions according to the given topic, outline, chart, statistics, etc. In addition, to be able to write a practical writing with a length of about 60 words in 10 minutes (Ministry of Education, 2000).*

For TEM-8, the requirements for writing skill are “to be able to write a short essay with a length of 300-400 words in 30 minutes with rich content, smooth language, appropriate expressions and in correct styles according to a given topic, outline, chart, statistics, etc.”.

All the EM-students in the School of Foreign Languages in the academic year 2017-2018 were certificated in TEM-4 in the second year or the third year, and 53% of them passed TEM-8 during their fourth year. Table 1.4 shows their TEM results.

**Table 1.4** TEM Results of the EM-Students

TEM	Results								
	Pass rate	Excellent	%	Good	%	Average	%	Passed	%
TEM-4	100%	0	0%	8	3.5%	22	9.7%	197	86.8%
TEM-8	39.2%	0	0%	3	1.4%	6	2.7%	80	36.2%

From the TEM results, an assumption can be made that all the EM-students have reached the proficiency set up by the *Syllabus* of writing basically qualified English essays, and could start writing Bachelor’s theses in the fourth year.

Studying in a normal university, that is, a university with its aim to cultivate teachers, the EM-students were generally supposed to become teachers of English in basic education (mostly primary schools). Different from the students who survive the degree requirements, they were motivated in English learning and were interested in developing their academic writing skills because these skills can serve them through their working lives.

3) BA thesis writing management in the School of Foreign Languages. Both the university and the School of Foreign Languages attach great importance to the quality of the EM-students' BA thesis because it reveals the teaching quality of the university and the School as well as a requirement to meet the Evaluation Scales for Undergraduate Education Programs. Firstly, each year, the Academic Department of HNFNU provides the eleven faculties with a guideline for BA thesis writing management, including the timetable, the leadership, the supervision process and the evaluation requirements. Then, the School of Foreign Languages makes its own detailed requirements to supervisors and to the EM-students, including the leadership, topic areas, format and mechanics as well as supervisors' responsibilities.

In order to both urge the EM-students to complete their theses in time and to monitor the supervisors to fulfil their duties, the School of Foreign Languages divides the BA thesis writing process into a few stages: proposal stage, first draft stage, second draft stage, third draft stage and final draft and defense stage. At each designated stage, the EM-students are requested to submit corresponding drafts with WSF on them or submit their final drafts without WSF for oral defense at the final stage. By requiring the supervisors to give WSF on the first, second and third drafts and the students to submit four drafts, the School hopes that the supervisors could spend much time in instructing students and giving WSF on students' thesis, as well as avoid students

completing the thesis as finishing a task and submitting a very low-quality thesis for oral defense. This is because in the past years, a few supervisors gave little or no WSF on their students' thesis drafts, and a few students would never appear before the supervisors until the oral defense. Since the quality of bachelor's theses is one of the indicators of the teaching quality, the School tries to ensure the quality through supervision process management.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Over the years, researchers have investigated various aspects of written feedback (e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Ferris, 1997, 2010). Within these fields of research, a great number of the studies have focused on the students' perceptions of or preferences towards teachers' written feedback practices (Caffarella & Barnett, 2000; Diab, 2005; Montgomery & Baker, 2007); some studies have examined the functions of supervisors' written feedback on their students' writing (Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010); some studies have explored the roles of written feedback (Kumar & Stracke 2007; Ferris, Liu, Sinha & Senna, 2013), and some studies have offered suggestions on how to give effective written feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Brookhart, 2008).

However, as Lee (2004, p.289) points out, "the majority of the previous error

correction studies have been conducted in the United States”. Although many scholars previously researched written feedback, few people have studied WSF in Chinese context. The lack of research on WSF may impede Chinese supervisors from maximizing EM-students’ academic writing proficiency and research skills. More importantly, some studies showed that teachers are ill-equipped (Voerman, Meijer, Korthagen, & Simons, 2012; Harris, Graham, Friedlander, Laud, & Dougherty, 2013), overburdened, misguided (Taylor & Burke, 2014), unskilled, or unmotivated to provide sufficient feedback (Taylor & Burke, 2014) to assist student writers (Diab, 2015; Wollenschlager, Hattie, Machts, Möller, & Harms, 2016). Such lack of knowledge is neither good for students’ writing improvement, nor for supervisors’ professional development (Grimm, 2016).

Moreover, research on to what extent supervisors’ written feedback practices lead to students’ writing improvement in aspects of accuracy or comprehensive writing proficiency has not received enough attention. Whether the improvement is short-time or longitudinal is also worth studying (Truscott & Hsu, 2008).

Besides the above factors, there is still a great need to carry out more research on WSF on BA thesis drafts in China. Firstly, previous researchers have mainly studied written feedback given by supervisors of English as their native language (eg., Bitchener, Basturkmen, East, & Meyer, 2011) in English speaking contexts, while little

studies have been carried out on written feedback provided by supervisors of English as a foreign language (hereafter EFL supervisors) in ESL/EFL contexts. Scholars argued that “various aspects of ESL writing instruction, particularly those related to response, need to be considered separately from the findings and recommendations of L1 researchers” (Ferris, 2003, p.14). In China, the supervisors who supervise EM-students’ BA theses are principally EFL supervisors; their provision of feedback to BA thesis drafts certainly are influenced by their own culture. Therefore, a study on written feedback given by Chinese EFL supervisors would improve supervisors’ awareness of written feedback and therefore allows better supervision to BA thesis.

Secondly, previous literature has mainly studied the written feedback on essay writing or pedagogical writing tasks (e.g., Biber, Nekrasova, & Horn, 2011; Almendral, 2014). The BA thesis is a different genre from the five-paragraph essay, so the written feedback on the BA thesis drafts should be different from the written feedback on the less demanding and challenging writing tasks. However, despite lots of studies on the written feedback on the five-paragraph essays, little research has been carried out on the written feedback on the BA theses. Therefore, a study on how EFL supervisors give WSF to BA thesis drafts can certainly offer insights into written feedback research.

Thirdly, very few studies have been conducted to investigate the EM-students’ perceptions of supervisors’ WSF. As discussed by Ferris (2004), very few of previous

studies on written error correction incorporated both teachers and students as participants. A study on the features of supervisors' WSF may be valuable for supervisors' WSF practices. However, only the study of WSF is of insufficient value without considering students' perspectives. After all, the ultimate goal of providing WSF is to facilitate EM-students' thesis writing. So, knowing what WSF the EM-students like best and why they prefer some WSF instead of others can be very beneficial both to supervisors and the EM-students. For the supervisors, they can know how to adapt their WSF techniques to the needs and expectations of their students, so that they can provide the most effective WSF. For the EM-students, receiving the preferable WSF could certainly lead to high frequency of successful uptake, and finally result in their better thesis writing and research growth.

Fourthly, the EM- students in the School of Foreign Languages greatly demanded their supervisors' WSF. The researcher conducted a survey in the *An Introduction to Thesis Writing* classes, and found that over 85% of the EM-students had never read an academic article or any degree thesis/dissertation until their bachelor's thesis writing. This is their first experience for most, if not all, of the EM-students to write a research paper. They have difficulties in the process of their bachelor's thesis writing, such as choosing topics, retrieving resources, writing proposal, following the bachelor's thesis format, and even reading research papers. Therefore, they quite needed their

supervisors' instruction, especially their supervisors' WSF on their bachelor's thesis drafts, giving targeted, effective and supportive suggestions on the important aspects to improve their thesis writing.

Fifthly, although the quality of Bachelor's theses has been emphasized, little attention has been given to the problems of the supervisors' practices of WSF in the School of Foreign Languages. In the academic year 2017-2018, only 11 BA theses out of 221 were scored as "excellent" in an "excellent, good, average, passed, failed" evaluation system or above 90 points in a 100-point evaluation system for the final evaluation. That is, the "excellent" rate of the EM-students' theses was only 5% in the School. As Liu (2016) claimed, the reasons that some English major students' theses have not reached the demand set by the *Syllabus* are not only due to students' lack of proper attitudes towards the thesis and their limited linguistic knowledge and academic competence, but also due to the supervisors' inadequate instruction and improper feedback content and methods. The researcher investigated some thesis archives, and found that some supervisors had given little WSF, and some supervisors' WSF only pointed out the students' grammatical errors. The supervisors were not very aware about the influence of their WSF foci, strategies and connotations on the students' writing.

Therefore, how the supervisors in the School of Foreign Languages provide their

WSF and how the students perceive their supervisors' WSF practices are important topics for inquiry.

### **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

The goals of this research are to better understand the relationship between the characteristics of WSF and the EM-students' uptake and then offers suggestions on WSF provision to Chinese EFL supervisors at HNFNU as well as supervisors in the similar circumstances in other universities. The central focus of this work is threefold: (a) to examine the Chinese EFL supervisors' practices regarding the provision of WSF to BA thesis writing at HNFNU, (b) to investigate the EM-students' uptake of different WSF and what characteristics of WSF lead to high frequency of successful uptake, and (c) to probe into the EM-students' perceptions of their supervisors' WSF. In order to achieve these objectives, the present study undergoes the following procedures.

Firstly, by coding and analyzing the WSF collected from the EM-students' BA thesis drafts, this research intends to find out the characteristics of WSF provided by the Chinese EFL supervisors in HNFNU on BA thesis drafts in terms of foci, strategies and connotations. To know the characteristics of the WSF will help researchers understand and the supervisors reflect the WSF practices in this Chinese university.

Secondly, by coding the EM-students' uptake of different WSF and relating the

uptake to the characteristics of WSF, this research aims to find out an overview of the uptake made by the EM-students and the associations of the successful uptake to the features of the supervisors' WSF. To get the overview of the uptake made by the EM-students will help the researcher understand the EM-students improvement in BA thesis writing, and to investigate what characteristics of WSF leading to high frequency of successful uptake will help the researcher identify the effective characteristics of WSF, which has great pedagogical significance in facilitating the EM-students' BA thesis writing through providing the pertinent foci, strategies and connotations of WSF.

Thirdly, by incorporating a questionnaire survey and a semi-structured interview, this study manages to identify the EM-students' perceptions of their supervisors' WSF in terms of WSF foci, strategies and connotations. To identify the students' perceptions of their supervisors' WSF can benefit the researcher to compare the supervisors' WSF practices with the EM-students' needs, recognize the discrepancy between the supervisors' WSF practices and the EM-students' needs, and then offer suggestions on need-oriented WSF provision.

#### **1.4 Research Questions**

Based on the research objectives, the following research questions will guide the present study:

1. What are the characteristics of Chinese EFL supervisors' WSF on BA thesis drafts in terms of foci, strategies and connotations in different draft stages and in different sections?

2. To what extent do Chinese EFL supervisors' WSF foci, strategies and connotations bring about different types of uptake?

3. How do the EM-students perceive different WSF provided by Chinese EFL supervisors?

By answering the above questions, this research can offer insights into Chinese EFL supervisors' practices of WSF, the characteristics of WSF leading to successful uptake and the EM-students' attitudes towards and preferences for their supervisors' WSF.

### **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Written feedback is heavily involved in L2 writing context and the related studies are abundant, but few research reports have been presented about the WSF on BA thesis drafts. In recent years, the study on WSF on BA thesis drafts becomes badly needed as the quality of BA thesis is stressed as an important scale to evaluate universities' teaching quality (Ministry of Education, 2011) and a critical means to cultivate EM-students' "ability in solving problems" and "creative ability" (Ministry of

Education, 2018). Given the lack of research in this field, this study seeks to address supervisors' practices of giving WSF on BA thesis drafts and the effects of WSF on EM-students' uptake. The significance lies in the following aspects.

Firstly, the results of this study can provide guidelines for the supervisors in HNFNU in giving effective WSF. After the study, the researcher will return to HNFNU for teaching and will present the findings from his study to all the teachers (also the students) in the School as required by the university. The study results would hopefully raise the supervisors' awareness of the impacts of WSF on students' thesis writing. Moreover, the supervisors would take the suggestions of this study into their WSF practices. Research concerning teacher-provided written feedback contributes to teachers' understanding of how best to help students reach their full writing potential (Brookhart, 2008). Without fully understanding how feedback affects student writers, teachers cannot effectively instruct students on how to be effective written communicators in their post university lives (Conrad-Curry, 2011; Conley & McGaughy, 2012). Therefore, this study can help supervisors in HNFNU to reflect on the appropriateness and effectiveness of their past practices of WSF, and help them provide optimal types of WSF on EM-students' BA thesis drafts in the future.

Second, this study may assist the EM-students to produce relatively high-quality BA theses in grammar, basic research, and academic writing. The BA thesis writing is

difficult even for students with high language proficiency because it requires not only basic writing skills, but also large-sized literature reading, rigorous research methods and writing norms (Xiong, 2012). The quality of BA theses is not only a proof of the EM-student's comprehensive ability, but also a direct reflection of the educational and academic level of the English faculty in one university. Therefore, universities attach great importance to the quality of BA theses, and so does the School of Foreign Languages of HNFNU. An examination into the relationship between different types of WSF and the EM-students' uptake might shed light on the optimal types of WSF that supervisors should provide to BA thesis drafts. The findings may result in the effectiveness of WSF, and in turn, benefit the EM-students' writing growth.

Thirdly, the results of this study may help establish a good relationship between supervisors and supervisees. A positive and productive supervisor-supervisee relationship is critical to successful supervision. As Kiser (2000) stated, the qualities of the relationship with supervisor form a solid foundation of the supervisee's work. It is the first time for the EM-students to write their research papers and also for them to establish a supervisor-supervisee relationship. Most of the students may take the relationship as "mysterious", "reassuring" and "anxious". Since the results of this study would be presented to the students in the School of Foreign Languages, it can provide an opportunity for the other EM-students in the School to know their hopes and

expectations regarding supervision as well as their supervisors' WSF practices. Being aware of their own expectations and their supervisors' WSF practices is useful for the EM-students in the development of a good communication with the supervisors.

On the other hand, the supervisors bear a responsibility to the supervisees for facilitating a positive learning experience. This research investigated both students' uptake and their perceptions of different WSF foci, strategies, connotations, especially the uptake of the interactions of WSF foci, strategies, and connotations. Studying the students' views or perceptions regarding WSF can assist supervisors to disclose the ways in which their practices could be misunderstood by the students. For instance, the students in this study were strongly unsatisfied that their poor performance out of difficulties or carelessness was labeled as having poor writing attitudes by the supervisors, and they were sometimes struggling with figuring out the intention of their teachers' unidentifiable comments. This indicates that being aware of students' views could help the supervisors communicate with their students and explain themselves better, rather than assuming that the students should know or should understand their WSF. Therefore, taking the EM-students' uptake and perceptions into consideration when giving WSF, supervisors could provide the EM-students with individual and effective WSF, which constitutes one of the characteristics of quality teaching (Ramsden, 2003).

Admittedly, each supervisory relationship is unique. However, students' knowing about themselves and the supervisors' WSF practices and supervisors' knowing students' uptake and perceptions about their WSF can serve to aid in the development of a positive and productive relationship.

Furthermore, the coding schemes for WSF categories in this research may help both bachelor's thesis supervisors and feedback researchers. Besides the traditional categories of feedback differentiation such as Content (Co), Organization (Or), Grammar (Gr), and Vocabulary or Linguistic Appropriateness (LC), three additional categories of "Requirements" (Re), "Writing Attitudes" (WA) and "Unidentifiable Comments" (UC) are introduced and analyzed for WSF focus specifically. In addition, the supervisors' WSF strategies were classified into six categories and the WSF connotation was divided into three categories. The coding and defining of these WSF categories enable EFL thesis supervisors to provide better WSF. Therefore, the tentative frameworks of providing feedback can give enlightenment for WSF provision practices. These frameworks could not only facilitate the experienced supervisors to provide better WSF but also help the inexperienced supervisors to provide WSF to bachelor's thesis drafts by setting a benchmark for themselves to meet.

Lastly, the results of this study may help improve the quality of BA thesis in China.

The researchers revealed many problems of BA thesis in Chinese universities, such as problems in thesis structure and topic selection, and provided suggestion on set up courses or improve the supervision management (e.g., Sun, 2004; Gu, 2009). However, if the students' needs for WSF and the characteristics of effective WSF are taken into consideration, the situation that the BA thesis quality is far from satisfactory might get solved.

### 1.6 Definition of Key Terms in the Study

In order to set a clear frame for this study to be conducted, it is necessary to provide operational definitions of the key terms related to the focus of this research. These definitions have been adapted from several sources or different authors to fit the current research.

**BA thesis:** In the present study, BA thesis only refers to the thesis written by English major students in the senior year (**EM-students**), and is regarded as a kind of academic genre which is different from those articles written in L2 writing classes or in exams. In accordance with the requirements of the *Syllabus*, it should be written under the guidance of a supervisor, abide to the format requirements set by the university or the school (or faculty, which is a subordinate or secondary organization to the university), in the form of academic writing with 3000-5000 English words. The topic

of a BA thesis should be relevant to the author's major (that is English language, which is usually further divided into English Linguistics, English Teaching, English Literature, English and Chinese Translation, and English and Chinese Culture). The BA thesis should be completed within an academic year or a semester depending on the teaching syllabus of a university.

The purpose of a BA thesis is for an EM-student to convince the defense committee that through four years of academic study he/she has relatively grasped basic theories, specialized knowledge, basic skills in the English language, and especially he/she has acquired the initial ability to undertake scientific research.

**Written supervisory feedback (WSF):** In this study, written supervisory feedback (WSF) refers to all responses that a supervisor writes on the multi-drafts of a BA thesis, intending to instruct or help students in writing, organizing, thinking, and revising. It includes all meaningful comments, corrections, symbols or codes, or combinations of them at the cover page, in the text or in the margins of the text of the BA thesis drafts. Each instance of comments, symbols, codes or combinations of them with one feedback focus (see 3.4.2.1) is regarded as a feedback comment.

In thesis or dissertation writing, the supervisors play a crucial role in socializing students into academic writing through written supervisory feedback (Kumar & Stracke, 2007). Therefore, written supervisory feedback enables supervisors to act as both

gatekeepers to ensure the research standard and mentors to support the students in conducting proper research and reporting it in logical, coherent and fluent language (Anderson, Day, & McLaughlin, 2006), provide directions for students' future development (Kumar & Stracke, 2018), inform the students of their strengths and weaknesses, influence their academic achievement, and help them become independent in their work, understand the requirements of academic disciplines, grow intellectually, and finally gain membership to their disciplinary community (Basturkmen, East, & Bitchener, 2014).

In feedback research, scholars have been greatly concerned about what aspects should be focused or be covered by teachers' written feedback. The content or the aspects teachers' written feedback focuses on is labeled as feedback focus. Besides, a practical problem the teachers often encountered when responding to students' writing is how the feedback to be given. The choice of the directness or explicitness in giving written feedback is often considered as the feedback strategy. In many studies, feedback strategy is classified as direct and indirect ones (Lalande, 1982; Semke, 1984; Sheen, 2007). Direct feedback means overt correction on students' errors or difficulties, while indirect feedback refers to covert correction with different hints. Furthermore, teachers' tones or connotations are also a concern for feedback research. Their definitions and classifications will be detailed in Chapter 2.

**EM-students:** In this study, EM-students refers to undergraduate students majoring in English in the senior year or the fourth year. In this year, they have passed the exams of all courses, reached the language proficiency that the *Syllabus* required on them and are required to write a qualified BA thesis and defend it orally; otherwise, they will not be awarded their Bachelor's degree certificate.

**Uptake:** In this study, uptake refers to any of the EM-students' response to WSF in some way (Ellis, 1994). It could be “successful uptake (Us)”, “unsuccessful uptake (Uu)” or “no uptake (U0)” (Ferris, 1997, p. 324; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999, p. 154) and “unverifiable uptake (Ux)” (Ene & Upton, 2014, p. 85). Successful uptake is a change “solving a problem or improving upon a problem area discussed in the feedback, while being consistent with the writer's purpose”, while “unsuccessful uptake” is uptake that does not “improve the text or that actually further weaken the text” (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999, p. 154). “No uptake” refers uptake with no revisions or reactions to WSF, and “unverifiable uptake” refers to the stances that no response is needed to a feedback comment or the responses to a feedback comment cannot be traced. Examples of categories of uptake and its coding will be provided in Chapter Three.

**Errors:** In the L2 classroom writing, errors refer to grammatical errors, lexical errors, including word choice, word form, collocation, and mechanical errors such as spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and typing conventions (Ferris, 2003). In this

study, besides including grammatical errors mentioned above, errors are further broadened to include problems, deficiencies, or inappropriateness in the thesis content, organization, format, academic conventions, or any requirements set up by the university. The content refers to the ideas, perspectives or positions contained in certain paragraphs, sections or chapters or the argumentation of the whole thesis, which could be inappropriate, inaccurate, incomplete or ineffective provided by the students. The organization refers to the ways in which a thesis is arranged, including the structure of different thesis parts, the order and links between different ideas, coherence and cohesion of sentences, and so on.

### **1.7 The Scope of the Study**

To describe supervisors' WSF, the EM-students' uptake and their perceptions of WSF in a Chinese university, it is worthy pointing out the scope of the present study.

Firstly, the sample size of this study is limited to 32 supervisors and 32 EM-students from the same university in the academic year of 2017-2018. It analyzed these supervisors' WSF practices and these students' uptake of the WSF. Compared to the literature, the sample size of the present study is in a relatively larger scale. What is more, the supervisors in this study consist of teachers with different professional ranks, degrees and genders, and the students' BA thesis drafts are systematically selected out

by their ID numbers, which may ensure the representativeness of the supervisors' WSF practices and the EM-students' uptake in this university.

Secondly, the supervisors' WSF on the students' thesis drafts in this study were mostly in Chinese. Although the EM-students write their BA theses in English, but both the supervisors and students were Chinese and the university did not require the supervisors to provide their WSF in English, therefore, the supervisors provided the written feedback comments in Chinese for the easy-understanding and effectiveness. In order to help the readers of this present study understand the WSF comments and the analysis in this study, the researcher had some of the supervisors' written feedback comments translated from Chinese into English as examples. The translated extracts used as examples in this study were checked by a Ph.D. holder with a specialization in Chinese-English translation to keep the foci, strategies and connotations in the translated WSF as the same as those in the original Chinese WSF.

Thirdly, the research topics of the EM-students' theses included a wide range of areas, including English literature, English linguistics, English teaching, English and Chinese cultures, and English and Chinese translation. The thesis topics may influence supervisors' WSF practices because if a student's thesis topic falls within the research field of his or her supervisor, the supervisor may provide more WSF in terms of amounts and specificity, and if otherwise, the supervisor might give less WSF practices.

However, before choosing their supervisors, the EM-students learned the research fields of their supervisors. Therefore, the EM-students thesis topics generally fell within the research fields of their supervisors, and the comparison of the supervisors' WSF practices to BA thesis in different research fields may be investigated in future study.

Lastly, the uptake of the frontpage WSF was not taken into consideration in this study because the frontpage WSF is the supervisors' general feedback comments on the whole writing, on certain chapters or on some commonly existing and serious problems in the thesis, therefore, it is not likely to trace the uptake of the frontpage WSF. However, because the frontpage WSF is general, and the EM-students usually revise their drafts based on the specific in-text or marginal WSF, the neglect of the uptake of the frontpage WSF will have little influence on the final results of this study.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

As an important sphere for L2 writing research, providing effective written feedback has become a major concern for the BA thesis supervisors. Most experienced supervisors understand giving written feedback is a frustrating, difficult, and time-consuming task; meanwhile it is a dutiful, benefitting and well-meaning task for them since it plays a crucial role in encouraging, motivating, helping and instructing L2 BA thesis students.

This part of literature first reviews the SLA theory including output hypothesis, interaction hypothesis and noticing hypothesis as the theoretical foundation of feedback providing. Secondly, this chapter examines the overview and the roles of written feedback in L2 writing, and then describes the previous studies on written feedback provision from different perspectives including foci, strategies and connotations in L2 writing. Although it is considered difficult to measure the effects or influences of written feedback on students' revision, there are still many studies of approaches to the question of measuring revision after written feedback, including focusing on the reduction of errors, holistic scoring of writing proficiency, the extent to which students

utilize the written feedback. Therefore, the review continues with the studies on different measures of the effectiveness of written feedback. Then, the review synthesizes the previous studies on students' perceptions of written feedback. Finally, the review is concluded with the research gaps in the literature of written feedback.

## **2.1 Theoretical Foundation**

Writing in L2 is also language acquisition, and is more challenging than listening or reading. Therefore, some second language acquisition theories lay foundations for teachers' written feedback practices in writing instruction. This section illustrates the theoretical bases including the Output Hypothesis, the Interaction Hypothesis and the Noticing Hypothesis for conducting the present study.

### **2.1.1 Output Hypothesis**

One theory that promotes the use of feedback and response in L2 writing is based on Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis, which suggests that output is closely related to second language learning. According to Swain (1996), "output pushes learners to process language more deeply – with more mental effort than does input" (p. 99), suggesting that output is not the result of the language learning process, but rather a step in the process.

Swain (1985) proposes that comprehensible output is a necessary mechanism

of acquisition independent of the role of comprehensible input. She points out that producing the target language may be the trigger that forces the learner to pay attention to the means of expression needed in order to successfully convey his or her own intended meaning. This will move the learner from a purely semantic analysis of the language to a syntactic analysis of it. This output “push” is a stimulus which leads learners not only to produce but to reflect on their second language output as it is being produced. Such a push can, for instance, come from interacting with a teacher or thinking out loud while writing an essay. Whether they are speaking or writing, learners must be able to assess their knowledge of the L2 in order to account for possible problems and make necessary adjustments to ensure that their output is comprehensible. It is this “push” that allows learners to reflect on their output and through which possible development of the target language occurs. Output, especially pushed output, promotes not only detection of forms but also integrative processing to conceive a coherent structure among the detected elements. This, together with the juxtaposition of the interlanguage- target language forms, creates a favorable condition for the learner to notice the mismatches between these two versions, which is fostered by the engagement of these processes and by the juxtaposition of the two versions that highlight any differences between the two uses of the form.

As Swain states, “in speaking or writing, learners can ‘stretch’ their

interlanguage (the learner's current, work in progress version of the language) to meet communicative goals. They might work towards solving their linguistic limitations by themselves to listen for using their own internalized knowledge, or by cueing a solution in future input" (1995, p.127). Output can promote language acquisition by allowing learners to try out and stretch their IL capabilities. In so doing, learners may recognize problems in their interlanguage through internal feedback—output promotes processing and self-monitoring—or external feedback—output invites feedback from teachers. This recognition may prompt the learners to generate alternatives by searching existing knowledge or to seek relevant input with more focused attention and with more clearly identified communicative needs.

With respect to the specific roles played by output, Swain (1995, 1998, 2005) suggested three functions. The first one is the noticing function, positing that L2 learners consciously understand their linguistic problems through output activities. As the learners notice the gap between their own target output and L2, they may become more attuned to the related structure in the target language. Thus, specific grammatical forms may become more salient and create a context for L2 development (Mackey, 2012). The second function (i.e., hypothesis testing) claims that language acquisition is developed when L2 learners consciously use target form and reformulate it upon receiving feedback from interlocutors. The third function (i.e., metalinguistic function)

highlights the role of output and defines metalinguistic as “using language to reflect on language produced by others or the self, mediates second language learning” (Swain, 1985, p.478).

In an attempt to further illustrate the roles acted by output, Swain (1991) warned that all the three functions cannot be realized by output alone with the recognition that if students are given insufficient feedback or no feedback regarding the extent to which their messages have been successfully conveyed, output may not play these roles at all. Given the widespread linguistic errors in L2 learners’ output, teachers’ written feedback helps to facilitate the fulfillment of the “noticing” function with regard to the mismatch between learners’ output and the target L2, and the “metalinguistic” function to enable learners to tune themselves in for the accurate use of certain structures in their future output, thus enhancing their awareness of self-monitoring in L2 writing.

### **2.1.2 Interaction Hypothesis**

Similar to the Output Hypothesis, Long’s (1985, 1996) Interaction Hypothesis also supported the facilitative role of feedback in language acquisition and L2 writing.

The Interaction Hypothesis experienced two evolutionary processes, including the earlier version and the updated version. Based on his empirical research,

Long (1985) formulated his earlier version of the Interaction Hypothesis and clarified three steps to understand how conversational adjustment affected acquisition:

*1. Show that (a) linguistic/conversational adjustments promote (b) comprehension of input. 2. Show that (b) comprehensible input promotes (c) acquisition. 3. Deduce that (a) linguistic/conversational adjustments promote (c) acquisition. (p. 378)*

This hypothesis confirmed the important role of conversational adjustment to language acquisition because the interlocutor's adjustment to the learner utterance might provide learners with input which promotes language acquisition.

In his later work, Long (1996) suggested an updated version of his Interaction Hypothesis. He replaced “linguistic adjustment” with “negotiation for meaning” and “comprehensible input” with “input and output”, and also emphasized the important role of selective attention in language acquisition. According to Long (1996), negotiation for meaning triggers interactional adjustment by the native speakers or more competent interlocutors, “facilitates acquisition as it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways” (p. 451-452). Additionally, he explained the reason why negotiation for meaning contributed to language acquisition. Language acquisition could be construed as a process of interaction between internal and external factors. Internal factors may be the language learning mechanism, while external factors could be input either in the form of positive evidence (about what is acceptable in the target language) or negative

evidence (about what is unacceptable in the target language). He pointed out that exposure to positive evidence alone is insufficient for language learning and that learners need negative evidence (e.g., corrective feedback) to produce modified output in oral interaction, thus highlighting the interactive input role of oral feedback in helping learners acquire the target forms. In other words, it was negative evidence and negative feedback in particular that eventually contributed to language learning. This was because through negative feedback, the learner's attention is directed to problematic features of knowledge of production (Gass & Mackey, 2007).

Although the role of negative feedback identified by the Interaction Hypothesis has been more frequently discussed in oral contexts than in written contexts, this does not mean that proposals arising from this context are irrelevant to the written context and the role of written feedback in SLA (Bitchener, 2012). That the theoretical constructs might also be applied to the written context have been noticed in several ways. Firstly, learners can receive input from what literature they read as positive evidence and from teachers' written feedback as negative evidence on their writing products. Secondly, conscious attention, similar to the oral context, is also indispensable in the written context if learners are to internalize the feedback. An advantage of written feedback is that learners are provided with enough time to notice the feedback, which might not be the case in the oral context. Furthermore, as it is proposed in oral interaction that

individual factors may exert mediating effects on the uptake of feedback, individual differences would also have facilitative or inhibitive effects on learners' noticing and performance in the writing process (Wang & Jiang, 2015).

### **2.1.3 Noticing Hypothesis**

Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (1990, 2001) is a theory within second language acquisition that a learner cannot continue advancing their language abilities or grasp linguistic features unless they consciously notice the input. This hypothesis suggests that nothing is learned unless it has been noticed and noticing is the indispensable starting point in acquisition (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

According to Schmidt (1990), "intake is that part of the input that the learner consciously notices" (p. 139). This meant that not all the input language learners received could be turned into intake for language acquisition. In the switching process from input to intake, it was noticing, or attention, that played a crucial role (Robinson, 1995; Schmidt, 1990, 1993, 2001; Truscott, 1998). In other words, the noticing of input was fundamental for language learning to take place.

The Noticing Hypothesis was confirmed by many scholars in the field of second language acquisition. Robinson (1995) agreed with Schmidt's assertion that there is no learning without noticing. Leow (1997) also confirmed that different levels of awareness, a closely related notion of noticing, lead to differences in processing, and

more awareness contributes to more recognition and accurate written production of noticed forms. Lightbown and Spada (1990) concluded that teachers' written feedback to students' errors and difficulties was in accord with the notion that learners can benefit from "consciousness-raising".

However, what learners noticed was not the raw data of input, it was relatively concrete, i.e., utterances (and parts of utterances) that might be exemplars of higher-level categories and principles of the linguistic system, but not the principle or the system itself (Schmidt, 2001). In other words, what learners noticed was selective. The selective attention was directed to the input as interpreted by existing schemata, but not the raw data of the input (the phonetic stream of speech) (Gass, 1988).

Since conscious attention to linguistic forms is considered facilitative to or even a prerequisite for L2 development, negative evidence such as teachers' written feedback can thus be assumed to bring beneficial effects for second language acquisition (Wang & Jiang, 2015). By arousing learners' conscious attention to the correct linguistic forms, according to Gass (1997), error correction enables them to destabilize and restructure the part of their interlanguage that deviates from the target language, and ultimately promotes the process of second language acquisition. It would seem, then, that teachers' written feedback functions as a noticing facilitator that assists learners to bridge the gap between their interlanguage and the target language.

## **2.2 Written Feedback in L2 Writing**

In order to fully understand written feedback, it is important to begin with an overview of written feedback and to see how scholars see written feedback in L2 writing. This part discusses the development of written feedback in L2 writing and the roles of written feedback in L2 writing.

### **2.2.1 Overview of Written Feedback in L2 Writing**

Feedback has been studied for almost 100 years (Brookhart, 2008), both in learning and in L1/L2 composition. The first studies and theories of feedback dated back to Thorndike's (1913, as cited in Kulhavy & Wager, 1993) "Law of Effect", which postulated that feedback would act as a "connector" between responses and preceding stimuli. Positive feedback was considered "positive reinforcement", while negative feedback was considered "punishment"; and both reinforcement and punishment affect learning. Pressey's (1927) study also supports Thorndike's notion of feedback as a reinforcer that emphasizes both the error-correcting function of feedback and its acting as a punishment for errors in language learning.

After the mid-twentieth century, the feedback-as-reinforcement view was under doubt. Research showed no systematic effects for feedback in programmed learning that had feedback at its heart (Kulhavy & Wager, 1993) and studies provided little evidence that feedback following positive responses acts in a reinforcing manner

(Anderson, Kulhavy, & Andre, 1972; Kulhavy, 1977; Roper, 1977; Barringer & Gholson, 1979; Bardwell, 1981). Researchers then looked at the basic functions of feedback and realized that the feedback message is filtered through students' perceptions as it becomes the message received (Brookhart, 2008) and found that feedback held potential to increase motivation (Parkes, Abercrombie, & McCarty, 2013; Hohnen & Murphy, 2016). Skinner (1957) studied varying results on feedback in learning, and witnessed that results were dependent on the connotations (positive, negative, or neutral) of words contained in feedback. Moreover, some scholars (e.g., Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Voerman, et al., 2012) posited that praise feedback motivated learners. However, other scholars (e.g., Wiggins, 2012) countered that positive feedback was not only unproductive but could be detrimental to student learning.

It was since the early 1970s that written feedback to students' writing has attracted scholars' interest (Ferris, 2003). At that period, the "process approach" to teaching composition began to take hold of classrooms around the United States, and some scholars (e.g., Elbow, 1973; Garrison, 1974), reacting to earlier paradigms in which teachers responded to a finished piece of writing primarily to justify a final grade, strongly suggested that teachers allow students to complete multiple drafts of their papers, encourage substantive revisions and give students written feedback while they were in the process of writing rather than at the end of that process. In addition, the

definition of written feedback was broadened from grammar correction in its earliest literature to different aspects of students' errors; therefore, one may find different terms, such as "response", "responding", "error corrections" (Chaudron, 1988; Truscott, 1996), "corrections", "commentary", "comments", "corrective feedback" (Ferris, 1997, 2000; Ellis, 2009b). Among these terms, "written feedback" is the most often used one, meaning any procedure provided by the teacher which is intended to help students improve their writing. However, all these terms are interchangeable in this present study. Since 1970s, many scholars had been writing about the importance of focusing on writing as a process rather than a final product, emphasizing substantive revisions and teachers' written feedback that took place between drafts.

In 1980s, studies by Sommers (1982) and Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) "established the new era of studying written feedback in process-oriented, multiple-draft settings" (Ferris, 2003). To investigate whether "teachers comment and students revise as the theory predicts they should" (p. 149), Sommers (1982) studied 35 university writing teachers and concluded that teachers "appropriate", or take over, students' texts with their written feedback and teachers' comments are not specific. Brannon and Knoblauch's (1982) study claimed that when teachers wrest control of the text away from students and remove the students' investment, engagement, motivation, and interest in writing, which is, in the authors' view, far more harmful to students'

development as writers than any weakness left untreated in the text could be. These views of teacher taking over the texts and controlling students by Sommers (1982) and Brannon and Knoblauch (1982) have proven highly influential in feedback research and composition pedagogy. For example, since mid-1980s, most U.S. composition teachers have been trained to give written feedback on content on the first draft and save response about grammar, word choice or mechanism and avoid using directives.

From 1990s, due to the widespread of the process-writing in ESL writing classes, research on teachers' written feedback moved toward more empirically grounded descriptions from a diversity of perspectives. Although there may be some L2 instructors still adhere to single-draft, error-focused models of writing and written feedback, many teachers have made the shift "from being form-focused and product-oriented to providing feedback on a broad spectrum of issues in a multiple-draft, response-and-revision writing cycle" (Ferris, 2003, p. 20). Therefore, the research of written feedback covered a wide range of issues from then on. Some scholars studied what contents (or focus) teachers' written feedback addresses on advanced university ESL learners' writing (Ferris, 1997; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999), and found teachers' comments mostly focused on ideals and rhetorical development. Thus, more research on form- and content-focused feedback and their effects was underway.

More recently, researchers have been interested in the effects of written feedback (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1997; Truscott, 1999; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Bitchener, 2008; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Truscott & Hsu, 2008), and tried to find out what makes some written feedback effective and some ineffective (Butler & Winne, 1995; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Other researchers have concentrated on different forms of written feedback (Bell, 1991, Carson & Nelson, 1994) and suggested peer review over-advantaged teacher written feedback in several ways such as students gaining more confidence, receiving more feedback from a more diverse reader.

Some researchers discussed how teachers constructed their written feedback, such as the linguistic or pragmatic features, tones, locations, commenting strategies of the written feedback (Ferris, 1997; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Ellis, 2009a; Basturkmen, East & Bitchener, 2014). For example, Ellis (2009a) identified six strategies for providing written feedback for teachers, and both Ferris (1997) and Conrad and Goldstein (1999) set analytical models to examine the linguistic and pragmatic features of teacher feedback. Ferris (1997) found that students made most effective changes to certain types of comments (information questions, imperatives, and comments about grammar and mechanics) and Conrad and Goldstein (1999) identified five formal characteristics of teacher feedback that led to successful student

revisions.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the studies of written feedback have been expanded into academic writing and research supervision; therefore, a large number of studies have investigated the thesis supervisors' written feedback. Kumar and Stracke (2007) and Basturkmen et al. (2014) studied the distribution of supervisors' written feedback in different functions and the linguistic features of the written feedback on doctoral dissertations. Bitchener, et al. (2011) studied 35 supervisors' written feedback practices and the views of supervisors and undergraduates on best written feedback in three disciplines from six New Zealand universities. Can and Walker (2011) studied the students' perceptions of supervisors' written feedback. In recent years, an increasing number of studies have examined the written feedback on academic writing (e.g., Bitchener, 2018; Bruce, 2008;), but more research in this field based on big data of students' scripts and longitudinal studies is necessary.

The focus of supervisors' written feedback has become a concern for researchers since the foci of written corrective feedback cannot be appropriately applied in the L2 thesis writing. A few researchers (e.g., Hyatt, 2005) made attempts to categorize different types of written supervisory feedback. Bitchener et al. (2011) provided a four-category classification of written supervisory feedback foci which includes Content, Requirements, Cohesion and Coherence, and Linguistic Accuracy

and Appropriateness. Subsequently, Basturkmen, East, and Bitchener (2012) analyzed supervisors' on-script feedback comments and revealed that most comments were about linguistic accuracy and appropriateness (62%), and then followed by content, requirements, and cohesion/coherence comments. In the study by Jafarigohar, Hoomanfar and Jalilifar (2018), thirty supervisors' written feedback on graduate students' theses/dissertations was analyzed, and seven categories of comments were found: grammar and sentence structure, content, method, organization, references, formatting, and academic procedures.

Students' perceptions of supervisors' written feedback were also a research interest to study thesis supervision (Odena & Burgess, 2017; Nurie, 2019). For example, de Kleijn et al. (2013) explored the student perception of master's thesis supervision, and found feedback to be positive, and to provide information on how they are doing and what they need to do next steps, is perceived to be the most satisfied feedback, from which they are learning the most. In Bitchener's (2018) study, both L1 and L2 master or doctorate students perceived guidance on the subject-specific use of literature, discourse structure, and language use through genre analysis as the most important aspects from their supervisors.

In summary, written feedback may represent the single biggest investment of time by instructors and supervisors and it is sure that their efforts are not in vain (Ferris,

2003). Despite different perspectives and results of written feedback research, one characteristic of written feedback where scholars concur today is that feedback is undoubtedly complex, and more empirical investigations on written feedback are needed.

### **2.2.2 Roles of Written Feedback in L2 Writing**

In the field of second language learning, writing skill has been considered an important foundation of effective literacy skills (Gallagher, 2006) and a valuable asset for social life (Graham, Harris, & Hebert, 2011). However, writing has also been described as the most difficult aspect for L2 students (Barkaoui, 2007). Therefore, writing teachers should provide practical feedback (mostly in written form) to cultivate improved student writing proficiency (Brookhart, 2011; DelleBovi, 2012). Through written feedback, the writer learns about his or her problems and how the reader has been misled or confused. Then, the writer could supply more information, enhance logical organization, clarify development of ideas, and provide appropriate word choice or tense (Keh, 1990).

Straub (2000a) realized that responding to students' writing is a great challenge for writing instructors, as it is time-consuming and sometimes unrewarding if students do not read the feedback attentively. In the process of giving feedback, teachers read students' writing word by word, and according to Straub (2000a):

*Here on the pages of your students' writing you find the most telling signs of what they are getting from the course. You have the best opportunity to give substance to the principles you've been advocating in the class. You can see what is taking root and what needs more water or light. Here you can help students work on what they most need to work on individually as writers. But it is difficult. (p. 1-2)*

Straub's statements for written feedback raise consonance of many writing teachers. As written feedback is an indispensable part of any writing course, teachers devote a great amount of time and energy to it. In L2 writing study, scholars singled out written feedback as a chapter in their writing handbook (White & Arndt, 1991; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998). As Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) stated, teachers and researchers recognize that written feedback is necessary for any writing teacher, but what is the best way to comment on students' drafts may vary with the context.

### **2.3 Provision of Written Feedback in L2 Writing**

In L2 writing, written feedback refers to a pedagogical strategy where information is given in order to provide a recipient or recipients with a better understanding of how to adjust their performance to achieve the desired goal (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Wiggins, 2012). It also serves as a formative assessment tool used by teachers to help students improve their learning (Angelo & Cross, 1993; Kingston & Nash, 2011). Most writing teachers genuinely desire to provide students with valuable written feedback to prepare students for a better writing ability; however, the effectiveness of their written

feedback varies, especially to the foci, strategies and the way in which the foci and strategies are framed (Correnti, Matsumura, Hamilton, & Wang, 2013). Therefore, this section describes the previous research on written feedback provision.

### **2.3.1 Written Feedback Focus**

Researchers have been interested in what teachers actually focus or should focus when providing written feedback for many years and there was not a universally accepted answer. In this section, general claims about the foci of written feedback and their evidence will be discussed.

#### **2.3.1.1 Form-Focused and Content-Focused Feedback**

Early studies of feedback to L2 student writing (e.g., Cumming, 1985; Zamel, 1985) noted that ESL writing teachers appeared to think of themselves as primarily language teachers rather than composition instructors. Thus, they focused mainly on students' language errors in writing, as opposed to giving students written feedback on ideas or organization. Beginning with studies by Cumming (1985) and Zamel (1985), researchers have attempted to describe or classify the foci of teachers' written feedback. One classification was form-focused feedback and content-focused feedback.

Form-focused feedback refers to the grammar and mechanics feedback that provide suggestions, questions or requests about grammatical mistakes

and incorrect spelling of words. It can also be referred as “error correction” or “error feedback”. Influenced by the product writing pedagogy, form features such as grammar and mechanics were traditionally emphasized over content (meaning) in L2 writing classrooms (Kepner, 1991; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994) because the purpose of form-focused feedback was to improve students write accurately (Truscott, 1996). By identifying students’ mistakes in writing, some researchers (e.g., Robinnett, 1972; Dulay, 1982; Vann, et al., 1984) found many frequently made grammatical mistakes or high-frequency errors and developed checklist for writing teachers to provide written feedback. Ferris and Roberts (2001) divided students’ form errors into five categories: Verb errors, Noun ending errors, Article errors, Wrong word or sentence structure. The concept of high-frequent errors has influenced and appealed to teachers’ written feedback until 1990s (Ferris, 2003).

Content-focused feedback refers to the feedback provided aiming at the content or organization of students’ writing. In most studies (Ferris, et al., 1997; Lee, 2003, 2004, 2009), researchers defined content as “the information you provide in your essay”, organization as “the way in which these ideas are organized” (Ferris, et al., 1997. p. 23). In the rating rubrics of most language examinations, besides grammar and mechanics, there are other categories like content and organization. These aspects are not concerned with the prescriptive language rules, but they are inseparable from the

quality of writing.

There were studies to test the effectiveness of form-focused or content-focused feedback. One study that supported the use of form-focused feedback was Fathman and Whalley (1990). In their study, the results revealed that only those students who had received feedback on grammar received significantly higher grammar scores. That is, without feedback, learners may not make significant improvements to the form of their writing. However, the majority of L2 writing studies investigating written feedback foci has not reported results that are strongly supportive of feedback on form (e.g., Semke, 1984; Kepner, 1991; Sheppard, 1992; Frantzen, 1995; Polio, et al., 1998). Sheppard (1992) reported in a study of feedback on college freshmen's writing that if teachers focused on the content of their students' ideas (rather than on form), the students' grammatical accuracy could improve as much, if not more, than if the students had received only feedback on form.

Ferris' (1995) survey found that university ESL students in single-draft classroom expressed a preference for form-focused feedback and students in multiple-draft classrooms expressed that they valued content-focused feedback. This finding is similar to those reported in Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1994, 1996), who found that basic ESL students in process-oriented classrooms (where the students were required to turn in multiple drafts) valued both meaning-level and surface-level

feedback, while EFL students in product-oriented classrooms (where the students typically turned in only one draft of a given assignment) paid more attention to form.

Zamel (1985) proposed that teachers should address issues of meaning and contents on early drafts of student writing and attend to form only at the penultimate stage. She further suggested that content feedback and form feedback should be kept separate to “avoid confusing students about what they should attend to at any particular stage of the process” (p. 82). However, other researchers (Leki, 1991; Silva, 1993) were against this opinion. Ferris (2007) proposed to balance and combine form- and content-focused feedback throughout the writing circle, and several studies in which teachers gave both form- and content-focused written feedback on the same text showed that L2 students showed the ability to improve their texts in both content and form during revisions (Russikoff & Kogan, 1996; Ferris, 1997; Ashwell, 2000).

Indeed, most researchers (e.g., Krashen, 1984) in the field seem to agree that attention must be paid to both. However, since the publication of Truscott's (1996) review article, whether to give form-focused feedback has been in question. Truscott (1996) has argued that feedback on form is ineffective, time-consuming, and potentially harmful. His argument resulted in a debate with Ferris (1997, 1999). Hyland and Hyland (2001) pointed out that there is the question of defining more precisely the purpose or purposes for which grammar correction (or form feedback) might be made.

Many teachers correct the grammar of their students' written work for the purpose of improving the accuracy of subsequent writing (a long-term goal), which Truscott (1996) argues is a misguided endeavor and unachievable objective. Other teachers believe in giving corrective feedback for the purpose of improving the linguistic accuracy of one writing product (a short-term goal). Although Truscott's argument is a powerful one, it is not as all-encompassing as many may think because it does not acknowledge this alternative purpose for corrective feedback.

Other studies found that the feedback process for L2 writers is too complex to be considered in terms of a simple content/form dichotomy. Hedgcock and Leflcowitz (1994, 1996; Ferris, 1995) found that L2 writers often view writing as just a means of practicing the language, and they are seeking different types of written feedback.

#### **2.3.1.2 Bitchener et al.'s Classification of Feedback Focus**

While the definitions of form-focused and content-focused written feedback are clear, they are difficult to apply in practice of analyzing teachers' written feedback. Especially with the genre knowledge was introduced into the research supervision, there were many overlapping areas between the parameters of form and content. In an investigation of the foci of the supervisors' written feedback on thesis/dissertation students, Bitchener et al. (2011) attempted to provide an accurate and

detailed classification and distinction of written feedback foci as in Table 2.1.

**Table 2.1** Classification of Written Feedback Focus (Bitchener et al., 2011)

Focus	Examples
Content (including arguments and information)	<i>Need a diagram illustrating the hidden terminal problem Lots of words. Could be replaced with an equation (or better have both).</i>
Requirements (including genre expectations and academic conventions including referencing and other APA type concerns)	<i>Literature review or introduction? References?</i>
Cohesion and coherence (including links between and order of information and ideas)	Cohesion: <i>'It' - Unfortunately different referent.</i> Coherence: <i>Things are a bit jumbled in this chapter...</i>
Linguistic accuracy and appropriateness (including surface level language forms and clarity of meaning)	Original: 'information collected during communicating with the interviewees' Correction: <i>collected during the interviews</i> Original: 'to bring the meaning of messages' Correction: <i>to accurately reflect the meaning</i>

Bitchener et al.'s (2011) study classified the foci of supervisors' written feedback into four categories: Content; Requirement; Cohesion and coherence; Linguistic accuracy and appropriateness. Altogether 35 supervisors across three disciplines (humanities, mathematics and commerce) at six universities and 53 undergraduates participated in the research. The study examined supervisors' and

students' opinions on the foci of written feedback and analyzed supervisors' practical texts of written feedback as well.

Bitchener et al.'s (2011) study revealed that the most frequently mentioned area of content that required supervisors' written feedback was gaps in the content covered, or there was a greater need to give feedback to L2 students on the importance of discussing the published literature and their own research findings in light of "the big picture" and of taking a critical look at what is published. With text analysis, Bitchener et al. (2011) discovered that supervisors gave balanced written feedback on content, part-genres, structure and organization, coherence and cohesion, linguistic accuracy and appropriateness while written feedback on content was the category seen across the highest number of scripts (14 out of the 15 scripts analyzed).

Although the text data for analysis only comprised four pages from five scripts in each disciplinary area (15 scripts in total), which was modest in data size, Bitchener et al.'s (2011) classification provides practical operation references to analyzing and understanding supervisors' written feedback. However, in their study, the supervisors were all native English speakers and the students were speakers of English as a first language or as an additional language.

### **2.3.1.3 Liu's Classification of Feedback focus**

The errors made by L1 or L2 students might not cover all those made

by EFL students. Consequently, according to the features of Chinese tertiary students' writing, Liu (2013) classified errors into six categories of grammar, content, sentence structure, organization, vocabulary and "Idiomaticity (Chinglish)" as in Table 2.2.

**Table 2.2** Classification and Working Definition of Written Feedback Focus (Liu, 2013)

Focus	Working definition
Grammar	Grammar, usage, and mechanics, etc. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Spelling: word spelling mistakes</li> <li>2) Verb: tense, voice, subject-verb agreement, transitive and intransitive verb confusion;</li> <li>3) Preposition: misuse, overuse or missing of preposition;</li> <li>4) Word order: the problem with word sequence;</li> <li>5) Noun: singular plural, countable or uncountable;</li> <li>6) Word class: misuse of word class, verb for noun, adj. for adv., or vice visa;</li> <li>7) Word addition and deletion: adding or deleting certain word;</li> <li>8) Article: misuse, overuse or missing of article;</li> <li>9) Punctuation or capitalization mistakes.</li> </ol>
Content	Development of a point of view, demonstration of critical thinking, use of examples, reasons, evidence, etc. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Thesis: clearness and effectiveness of thesis;</li> <li>2) Example: the quantity and quality of examples, reasons, and evidence;</li> <li>3) Counter-argument: an argument that makes an opposing point to the thesis;</li> <li>4) New argument: an argument which is new and should be supported with examples and evidence.</li> </ol>

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**Table 2.2** Classification and Working Definition of Written Feedback Focus (Liu, 2013)  
(Cont.)

Focus	Working definition
Sentence structure	<p>Variety of sentence structures</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Complex sentence: combining simple sentences to form adverbial and attributive clauses;</li> <li>2) Compound sentences: revising run-on sentences and combining simple sentences with coordinative conjunction “and”;</li> <li>3) Parallelism: forming parallel sentence structures;</li> <li>4) Simplicity: revising redundant sentences by using preposition, participles, parenthesis, etc.</li> </ol>
Organization	<p>Organized and focused structure, coherence and progression of ideas</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Macrostructure: the arrangement of IBC structure (Introduction-Body-Conclusion format);</li> <li>2) Argumentation outline: outline of providing examples and evidence;</li> <li>3) Paragraph: paragraph length, paragraph separation;</li> <li>4) Discourse marker: the misuse and absence of discourse marker;</li> <li>5) Cohesion: reference.</li> </ol>
Vocabulary	<p>Skillful use of language and word choice</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Appropriateness: using suitable, right and proper words;</li> <li>2) Accuracy: precision or exactness of word choice, especially resulting from careful effort;</li> <li>3) Level of formality: using formal words and avoid colloquial expressions.</li> </ol>
Idiomacity (Chinglish)	<p>Expression that are not idiomatic in English (Chinglish expression)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Transition of Chinese: the lack of English word clusters;</li> <li>2) Transition of Chinese rhetoric: the use of interactive tone, metaphors and proverbs.</li> </ol>

However, this classification was based on Chinese students' classroom writing, not on written academic genres. For example, the idiomaticity is a problem closely related to Chinglish expressions which reflect the Chinese influence on English. In addition, it was very detailed in the description of “grammar” and “sentence structure” which are important categories for essay writing, but it did not include the format or academic requirements that is critical for research papers. Therefore, both Bitchener et al.'s (2011) and Liu's (2013) classifications on the foci of written feedback were integrated and adapted for the analysis of foci of written supervisory feedback in the present study (See Section 3.4.2.1 for details).

### **2.3.2 Written Feedback Strategy**

In addition to feedback focus, another main field in L2 written feedback research is feedback strategy. Even with the same student writing, different teachers may provide written feedback differently. In the past decades, “research on teacher feedback has focused more on what teachers cover (content, grammar, etc.) in their response and on the effects of feedback than on the actual form of feedback” (Ferris, 2003. p. 32).

#### **2.3.2.1 Teacher Options for Written Feedback**

Earlier teachers provided written feedback to student writing for the purpose of error correction (Ferris, 2003), and “error” is categorized by Chaudron

(1986) into phonological, lexical, morphological, syntactic, discourse, and content errors. With adaptation, Lyster (1998) classified errors into grammatical errors, lexical errors, phonological errors, and non-solicited uses of L1, that is, students use mother language instead of the target language English when they are expected to use English. In this study, the error is broadened to include any error that the supervisors think ungrammatical, non-target like or inappropriate in linguistic forms, organization, content or format, and thus needs treatment.

When detecting an error and deciding to treat it, teachers will respond to it with different strategies. By inspecting both teacher handbooks (e.g., Ur 1996) and published empirical studies of written feedback (e.g., Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986; Chandler, 2003; Ferris 2006), Ellis (2009a) identified six strategies for teachers to provide corrective feedback (CF) on students' errors (Table 2.2). Although Ellis's (2009a) strategies are only for treating linguistic errors, they can also be applied to any other types of errors. The six strategies for providing written feedback include direct CF, indirect CF, metalinguistic CF, focused CF, electronic CF and reformulation.

**Table 2.3** Ellis' Strategies for Providing Written Feedback (Ellis, 2009a)

Strategies for providing CF	Description
<b>1. Direct CF</b>	The teacher provides the student with the correct form.
<b>2. Indirect CF</b>	The teacher indicates that an error exists but does not provide the correction.
a. Indicating + locating the error	This takes the form of underlining and use of cursors to show omissions in the student's text.
b. Indication only	This takes the form of an indication in the margin that an error or errors have taken place in a line of text.
<b>3. Metalinguistic CF</b>	The teacher provides some kind of metalinguistic clue as to the nature of the error.
a. Use of error code	Teacher writes codes in the margin (e.g. ww = wrong word; art = article).
b. Brief grammatical descriptions	Teacher numbers errors in text and writes a grammatical description for each numbered error at the bottom of the text.
<b>4. The focus of the feedback</b>	This concerns whether the teacher attempts to correct all (or most) of the students' errors or selects one or two specific types of errors to correct. This distinction can be applied to each of the above options.
a. Unfocused CF	Unfocused CF is extensive.
b. Focused CF	Focused CF is intensive.
<b>5. Electronic feedback</b>	The teacher indicates an error and provides a hyperlink to a concordance file that provides examples of correct usage.
<b>6. Reformulation</b>	This consists of a native speaker's reworking of the students' entire text to make the language seem as native-like as possible while keeping the content of the original intact.

However, the six strategies for providing feedback were not classified on a uniform standard, which led to many overlaps. For example, both

electronic CF and metalinguistic CF can be either focused or unfocused, either directive or indirective, and “reformulation” certainly provides the students with the correct (or appropriate) form, which falls in the strategy of “direct CF”. Therefore, in order to be operational in analysis and avoid confusion, Ene and Upton (2014) divided the written feedback into direct and indirect ones based on its directness, which is adopted in the present study.

### 2.3.2.2 Direct Written Feedback

Direct feedback refers to overt correction in which a teacher corrects errors in student writing, or “the teacher provides the student with the correct form” (Ellis, 2009a, p. 98). It occurs when the teacher marks an error and provides the target linguistic form or structure in the margin or between lines of students’ writing. As Ferris (2006) notes, this can take a number of different forms—crossing out an unnecessary word, phrase, or morpheme, inserting a missing word or morpheme, and writing the correct form above or near to the erroneous form. The following example illustrates direct written feedback from Ellis (2009a).

a	a	the
A dog stole <del>bone</del> from <del>a</del> butcher. He escaped with having <del>a</del> bone. When the dog was		
over	a	a saw a
going <del>through</del> bridge over <del>the</del> river he <del>found</del> dog in the river.		

Direct written feedback has both advantages and disadvantages. It provides learners with explicit guidance about how to correct their errors. This is clearly desirable if learners do not know what the correct form is (i.e. are not capable of self-correcting the error). A study by Sheen (2007) suggests that direct corrective feedback (CF) can be effective in promoting acquisition of specific grammatical features. Ferris and Roberts (2001) suggest that direct written feedback is probably better than indirect one with student writers of low levels of proficiency.

However, a disadvantage is that it requires minimal processing on the part of the learner because when the student performs the revision task, he or she needs only to transcribe the correction into the final version. Thus, although it might help them to produce the correct form when they revise their writing, the direct written feedback may not contribute to their thinking and discovery.

### **2.3.2.3 Indirect Written Feedback**

In contrast, indirect written feedback refers to covert correction or mere indicating marks in which messages are intended to convey that an error has been made. In this situation, learners themselves are encouraged to diagnose and correct it. That is, teachers, instead of providing the correct forms or answers, only send the signal of the existence of an error but leave it to the writer to detect and solve it. Indirect written feedback often takes the following four ways: (1) underlining with description

of the type of error; (2) marginal description of the type of error; (3) simple underlining or circling the error; and (4) recording in the margin the numbers of errors in a given line (Robb, et al. 1986; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). For example:

**1. underlining with description of type of error:**

“He was here for three years and he become very rich now.”

*VT (wrong verb tense)*

**2. marginal description of type of error:**

“He was here for three years and he become very rich now.” *[VT]*

**3. simple underlining:**

“He was here for three years and he become very rich now.”

**4. recording in the margin the number of errors in a given line:**

“He was here for three years and he become very rich now.” *[two]*

Indirect written feedback is often preferred to direct written feedback on the grounds that it caters to “guided learning and problem solving” (Lalande, 1982) and encourages students to reflect on linguistic forms, content, organization, etc. For these reasons, it is considered more likely to lead to long-term learning (Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

However, the research results about direct and indirect written feedback are very mixed. Many researchers support the use of indirect written feedback because it is claimed to encourage students’ analytical reflection to guide their own learning, engagement in problem solving process, and processing of the feedback they

receive (Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Robbert, 2001; Shintani & Ellis, 2013). Thus, indirect written feedback brings benefits to a long-term improvement in students' L2 learning and writing. Garrett et al. (1980) got conclusion from his questionnaire that 58% of the young disabled children do not expect teacher's direct correction of their errors in writings. Lalande (1982) compared two treatment groups receiving direct written feedback and indirect written feedback respectively and concluded that a large number of students are apt to receive indirect written feedback which enables them to participate in the process of solving problems. The findings of his study showed that indirect written feedback is more beneficial in helping students improving their long-term progress. In Bitchener et al.'s (2011) study, the undergraduates believed "the most helpful feedback was indirect" (p. 46).

In spite of the support for indirect feedback, Lee (2004) in his experiment claimed that 76% of the secondary students are in favor of teachers' direct written feedback or correction of their errors, and only 22% of the secondary students expect to get indirect written feedback from teachers. Chandler's (2003) study showed that most first and second students in an American conservatory consider direct correction as the simplest way of providing written feedback, and underlining plus description as an indirect written feedback to be the best way in helping them generalize their most frequently committed errors. Plumb et al. (1994), in a native

language-oriented study, also proposed that the reason for most high school and college students' incapability of correcting their errors is not because they are not able to do it, but that they cannot notice their errors. However, there are also studies suggesting direct and indirect feedback can exert approximate effects on students' correction of errors (Robb, et al., 1986; Frantzen, 1995), and Ferris and Roberts (2001) found that there is no difference in the effects on students' accuracy in writing between direct and indirect written feedback.

### **2.3.3 Written Feedback Connotations**

There is no doubt that not only the content of written feedback and the strategies that teachers use to provide the written feedback are of importance to students, but also the connotations or the tones in the provided written feedback can affect students' reactions and their improvement on revisions. Broadly defined, connotations refer to the pragmatic characteristics of written feedback, or "the expressive quality of the feedback message, and it affects how the message will be heard" (Brookhart, 2008).

Feedback connotations can be divided dichotomously or trichotomously.

#### **2.3.3.1 Dichotomous Classification of Written Feedback Connotations**

Based on connotations, some researchers divided teachers' feedback into positive and negative feedback (Cardelle & Corno, 1981; Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995; Ellis, 2009). Positive feedback affirms that a student's writing (e.g., content, form,

organization) is correct (e.g., “Good” or “Yes”). On the other hand, negative feedback intends to be corrective (i.e. with the purpose of fixing the errors), indicating that there is an error in a student’s writing. In this sense, any written feedback that points out students’ errors belongs to negative feedback. Negative feedback might extend to providing harsh criticism (e.g., “poor writing”), signaling a total disapproval from the teacher (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). It is proposed that positive written feedback or praising provides students with the affective support and fosters their motivation (Ellis, 2009b; Bitchener, et al., 2011), and early studies (Cardelle & Corno, 1981; Cohen, 1987) revealed that students tend to view their teachers’ corrective feedback on their errors as negative and that students may be inclined not to read the feedback as negative feedback hurts their feelings and suppresses their motivation.

#### **2.3.3.2 Trichotomous Classification of Written Feedback Connotations**

However, not satisfying with any feedback that points out students’ errors was treated as negative feedback, some researchers (Tunstall, et al., 1996; Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Stern & Solomon, 2006) distinguished the written feedback that expressing dissatisfactory or denying students’ writing quality from the one objectively pointing out errors or providing suggestions, and categorized written feedback into positive, neutral and negative. While positive feedback involves praising on students’ writing and negative feedback relates to denial on students’ writing, neutral feedback

refers to the feedback pointing out the errors, giving suggestions to improvement but elicit neither positive nor negative feelings from the students.

In terms of praise, criticism and suggestion, Hyland and Hyland (2001) offered a detailed text analysis of the written feedback given by two teachers to six ESL students over a university language enhancement course. They view praise “as an act which attributes credit to another for some characteristics, attributes, skills, etc., which are positively valued by the person giving feedback.” (Hyland & Hyland, 2001, p. 186). It, therefore, suggests a more intense or detailed response than simple agreement.

Criticism, on the other hand, is defined as “an expression of dissatisfaction or negative comment” on a text (Hyland, 2000, p. 44). Suggestion, which Hyland and Hyland (2001) regarded as coming from the more positive end of a continuum, usually contains an explicit recommendation for remediation, a relatively clear and accomplishable action for improvement, sometimes referred to as “constructive criticism”.

The results in Hyland and Hyland’s (2001) study showed that the feedback the six university ESL students received most often from the two teachers in an language enhancement course was praise, but the feedback they received most on first drafts was criticism, and the teachers overwhelmingly focused their praise on ideas,

and were much less likely to praise either formal or academic aspects of the writing.

Many scholars agreed that praising comments are essential in improving students' writing abilities (Connors & Lunsford, 1993; Bates, et al., 1993; Ferris, 1995; Martens et al., 2010; Orsmond & Merry, 2011; Scheeler, et al., 2012). Quite a few studies on teacher written feedback beliefs (Zacharias, 2007; Lee, 2009; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Jodaie & Farrokhi, 2012) reported that teachers considered praise to be more useful in facilitating students' development when compared to criticism. In Zacharias' (2007) study, teachers thought that praising the students' writing affects the students' positive feelings, fosters their self-esteem, and develops the students' writing level as students start to view their writing ability as something that can be improved.

Similar to the research on teachers' beliefs, surveys of L2 student opinion about teachers' written feedback (Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1995; Lee, 2004) reached the same finding that students want and expect to receive praising and encouraging comments on their writing. However, Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) and Lee (2004) found that too much praise might mislead, confuse, and/or demotivate the students. This led researchers to suggest ways to prepare students to cope with teachers' written feedback, advising teachers to provide neutral feedback, specifically non-judgmental, non-evaluative, and non-hurtful (Martens, Brabander,

Rozendaal, Boekaerts, & VanderLeeden, 2010). Shute (2008) suggested giving neutral, unbiased, and objective feedback. Providing neutral feedback was also suggested by Fund (2010) and Martens et al. (2010), who reasoned from social constructivism.

Hattie and Timpley (2007) suggested that the effects of neutral feedback on student perceptions could change depending on circumstances. In their study, learners who received positive feedback after success or neutral feedback after an error perceived feedback as an indication that teachers thought they had low capacity. However, these same students, when receiving negative feedback after an error and neutral feedback after success, perceived that teachers thought their ability was high but that they were not putting forth a good effort. Similarly, Ma, Meng, Wang, and Shen (2014) reported that neutral feedback emits a more negative effect on writers than positive feedback. Conversely, Roos and Hamilton (2005) suggested that teachers should formulate detailed, neutral feedback, especially when no right or wrong answer exists.

Instead of advocating neutral feedback, other researchers remarked that educators should balance feedback between positive, neutral and negative (McGrath, et al., 2011; Eksi, 2012; Thurlings, et al., 2013), as a balance between praise, suggestion and criticism is the best means of encouraging quality writing (Brinko, 1993; Weaver, 2006; Gielen, et al., 2010).

This trichotomous classification of written feedback connotations is adopted in the present study, firstly because this classification distinguishes the error-indicating from criticizing, secondly because the main purpose of the supervisors' WSF is to help the EM-students' writings to meet the requirement of BA thesis; therefore, instead of only using praising to motivate students to keep on writing, the supervisors have to point out the errors or give suggestions on improvement, which mostly intend to be objective.

#### **2.4 Measures for Assessing the Effectiveness of Written Feedback**

Written feedback is generally regarded as essential for writing development at all levels, from students at the kindergarten to graduate students working on dissertation projects (Biber, et al., 2011). A large number of studies (e.g., Ferris, 1997; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Bitchener, et al., 2011; Biber, et al., 2011) investigated the effectiveness of written feedback on students' writing practice, or the kinds of feedback that actually make a difference. They used diverse methods to measure potential improvements in writing performance resulting from feedback, for example, focusing on reduction in errors, overall holistic assessments of writing quality, or the extent to which students incorporate the written feedback in their revisions.

### 2.4.1 Number of Errors

The earliest research on written feedback dealt dominantly with error correction, defined by Truscott (1996) as “correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a student’s ability to write accurately” (p. 329), hence “written corrective feedback” (WCF) has been widely accepted as the term for teachers’ on-script response to students’ writing. In instructional context, the definition can be broadened to lexical errors, mechanical errors such as spelling, punctuation and capitalizations (Ferris, 2011). Scholars carried out empirical studies (e.g., Fathman & Whalley, 1990) on the effects of feedback, and written feedback was considered ineffective to improve students’ writing by some scholars (e.g., Truscott, 1996, 2007) and helpful to students’ accuracy in writing (e.g., Ellis, 1998; Ferris, 1999), both sides using reduction of error numbers in students’ writing as the evidences in their research papers.

In Haswell’s (1983) study, 24 students in a freshman composition course were required to self-edit errors marked by checkmarks in the margins, and the results found that the students were able to quickly correct (in 15 minutes or fewer) over 61 percent of the marked errors, regardless of error type.

With treatment/control research designs, Fathman and Wasley (1990), Ashwell (2000), Ferris and Robbert (2001), and Ferris (2006) compared the

grammatical errors in the revised drafts between treatment groups and control groups in both university EFL and ESL students, all showing that the students who received written feedback (grammar or form feedback) significantly reduced their number of grammatical errors (in some specific grammatical items such as articles, tense or overall grammar) than the control group students who received no feedback. With pre- and post-test designs, Ferris and Roberts (2001), and Bitchener et al. (2005) investigated whether written feedback can help adult L2 writers improve the accuracy, and the findings provided evidence that the adult migrant students who receive error feedback from teachers improve in accuracy over time.

However, there were different voices on the effectiveness of written feedback on students' writing accuracy. Polio, Fleck and Leder (1998) found written feedback to be ineffective in accuracy improvement. In his review article, Truscott (1996) argued that "grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned" (p. 328), "it does not help" (p. 341), and "grammar correction is a bad idea", "ineffective" and "harmful" (1999, p. 111). In their study, Truscott and Hsu (2008) divided 47 EFL graduate students in two groups, of which the experimental group received underlined feedback, then the students were required to revise the in-class texts and write a new text a week later. The findings showed no effectiveness of correction for improving learners' writing accuracy in a long run.

### 2.4.2 Scores of Writing Proficiency

Even though there is a controversy in the effectiveness of written feedback on students' writing accuracy, written feedback is considered as a critical teaching tool to improve students' writing performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Truscott (1996), the most vocal critic of revision studies in written feedback (grammar correction), did not reject the effectiveness of written feedback on the improvement of content, organization, or clarity of a composition. In addition, with the definition of written feedback broadened from grammar correction to advice or indication in content, organization, or any other aspects relating to the quality of a writing, researchers had an interest in what types of feedback leading to writing proficiency. Holistic scores between the first-draft texts and the later multi-draft texts or between the treatment group essays and the control group essays were used to compare the students' gains in grammar, content, organization, spelling or holistic quality after receiving written feedback (Biber, et al., 2011).

Davis and Fulton (1997) used a general-impression holistic rating to compare the extent of growth in overall writing quality of college freshmen to determine whether feedback from the instructor during the planning and composing process was more effective than another instructor's feedback during conferences on each final, graded writing product in the students' outcomes. Results indicated that the

students' growth in overall writing quality was statistically significant for both comparison groups of writers.

Kamimura (2006) utilized holistic scores to compare students' change in overall quality between the pre- and post-tests and between the original and the rewrite to investigate effectiveness of peer feedback in EFL writing classrooms in Japan. It was found that peer feedback had overall positive effects on the compositions for both the high- and low-proficient students, with different patterns observed in the relationship between the comments and revisions that characterized the two groups.

In Ashwell's (2000) study, four different patterns of teacher feedback were given to foreign language students producing a first draft (D1), a second draft (D2), and a final version (D3) of a single composition. The first pattern was content-focused feedback on D1 followed by form-focused feedback on D2. The second pattern was form-focused feedback on D1 followed by content-focused feedback on D2. The third pattern was form and content feedback mixed at both stages, and a control pattern of zero feedback. It was found that the first pattern, which has been regarded as the recommended pattern of feedback within a process writing approach, did not produce significantly different results in terms of content score gains between D1 and D3.

#### **2.4.3 Revision after Written Feedback**

The scores of writing proficiency do not tell how students actually make

changes after receiving written feedback. To have a clear view on the relationship between characteristics of teacher feedback and subsequent revision by students, scholars (e.g. Ferris, 1997; Conrad & Goldstein, 1999; Yang, 2006) examined and distinguished various kinds of student responses to teachers' written feedback.

To assess the impact of the teacher's commentary on the students' revised drafts, Ferris (1997) developed a subjective rating scale to consider the degree to which the students utilized each first-draft comment in the revision—by making no attempt, a minimal attempt, or a substantive attempt to address the comment. In this study, marginal requests for information, requests (regardless of syntactic form), and summary comments on grammar lead to the most successful (substantive) revisions, while questions or statements that provided information to the students led to less influence, and positive comments never led to any changes at all. Ferris (1997) then suggested that teachers give less comments in question form because L2 writes often thought the questions confusing, although the questions can both stimulate students' thinking processes and to avoid appropriating students' texts in theory (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982; Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985).

Conrad and Goldstein (1999) investigated the relationship between written comments and students' subsequent revisions for one teacher and three students in an advanced ESL composition course. The data included 44 comments, and they coded the

revisions as successful, unsuccessful, or no change (not attempted). They defined successful revisions as those “solving a problem or improving upon a problem area discussed in the feedback”, while unsuccessful revisions as those that “did not improve the text or that actually further weakened the text” (p.154). This study showed four findings. Firstly, declaratives resulted in successful revision more often than questions did (57% vs. 35%). Secondly, students revised successfully more often in response to declaratives of necessity or declaratives that made suggestions, rather than in response to declaratives that characterized their texts (about 70% vs. 0%). For questions, students revised more successfully in response to yes/no questions than to WH questions (70% vs. 0%). Thirdly, direct comments were associated with successful revisions more commonly than indirect comments (approximately 70% vs. 18%). Finally, revision directives that included a strategy, rather than those that did not, were more often associated with successful revisions (70% vs. 21%). Their conclusions are consistent with some of Ferris’s (1997) findings in that students revised less successfully when dealing with problems of logic and argument.

To explore the effects of teacher feedback and peer feedback on the writing, Yang, Badger and Yu (2006) examined two groups of students at a Chinese university writing essays on the same topic, one receiving feedback from the teacher and one from their peers. They classified revisions into “successful revisions”, “unsuccessful

revisions” and “revisions with mixed effect”. “Revisions with mixed effect” refers to revisions that are successful in part, and not successful in part. The results revealed that both groups of the students could use teacher or peer feedback to improve their writing, but teacher feedback was more likely to be adopted and led to greater improvements in the writing.

In terms of student revision, the syntactic forms of teachers’ written feedback cannot be neglected. Several studies investigated the relationship between the syntactic forms and student revision, and revealed different results. Ferris (1999) distinguished teachers’ commentary into questions, declaratives, imperatives and exclamations, and suggested less commentary in question form. Sugita (2006) found that imperatives were more influential than either statements or questions in student revision, as well as that students’ attitudes towards the use of imperatives in written feedback were more positive than they are towards questions or statements. Concrad and Goldstein (1999) discovered that directives and declaratives were more effective than other syntactic forms. Tajik and Fakhari (2008) identified that questions and statements with a purpose of making a request could bring about the best results in upper-intermediate Iranian students’ writing.

A considerable number of studies examined the relationship between teachers’ written feedback and students’ revisions. This kind of research has shown that

a lot of factors influence students' successful revisions. For example, students use the teacher comment without understanding the reasons behind it (Hyland, 1998, 2000); the nature of what to be revised may play a role in students' revision success (Ferris, 2001); and a feeling that the teacher's written feedback is valid or incorrect (Goldstein & Gohls, 2002) or a resistance to revision (Radecki & Swales, 1998) has been demonstrated to influence the students' successful revisions as well.

## **2.5 Uptake of Written Feedback**

Besides the measures mentioned above for assessing the effectiveness of teachers' written feedback on students' written products, "uptake" has been much used to understand students' response to teachers' written feedback in the process of multiple-draft writing in the relevant literature (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Anderson, Benson & Lynch, 2001; Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005; Storch, 2010; Lee, 2013; Ene & Upton, 2014; Ruegg, 2015; Rummel & Bitchener, 2015 ).

In view of Lyster and Ranta (1997), "Uptake...refers to a student's utterance that immediately follows the teacher's feedback and that constitutes a reaction in some way to the teacher's intention to draw attention to some aspect of the student's initial utterance" (p. 49). Having drawn on Speech Act Theory into the error treatment sequence, Lyster & Ranta (1997) relate "uptake" to learners' response to the feedback

they receive from teachers, or what the student attempts to do with the teacher's feedback.

Ellis et al. (2001) expanded Lyster and Ranta's (1997) definition of uptake and distinguished three types of uptake: acknowledgement, repair and needs-repair. On the assumption that uptake is more likely to facilitate acquisition if the feedback provided has been processed by the learner, Ellis et al. (2001) drew a distinction between successful and unsuccessful uptake, as follows:

*Successful uptake was defined as uptake in which a student correctly repaired a linguistic feature or clearly demonstrated understanding of an item. [...] Unsuccessful uptake was uptake where there was no attempt to repair or where an attempted repair failed or where it failed to clearly demonstrate understanding of the targeted feature. (p.299)*

After Lyster and Ranta's (1997) study, "uptake" has become a routine that researchers used in their studies to refer to learner responses after teachers' oral feedback (Oliver, 1995; Mackey, et al., 2000; Ellis, et al., 2001; Sheen, 2004; Loewen, 2005; Fu, 2012). However, it is also used in the studies of students' response after receiving teachers' written feedback (Storch, 2010; Gladday, 2011; Ene & Upton, 2014, 2018). In precise terms, uptake shows what and how students use feedback, oral or written (Tedick & de Gortari, 1998).

For Storch (2010), "uptake" means that students understand teachers' written feedback and then make changes in response to the written feedback, or "uptake

provides a measure of revision.” (p.309). To gain a better understanding of the efficacy of direct (reformulation) and indirect written feedback (editing symbols) on learners’ uptake and retention, Storch (2010) reported the quantitative results of his large research project and analyzed the transcribed pair talk of four groups. Into two groups, 48 ESL learners in an Australian university participated in the project. They were required to compose a text based on a graphic prompt in pairs in session 1 and session 2, but individually in session 3. During session 1 and session 2, one group received feedback in the form of reformulation and the other received feedback in the form of editing symbols. The study found out that “there was more uptake following editing than following reformulations” (p. 314) and that uptake and retention may be affected by a host of linguistic and affective factors, including learners’ attitudes, beliefs, and goals.

Other studies (e.g., Hyland, 1998; Swain & Lapkin, 2002) have also shown that learners’ goals, attitudes, and beliefs may affect the uptake of written feedback. Hyland (1998) used case studies to investigate L2 students’ use and reactions to the feedback received in a L1 environment. By coding, categorizing and analyzing six L2 learners’ revisions after receiving teacher written feedback in an English proficiency program (EPP) in a New Zealand university, his study found out that the use of teacher written feedback varies due to individual differences in their needs and approaches to writing.

Swain and Lapkin (2002) showed, using pair work, that learners may reject teacher written feedback because it is perceived as violating their own beliefs about language conventions or as altering their intended meaning.

Anderson, Benson and Lynch (2001) examined EFL college students' attitudes toward and uptake of written feedback on their written work in an Academic English (AE) course. Nakabayashi, Yamamoto and Homma (2014) studied the uptake of two different types of written feedback on their essays made by Japanese EFL college students. The result shows that the comments on linguistic forms were properly understood, while the comments on content problems were rather misunderstood.

Rummel and Bitchener (2015) examined the effectiveness of written corrective feedback on the simple past tense and the impact beliefs may have on EFL students' uptake of the feedback they received. They indicated that beliefs might have an impact on the extent to which the Lao students improved their linguistic accuracy because the students who received their preferred type of feedback were more successful at eliminating the targeted errors than the ones who did not.

In order to detect the effectiveness of teacher electronic feedback (TEF) on 12 students' writing, Ene and Upton (2014) investigated the types of teacher electronic feedback, and divided students' uptake of TEF into four categories: successful uptake, unsuccessful uptake, unattempted uptake, or unverifiable uptake (p.85). The results

showed that the overall rate of successful uptake was high (62.3%), with the highest rate being in response to TEF focused on grammar (75%) they suggested that electronic feedback can be effective and therefore should not be avoided. In their study, Ene and Upton (2018) again concluded that TEF is effective (p.1).

Both “revision” and “uptake” mean that students make responses to teachers’ written feedback; however, this present study would identify “uptake” as students’ response following any type of supervisors’ written feedback because “uptake” carries a meaning that students process the written feedback, think of it and then make reactions to it while “revision” only means a reaction to the teachers’ written feedback, active or positive. Ellis et al.’s (2001) classification of “successful uptake” and “unsuccessful uptake” will be adopted and expanded in this study. Successful uptake refers to successful treatment of error pointed out in supervisors’ written feedback, and unsuccessful uptake refers to failure or partial failure in treatment to errors pointed out in the written feedback. In addition, since not all the feedback may finally lead to changes, it is considered worthwhile to analyze the concept “no uptake”, which occurs in this study in some cases when a supervisor’s written feedback fails to be responded to or reacted to by the students at all.

## 2.6 Students' Perceptions of Written Feedback

One substantial area of research on written feedback to student writing is the surveys of students' views on their teachers' written feedback. Reid (1998) noted it is important on a number of levels for teachers and researchers to ask students about their preferences and to respect them as much as possible. Leki (1991) argued that "ignoring their request for error corrections works against their motivation" (p. 210). Such research may help teachers to be aware of what the students may think and how they may react to teachers' feedback practices so that to achieve improved student motivation or better instruction understanding.

Studies on students' perceptions of teachers' written feedback have typically investigated one or more of the following issues: (1) Types of written feedback teachers give them; (2) students' preferences about the types of written feedback they would like to receive; (3) students' reactions to teachers' written feedback they have received; (4) the problems students have with their teachers' written feedback; and (5) how students process and apply their teachers' written feedback (Ferris, 2003). Given this plenty of research, studies on students' perception of written feedback can be classified into four groups. The first group, which constitutes the majority of the studies (e.g., Cohen, 1987; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Ferris 1995; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Diab, 2005), examined students' preferences in isolation of teachers' actual practices. The second

group of research (e.g., Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990; Lee, 2004) investigated the relationship between the students' preferences towards written feedback and the teachers' actual practices. The third group (Grami, 2005; Zacharias, 2007; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Hamouda, 2011) compared teachers' beliefs and students' preferences towards written feedback. The last group (e.g., Leki, 1991; Komura, 1999; Ferris & Roberts, 2001) looked at students' perceptions about language correction.

In examining students' preferences, Cohen (1987) studied 217 university students' attitudes, reactions and problems regarding written feedback. He found that although students reported that they read and attended to teachers' written feedback, they had trouble in understanding or using teacher comments when they were cryptic such as "confusing" or "not clear". Cohen concluded that "the activity of teacher feedback as currently constituted and realized may have more limited impact on the learners than teachers would desire" (p. 66). Ferris (1995) surveyed 155 U.S. college students about their attitudes, preferences and reactions to teachers' written feedback. The results revealed that students reported that their teachers gave feedback on various aspects, but they believed that feedback on language form was the most important to them. The students stated that they experienced a few problems in comprehending their teachers' written feedback. Moreover, although they appreciated positive comments of praise, the students expressed strong preference for a mixture of praise and constructive criticism.

Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) and Lee (2004) investigated the relationship between the students' preferences for written feedback and the teachers' actual practices. Both of their studies demonstrated that students' preferences aligned strongly with their teachers' written feedback practices, and most of the students preferred the comprehensive written feedback. Students in Cohen and Cavalcanti's (1990) study favored written corrective feedback (WCF), most of them (76%) favored positive feedback, while students in Lee's (2004) favored direct approach on their errors.

Some researchers (Grami, 2005; Zacharias, 2007; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Hamouda, 2011) studied and compared similarities and differences between teachers' beliefs and students' preferences in written feedback. These studies were based on self-report data from teachers and students with no reference to the teachers' actual written feedback practices. Amrhein and Nassaji's (2010) study revealed both students and teachers shared the same beliefs concerning the amount and usefulness of written feedback, but disagreed on the focus of WCF. While students showed preference for the various aspects in writing, most teachers were opted to attend to language form. Grami's (2005), Zacharias' (2007) and Hamouda's (2011) studies confirmed the previous findings that both students and teachers believed in the importance of written feedback. Moreover, both students and teachers stated that teachers' written feedback should be specific (Zacharias, 2007), but there were a few discrepancies concerning the

focus of written feedback. While students believe that teachers' written feedback should be direct, teachers believe that they should provide some indirect feedback as to help students think of the correct forms (Hamouda, 2011).

Whereas most researchers studied error feedback in conjunction with teacher written feedback, a few researchers (Leki, 1991; Komura, 1999; Ferris & Roberts, 2001) looked specifically at students' perceptions about language correction. These studies represent a consistent result of students' preferences and reactions regarding error feedback, that is, linguistic accuracy in writing is important to students' overall effectiveness as an L2 writer, and students preferred comprehensive and indirect written feedback to selective and direct written feedback.

In addition, there were some studies investigating students' perceptions of written feedback on emotions/affect. Rowe et al. (2009) asked undergraduate about the emotions they experience when receiving feedback. Their results indicated that students associated a wide variety of emotions with feedback, both positive and negative. In terms of positive emotions, the students reported feeling joy, relief, excitement, and even love when they received feedback. The negative emotions that the students associated with feedback included anger, fear, sadness, boredom, and disgust. Other studies (Marrs, et al., 2015; Zumbunn, et al., 2015) revealed that students liked the teachers' written feedback because positive affect made them "feel good", proud or

special or showed them that their teacher liked their writing, and disliked the teachers' written feedback because it evoked negative emotions or memories.

## **2.7 Written Supervisory Feedback (WSF) in BA Thesis Writing**

This section first reviews the previous research on bachelor's thesis for English major undergraduates (BA thesis) in China, and then the concept of written supervisory feedback (WSF), its main functions and its necessity in BA thesis writing will be discussed.

### **2.7.1 Previous Studies on BA Thesis**

Over the past decades, much research has been done on the EM-students' bachelor's thesis. Research on English undergraduates' thesis writing can generally be classified into three kinds (Liu, 2015).

The first kind is research report (e.g., Mu, 2001; Sun, 2004; Yan & Ni, 2005; Lu, 2008; Chen, 2012). These papers investigated the problems existing in the EM-students' bachelor's theses, the reasons behind these problems and proposed some suggestions. Mu (2001) conducted a survey on 165 EM-students' opinions on awareness of the significance of thesis writing, procedures of tutoring, difficulties and help needed, and ways of evaluation and scoring at five universities in four developed cities or provinces in China, and found that the topics of their theses covered all the

subject areas, but mostly fell within English Literature. As for the significance of thesis writing, although about 63% of the EM-students took thesis writing as a process to improve their research and academic writing abilities, above 33% of the students wrote their theses as just completing their universities' tasks. Sun (2004) carried out a survey of 147 EM-students in three universities in one city, and the results showed that 56% of the subjects had difficulty finding references, 85% of the students admitted their theses were mostly or half extracted from other's articles, and 57% of them did not find the writing process rewarding.

The second kind is exploration into the administration, assessment and specific links in the instruction of thesis writing (e.g., Li, 1999; Yu, 2001; Huang, 2002; Li, 2003). Yu (2001) proposed a systematic management of bachelor's thesis administration, including topic selection process, supervisors' responsibilities, and analytic scoring criteria.

The third kind is the introduction to the instructive strategies and writing skills (Song, 2001; Wang, 2002; You, 2004; Cheng, 2010; Zhao, 2012, Liu, 2015). Research in this classification proposed countermeasures or strategies to improve the quality of bachelor's theses. Zhao (2012) proposed to improve the quality of bachelor's thesis by cultivating students' innovative thinking ability in "digging out newness in materials, information, ideas, topics, research methods" (p. 161). Liu (2015) carried out

questionnaires with 36 supervisors and 167 English major students at a university and found that the discrepancies in teachers' and students' beliefs and the problems in the thesis writing course are the key causes of the low quality of students' theses. Then, the author reformed the thesis writing course by appreciating academic papers published in journals of high prestige, reviewing former graduate theses, and practicing writing academic papers, and found out the students improved significantly in collecting and using materials as well as language and format.

Despite much research on the English major students' bachelor's thesis, few of them have explored the supervisors' written feedback on bachelor's thesis.

### **2.7.2 Functions of Written Supervisory Feedback (WSF)**

Written feedback on drafts of a thesis is probably the most important source of input for the thesis students. Recently, many researchers are concerned of the supervisors' written feedback to thesis (Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Bitchener, et al., 2010; Bitchener, et al, 2011; Cotterall, 2011; Fernsten, 2011).

In general, the purposes of thesis writing are to teach the students the scientific approaches to conducting research, thereby preparing students for research careers, and to train the students' academic writing. However, writing a thesis for the first time is often a great challenge for students, especially for L2 writers, even for the advanced L2 writers. Bitchener et al. (2010) pointed out two main reasons for this

challenge are “a limited understanding of the characteristics of the thesis genre and its component parts (for example, part-genres like the introduction and discussion sections/chapters) and uncertainty about the expectations and requirements of their discipline-specific communities of practice” (p.80). Therefore, the written feedback to thesis provided by supervisors serves much abundant functions.

Firstly, one important function of supervisors’ written feedback is to enculturate the students into discipline convention (Paré, 2011), or to induct students into the “academic discourse community” (Hyatt, 2005; Bitchener, et al., 2010). A thesis is written not for the world in general, but for other members of the community. Therefore, supervisors’ written feedback conveys “implicit messages” about the community’s expectations, values and beliefs, the nature of disciplinary knowledge and student roles in the community (Hyland, 2009), and facilitates the process by which students gain expertise in community practices (Duff, 2008). In this sense, supervisors’ written feedback can be considered as “messages about community expectations given to help students develop their understanding of what is valued” (Bitchener, et al., 2014, p. 434). The second function of supervisors’ written feedback is to train students to become independent writers. In thesis writing supervision, a supervisor usually supervises a small number of supervisees, and the relationships between the supervisor and the supervisees are either a master-apprentice relationship (Lave & Wenger, 1991)

or a cordial and collaborative one if the supervisee “is already a practicing academic and/or considered a colleague by the supervisor” (Kumar & Stracke, 2007, p.462). In both relationships, the supervisors’ written feedback is “a form of communication”; that is, through written feedback, the supervisor communicates and provides advanced academic training to the supervisee, such as “discover one’s own standpoint”, “gain recognition for one’s ‘own work’”, and “find ways of expressing it in one’s ‘own voice’” (Sofoulis, 1997, p. 11). Through the written feedback, the supervisees are able to understand the writing and gain discovery in writing, in research or in thinking. (Kumar & Stacke, 2007). With regular submission of written work to supervisors, and supervisors’ prompt and constructive written feedback on it, the supervisees gain maturity and independence.

Thirdly, supervisors’ written feedback serves a supervisory function, that is, to guide, help and direct the supervisees to complete their thesis/dissertation writing within a certain period of time. In the process of researching and writing up a thesis, supervisors’ written feedback can provide input and guidance about the supervisees’ research progress and thesis writing, and the supervisees can depend on the written feedback to push the research and writing forward (Wang & Li, 2009). Supervisees usually care a lot about the judgmental components in their supervisors’ written feedback because the judgement reveals the supervisor’s attitude to the thesis quality

and decides the following steps for the thesis development. Therefore, while there is a controversy on the effects of written feedback on students' writing accuracy, supervisor's written feedback is believed to play a quality control role in thesis writing. (Mouton, 2001; Lee, 2008; Bitchener, et al., 2011)

With these unique functions, the written feedback provided by supervisors to BA thesis in this present study is termed as "written supervisory feedback" (WSF) by the researcher, with the intention of distinguishing it from "written corrective feedback" which is used frequently by scholars in the field of short essay writing, and unifying the different terms used in the field of academic writing, such as "supervisor written feedback" (e.g., Bitchener, et al., 2010; Kleijn, et al., 2013), "supervisory feedback" (e.g., Azman, et al., 2014; Paré, 2011), "supervisor's on-script feedback" (e.g., Basturkmen, East, & Bitchener, 2011; Basturkmen, & Bitchener, 2014) and so on.

### **2.7.3 Necessity of Written Supervisory Feedback (WSF) in BA Thesis Writing**

Written supervisory feedback (WSF) has been declared by several scholars as being able to provide great assistance to students in their thesis writing (e.g. Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Wang & Li, 2011; Bastola & Hu, 2000). In thesis writing, supervisors are said to be experts that provide opportunities for the students to move from their initial level of mastery to a more advanced level of writing (Yu & Lee, 2013).

In Chinese universities, though English major students at the fourth year (EM-students) may have access to a little genre knowledge about thesis in their classes, they rarely put it into practice until they write their BA theses. They have not read any academic papers, theses or dissertations to get familiar with the discipline community expectations either because they do not have any requirements on academic writing until BA thesis writing. As Bitchener (2010, p.80) pointed out, “a limited understanding of the characteristics of the thesis genre and its component parts” is one main reason to hinder students write their theses, such is true to the Chinese EM-students. Therefore, written supervisory feedback is the key in addressing EM-students’ genre problems in their theses. Wang’s (2007) study revealed that Chinese EM-students believe that the supervisor should guide them to select a promising topic, give suggestions on literature reading, provide advice on the research design and motivate them to complete their thesis. In sum, they expect guidance in every stage of writing the thesis, and view WSF very important during their thesis writing.

Furthermore, the EM-students may suffer from their English proficiency in writing a BA thesis. Writing a thesis in English for the first time is often a challenge for both native (L1) writers and nonnative (L2) writers (Bitchener, et al., 2010), even for the advanced L2 writers. The EM-students, though they have practiced writing plenty of short essays for the test, cannot express their ideas in an authentic way, often with

Chinese English expressions. Therefore, WSF is very critical for Chinese EM-students in the process of BA thesis writing.

## **2.8 Research Gaps in the Literature**

This review of the literature has confirmed the role of written feedback in L2 writing, examined the studies on written feedback provision, demonstrated different measures for assessing the effectiveness of written feedback on students' subsequent revision, and reviewed the studies on students' perception of written feedback. Nonetheless the examination of literature has revealed some problems with the research on written feedback.

Firstly, though a number of existing studies have depicted and analyzed the teachers' written feedback over the past decades, few have attempted to investigate written supervisory feedback (WSF) in academic writing, especially WSF on BA thesis. As mentioned before, WSF has some unique functions and there exists great differences between thesis writing and general essay writing. Therefore, the researcher intends to find out what characteristics WSF has.

The second problem is concerned with the deficiency of research on the relationship between the characteristics of WSF and students' response to WSF. The WSF to thesis drafts is "a form of communication", through which the supervisors

“communicate and provide academic training” (Kumar & Stracke, 2007, p. 462). The students’ response to the WSF is another side of the communication. However, only few studies (e.g., Nassaji & Swain, 2000; Storch, 2010) investigated the relationship between written feedback and students’ uptake in essay writing. Therefore, this present research attempts to link the WSF characteristics to students’ uptake of WSF in academic writing.

Thirdly, many previous studies have only studied WSF on the first draft (e.g., Kumar & Stracke, 2007) or any random draft (e.g., Bitchener, et al., 2010), which would not reveal the overall picture of WSF and students’ uptake during the thesis writing process. BA thesis writing is a long and big investment, and supervisors quite likely invest their WSF different at various stages. Therefore, a thorough study of WSF and students’ uptake of WSF between drafts at the whole thesis writing is critically necessary.

Fourthly, in previous studies (e.g., Ferris, 1997, 2000, 2007; Lee, 2005, 2008; Ellis, 2009; Bitchener, et al., 2011), written feedback only referred to those verbal commentary to students’ writing, but the independent or attached symbols or codes were removed. That is, only a partial of teachers’ written feedback was examined. However, for the sake of speed and convenience, besides necessary verbal comments, supervisors use quite a lot of symbols or codes, which carry significant information to

students. This study is designed to obtain an understanding of all rather than a partial of written supervisory feedback practices, therefore, any meaningful comments, symbols or codes are included in the WSF.

Lastly, the research objects in previous studies on written feedback were mostly non-English major students. The number of English major students in China takes a large portion of English majors in the world, and China authorities attach great importance to BA thesis writing; however, there has been little research on the supervisors' WSF and the English major students' uptake. Thesis writing is a necessity in university education, and written feedback comprises one of the most effective elements that facilitate students' learning (Hattie, 2015). How supervisors provide their WSF to realize the goal of facilitating the English major students' thesis writing, how the EM-students respond to WSF and how they perceive of WSF remain a significant issue for exploration.

## **2.9 Summary**

This chapter firstly gives a thorough review of written feedback in L2 writing and the roles of written feedback in L2 writing. In the past decades, written feedback is extended from grammatical error correction to any commentary aiming to improve the quality of writing, and from commentary on five-paragraph writing to academic writing.

It is recognized to be necessary for any writing teacher, but what is the best way to comment on students' drafts may vary with the context.

The chapter secondly concentrates on the research on written feedback provision in L2 writing, including previous studies on written feedback foci, strategies and connotations, and a wide range of measures in assessing the effectiveness of written feedback on students' improvement. The studies of students' perceptions of teachers' written feedback have also been analyzed. These topics represent the essence of this study.

Then, the functions and necessity of written supervisory feedback (WSF) in BA thesis writing in China are explored. The chapter ends by reviewing the research gaps in the previous literature.

Based on this, the next chapter will describe the methodological approach adopted by this research. The research framework will be described and the procedures of data identification, data collection and data analysis will also be presented.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This chapter describes in detail the research design of the present empirical study. First, the research framework for this study is clarified. Then, the data identification, the data collection and management, and the data analysis in this study are respectively presented in different sections. Finally, this chapter illustrates the pilot study and its implications for the main study.

#### **3.1 Research Framework**

The purpose of this study was to investigate Chinese EFL supervisors' practices in giving written supervisory feedback (WSF) on BA thesis drafts, the characteristics of the WSF that lead to the students' successful uptake and students' perceptions of the WSF at Hunan First Normal University in China. Specifically, this study aimed to address the following research questions:

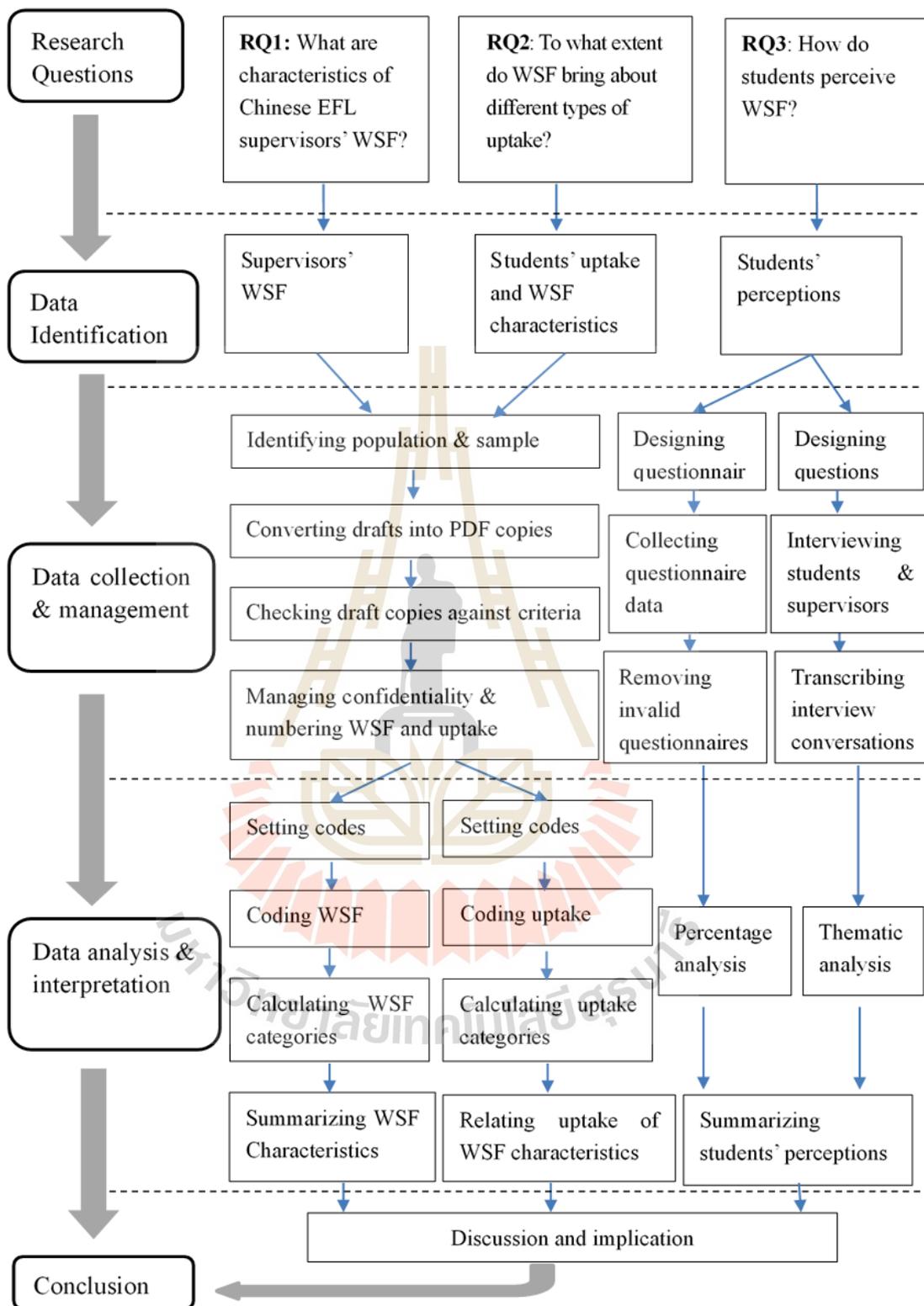
1. What are the characteristics of Chinese EFL supervisors' WSF on BA thesis

drafts in terms of foci, strategies and connotations in different drafts stages and in different sections?

2. To what extent do Chinese EFL supervisors' WSF foci, strategies and connotations bring about different types of uptake?

3. How do the students perceive different WSF comments provided by Chinese EFL supervisors?

To address these questions, both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to support the descriptive and explorative nature of the research. This chapter presented these procedures and methods of data identification, data collection, and data analysis in order to obtain the answers to the research questions of the present study. The research procedures and methods in this study can be illustrated in Figure 3.1. Then the chapter ended with a pilot study testing the instruments and procedures of the research.



**Figure 3.1** Research Design for the Present Study

### 3.2 Data Identification

To answer the three research questions, an important step was to identify what data were in need and to be studied.

In the university of this research (HNFNU), BA thesis from the undergraduate students majoring in English in the senior year (EM-students) was of significant importance to both the EM-students and to the School of Foreign Languages (SFL). For the EM-students, completing and successfully defending their BA theses was one basic requirement to obtain a Bachelor's degree; and for the SFL, the quality of BA theses and of BA thesis supervision are important indicators of its teaching level (Ministry of Education, 2011). Therefore, the SFL attaches great importance to the BA thesis supervision, stressing the four-draft stages for the EM-students and in-text and frontpage written supervisory feedback (WSF) for the supervisors. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, few studies have been done on the characteristics of WSF and the analysis of EM-students' uptake of WSF. That is to say, the effects of WSF and the optimal effective kind of WSF that supervisors should provide to assist EM-students in improving BA thesis writing are still undetermined.

Therefore, the researcher decided to analyze: (1) the characteristics of WSF on

students' BA thesis drafts provided by the Chinese EFL supervisors in HNFNU, (2) the characteristics of WSF leading to the EM-students' different types of uptake in terms of foci, strategies and connotations at different draft stages and in different sections, and (3) the EM-students' perceptions of WSF provided by the Chinese EFL supervisors, hoping that the results of the analysis would shed light on empowering supervisors' WSF practices as well as enhancing EM-students' BA thesis writing ability inside and outside HNFNU with similar EFL contexts.

Both the characteristics of WSF and the frequency of the EM-students' uptake can only be acquired by examining BA thesis drafts. The supervisors' WSF, including comments, correction codes, indication symbols or combination of them, are provided on their students' BA thesis drafts, and the EM-students' uptake is reflected on the changes which the EM-students make from earlier drafts to later drafts. Therefore, the students' BA thesis drafts are an indispensable data source to get both the WSF and students' uptake.

However, the results cannot explain why some characteristics of WSF can lead to high frequency of successful uptake while others not. In order to better understand the possible associations between the characteristics of WSF and the students' uptake, it is

of great importance to know the students' perceptions of different types of WSF, the reasons why they have such perceptions, and even what they will do to respond to different characteristics of WSF. As a result, a questionnaire and an interview with the students would be appropriate tools to glean the information about students' perceptions.

In sum, three types of data were sought after and analyzed in this study: WSF on BA thesis drafts provided by Chinese EFL supervisors, the EM-students' uptake of WSF, and the EM-students' perceptions to WSF, including the answers to both the questionnaire and to semi-structured interviews.

### **3.3 Data Collection and Management**

Various types of research techniques, such as interviews, questionnaires, observations, focus groups, ethnographies, document or artifact analysis, etc. have been developed over the years for data collection (Johannesson & Perjon, 2014). Each of these techniques is particularly appropriate for answering certain research questions, yielding information of a kind which could be most effectively used.

In this study, three data gathering techniques were utilized to collect the three types

of data identified in the previous section; namely, document analysis, questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Document analysis is a method of data collection which involves analysis of content from written documents in order to make certain deductions based on the study parameters (Wanjohi, 2014), and it is “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic material”, “to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” (Bowen, 2009, p.27). Documentary resources in qualitative research may be public physical artifacts such as newspapers, minutes of meetings, official reports or private physical artifacts like personal journals, diaries, letters and e-mails (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Creswell, 2002). In this research, the documentary resources collected were the EM-students’ BA thesis drafts, on which the supervisors’ WSF and the EM-students’ uptake can be identified.

According to Bowen (2009) and Babbie (2010), there are many advantages of using document analysis. Firstly, document analysis is an efficient and effective way of gathering data because documentary resources are manageable and practical resources. Obtaining and analyzing documentary resources are often far more cost effective and time efficient than conducting your own research or experiments (Bowen, 2009).

Secondly, documentary resources are stable, “non-reactive” data sources. The investigator’s presence does not alter what is being studied (Merriam, 1988). “Documents, then, are suitable for repeated reviews” (Bowen, 2009, p.31). Thirdly, documentary resources can also contain data that no longer can be observed, provide details that informants have forgotten, and track change and development. Fourthly, document analysis can also point to questions that need to be asked or to situations that need to be observed, making the use of document analysis a way to ensure your research is critical and comprehensive (Yin, 1994). Therefore, document analysis is used in many studies (e.g.: Ferris, 1997; Lee, 2008; Ene & Upton, 2014; Li, 2016) to study written feedback.

Regarding the data gathering technique of questionnaire, it is effective for immediate distribution and obtaining immediate feedback according to Munn and Drever (2004). It provides anonymity for the respondents, offers the possibility of a high return rate, and provides standardized questions.

For semi-structured interview, it is considered beneficial because its nature allows depth to be achieved, providing the researcher the opportunity to probe and expand the interviewees’ responses and to elicit new ideas on the topic. It also “permits the

respondent to move back and forth in time-to reconstruct the past, interpret the present and predict the future” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 273).

These three techniques, which are discussed in more details below, were utilized in this study to collect necessary data to answer the research questions and enrich the findings.

### **3.3.1 Documentary Resources**

As mentioned above, the documents to be collected in this study were the students’ BA thesis drafts which were the sources of supervisors’ WSF and students’ uptake. There were 227 EM-students in the academic year 2017-2018, and 53 supervisors supervised them with their BA thesis writing. All of the EM-students submitted four drafts as their academic archives to the School of Foreign Languages; therefore, there were 227 sets of BA thesis drafts in total (all the BA thesis drafts written by one EM-student and submitted to the School is grouped as a set). The 227 sets of BA thesis drafts were chosen as the primary data of this study.

It is advantageous for the researcher to use the archival data of students’ BA thesis drafts because they contain the authentic WSF and uptake. All drafts in this study came from EM-students’ original BA thesis writing process; consequently, teachers did

not modify their foci, strategies or connotations of WSF they offered to the students, nor did the students modify their revisions, because the possibility of a study on this work was not a consideration at that time; therefore, archival data of this sort can yield authenticity in WSF because the data are derived from a natural setting (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). No data were collected until the School of Foreign Languages approved the study.

Many previous studies on written feedback (Ferris, 1997; Ferris, et al., 1997; Montgomery & Baker, 2007) have included students' papers as their data. These papers in their studies, usually had already been corrected by the teachers, were collected to reflect teachers' actual practice of written feedback. Most of the papers in their studies were from one-draft writing. However, BA thesis writing is a process involving writing at several drafts, so collecting one draft will certainly limit the depth of exploration and investigation of supervisors' practices of WSF. Therefore, this study collects all the four BA thesis drafts from the EM-students for the researcher to develop a more precise understanding of what and how Chinese EFL supervisors provide WSF in actual supervision practice, and what characteristics of WSF lead to high frequency of successful uptake. In addition, the analyses of WSF in the pilot study can be used to

develop some of the follow-up questionnaire questions to assist the researcher to further investigate students' perceptions regarding WSF.

### **3.3.1.1 Identifying Population and Sample**

A population is a group of individuals, objects, or data that a scientific query focuses on (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009; Muijs, 2011). In this study, the population was the 227 EM-students and the 53 Chinese EFL supervisors at the SFL at HNFNU in academic year 2017-2018. Out of the 53 supervisors, 5 were full professors, 17 were associate professors, 30 were lecturers and 1 was an assistant teacher. There were 4 Ph.D. holders, and 41 Master holders and the others were Bachelor holders with an associate or full professor rank. Their ages ranged from 26 to 55, their teaching experiences varied from 2 years to over 30 years. The 227 EM-students were all EFL learners and shared the similar EFL learning experiences. They took the course of "*An Introduction to Thesis Writing*" in the first semester of the academic year 2016-2017. All of them were writing their BA theses for the first time and preparing for the oral defense in the academic year 2017-2018.

The reasons for choosing this population at this site were of three folds. Firstly, as a supervisor in this context, the researcher himself had the experience

of lacking the knowledge of the suitable foci, strategies and connotations he should provide in his own WSF for improving students' academic writing growth. Secondly, upon completion of this research, the researcher would return to teaching at HNFNU, hence the study results would hopefully be helpful for the professional development of supervisors in WSF provision and for the course instruction of "*An Introduction to Thesis Writing*". Lastly, as a teacher at this university, the researcher's familiarity with the place and the people could facilitate the study, for example, to get access to the thesis archives, find proper participants, and obtain permissions to the research.

The researcher used systematic sampling as the sampling method in this study. Systematic sampling is a probability sampling method where the elements are chosen from a target population by selecting a random starting point and selecting other members after a fixed "sampling interval", and it will approximate the results of simple random sampling (Weiss, 1984). Since there were 227 EM-students and 53 supervisors in the academic year 2017-2018, and each supervisor supervised four to five students, so the researcher decided the sampling interval as "5" and the student with the ID number ending with 3 in each class as the first number. Therefore, the students with ID number ending with 3 and 8 in each class as well as their

corresponding supervisors were selected out as the samples in this study. There were six classes in total and the number of the EM-students in every class varied from 27 to 41, so the sample in every class was 5 to 8 students. There should be 45 students selected out; however, among the 45 students, some students were under the supervision of the same supervisor. The researcher decided only one student under one supervisor is chosen out because the WSF on different students' drafts under the same supervisor may possess similarities. Therefore, among the different students with the ID number ending with 3 or 8 are supervised by the same supervisor, only the student with the smaller or the smallest ID number were selected out as the study sample. At last, a total of 32 EM-students and 32 supervisors were chosen as the sample in this study. The population and sample of the EM-students and supervisors in each class are shown in Table 3.1.

**Table 3.1** Student Population and Sample in the Present Study

Class	Population		Sample		
	No. of students	No. of Supervisors	No. of Students	No. of Supervisors	Ss under the same supervisor
One	41	10	5 (12.2%)	5 (50%)	03, 23and 33; 28, and 38
Two	41	9	6 (14.6%)	6 (66.7%)	08 and 28; 23 and 33

**Table 3.1** Student Population and Sample in the Present Study (Cont.)

Class	Population		Sample		
	No. of students	No. of Supervisors	No. of Students	No. of Supervisors	Ss under the same supervisor
Three	40	9	5 (12.3%)	5 (55.6%)	03 and 28; 13 and 33; 18 and 38
Four	39	10	6 (15.4%)	6 (60%)	28 and 33; 18 and 38
Five	39	9	6 (15.4%)	6 (66.7%)	03 and 33; 13 and 28
Six	27	6	4 (14.8%)	4 (66.7%)	13 and 23
Total	227	53	32 (14.1%)	32 (60.4%)	

The supervisors in the sample cover a relatively good portion of the population in terms of professional ranks, degrees and genders. The information of supervisor population and sample in this study is demonstrated in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.2** Supervisor Population and Sample in the Present Study

		Population	Sample	
		No. of supervisors	No. of supervisors	Percentage
Professional rank	F. P.	5	4	80%
	A. P.	17	8	47%
	L.	30	19	63%
	A. T.	1	1	100%
Degree	BA	4	2	50%
	Master	45	28	62%
	Ph. D.	4	2	50%
Gender	M	7	3	43%
	F	46	29	63%
Total		53	32	60%

Note. *F. P.* = full professor; *A. P.* = associate professor; *L.* = lecturer; *A. T.* = assistant teacher; *M* = male; *F* = female.

This research chose 60.3% (n=32) out of 53 Chinese EFL supervisors as the study subjects which was relatively higher a rate than previous studies from three case subjects (Cohen & Robbins, 1976) to 35 supervisors (Bitchener, et al., 2011). In addition, the supervisors covered all the categories in terms of professional ranks, degrees and genders. What is more, the study chose 14.1% (n=32) out of 227 EM-students as the student sample, that means 32 complete sets of BA thesis drafts were used to study the Chinese supervisors' WSF and EM-students' uptake, which no previous studies did the same either in sample numbers nor in writing-process completeness. Ferris claimed (2003), "most of the research on this topic [written feedback] has been conducted on a rather small scale." (p. 47). Hence, the 32 sets of BA thesis drafts were selected as the initial data source from which WSF and EM-students' uptake would be collected.

### **3.3.1.2 Collecting Documentary Resources**

To answer Research Questions 1 and 2, the researcher needed to collect the documentary resources, that is, the 32 sets of BA thesis drafts, which contained the supervisors' WSF and the EM-students' uptake. As required by the SFL, every EM-student should submit their BA thesis drafts to the supervisor for comments

for three times before their oral defense, in other words, each set of BA thesis drafts collected in this study included four drafts— the first, the second, the third, and the final drafts. The first drafts only contained the handwritten WSF (including marginal and frontpage comments, codes, symbols or combinations of them) provided by the Chinese EFL supervisors; the second drafts were written after the students had received the WSF on the first drafts, so they contained both the WSF and EM-students' uptake; the third drafts were written after the students had received WSF on the second drafts, and they also contained the WSF and uptake; the final (fourth) drafts, written after the students had received the WSF on the third drafts, contained students' uptake only.

After obtaining permission from the supervisors and their students as well as the School of Foreign Languages, the researcher borrowed the 32 sets of BA thesis drafts written by the selected 32 students, and then the researcher photographed the 32 sets of students' BA thesis drafts and turned them into PDF format for analysis.

In all, the researcher gathered WSF and EM-students' uptake from 128 BA thesis drafts written by 32 students (4 drafts for each EM-student).

### **3.3.1.3 Checking Documents against Criteria**

In order to ensure the collected WSF and uptake can be successfully

used for analysis, the researcher checked these data against the criteria.

A total of 32 sets of students' BA thesis draft copies were initially collected for this study. Then, all the 32 sets of BA thesis drafts were checked to ensure that each set meets the following criteria: (a) in each set, there were four drafts, (b) in each set, every draft was complete without any page leaving out, (c) in each set, the four drafts were the continuous first, second, third and final drafts (that is, they were not taken out from any four drafts from their five or more drafts, as few students underwent a process of more than four drafts), and (d) in each set, all the first, the second, and the third drafts contained both marginal and frontpage SWF (this was a requirement to supervisors set by the School Academic Committee). Researchers should exclude drafts from a data set that do not meet an inclusion criterion for a study (Muijs, 2011). Any draft set that did not meet one or more of these criteria would be eliminated from the study, and another set meeting these criteria under the same supervisor would be collected and used for the analysis.

#### **3.3.1.4 WSF and Uptake Management**

After excluding draft sets that fail necessary criteria, the researcher had to manage the qualified draft sets both for keeping confidentiality of the

supervisors and students and for later coding and analysis.

Firstly, each set of BA thesis were pseudonymed as S1 to S32, with “S” standing for “student”. Then, the four BA thesis drafts in each set were marked as D1, D2, D3, and D4, with D1 referring to the first draft, D2 referring to the second draft, D3 referring to the third draft, and D4 referring to the final draft. Therefore, the 32 sets of BA thesis drafts in this study are coded as S1D1 to S32D4.

Secondly, each draft was divided into eleven separate sections following the university’s format and the ILrMRDC pattern (Paltridge, 2002); namely, the Frontpage, Title, Content Table, Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review/Theoretical Basis, Methodology, Results and Discussion, Conclusion, Bibliography, Appendices and Acknowledgements. However, not every thesis followed the ILrMRDC pattern since the BA theses concentrated on different fields. But each BA thesis has its first chapter as “Introduction”, the second as “Literature Review” or “Theoretical Basis” (probably not with those theses concentrating on English literature), and the last chapter as “Conclusion”. For those BA theses did not follow the ILrMRDC pattern, the chapters between the Literature Review and the Conclusion were usually the analysis of cases and the countermeasures and suggestions. For the coding convenience,

the analysis of cases was categorized into Methodology and countermeasures and suggestions were categorized into Results and Discussion in this study. Therefore, the different thesis sections and their codes are illustrated in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3** Codes for Different Sections of BA Thesis Drafts

Section	Code
Frontpage	FR
Title	TL
Content table	CT
Abstract	AB
Introduction	IN
Literature Review or Theoretical Basis	LR
Methodology or Analysis	MT
Results and Discussion or Countermeasures and Suggestions	RD
Conclusion	CO
Bibliography	BB
Appendices & Acknowledgement	AA

Thirdly, all the WSF comments in each section were identified and numbered as “WSF1”, “WSF2”, “WSF3”, ...etc. for all the thesis drafts. In this study, a WSF comment refers to each instance when a supervisor provides an independent verbal remark (a word, a phrase, etc.), a code (e.g., a acronym, a capitalized letter), a symbol (e.g., question marks, underlines, circles, crosses, ticks) or combinations of them. For example, each of the following examples (1) - (3) will be marked as one WSF comment.

2.1 Culture definition.....  
 2.2 Culture image.....  
 2.3 Culture translation.....

*Capitalization!*

(1)

#### **Abstract**

...This article will be divided into six parts. The first part is introduction; the second is the definitions of teachers' oral evaluation; the third part is the importance and significance of teachers' oral evaluation...

*This should not appear in the abstract.*

(2)

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the three persons, Xu Yuanchong, Lu Xun made great contributions to translation of Chinese poems...

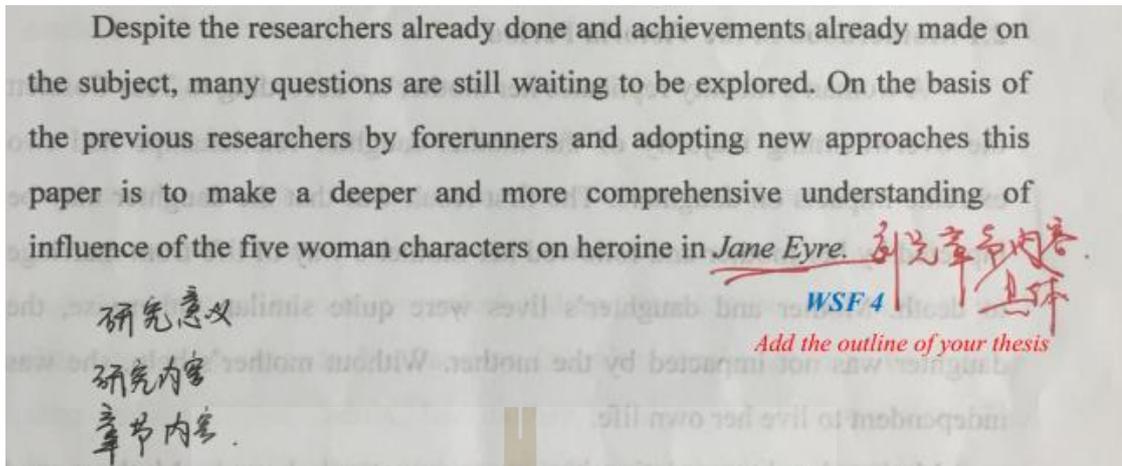
(3)

Several sentences provided by the supervisors in one place may be taken as one WSF comment or several WSF comments. If the multiple statements include several individual ideas, then each idea was coded as a WSF comment separately; the boundaries of WSF with multiple ideas were determined based on where the foci of the WSF shifts (Ene & Upton, 2014). On the contrary, "A single comment, then, could consist of multiple sentences when they all worked toward the same aim, such as directing the student to revise a particular part of the paper." (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999, p.153) Therefore, whether a bunch of sentences was marked as one WSF comment or more WSF comments depended on the number of feedback foci in it. For example:

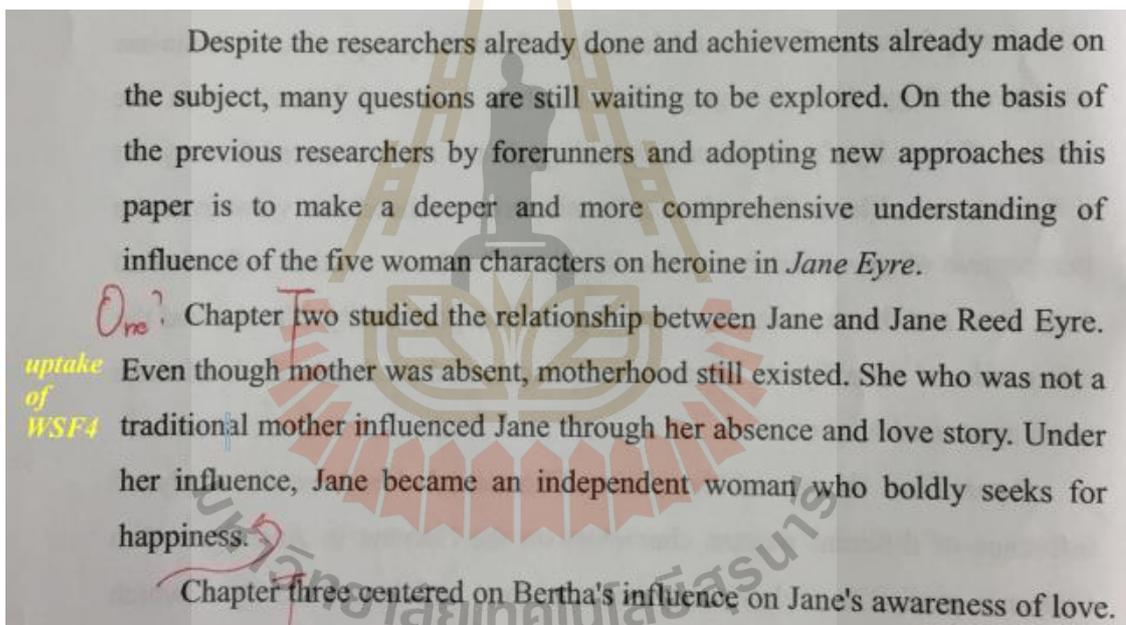
*“You have done a good job on the subtitles in this chapter, // but you need to specify the interview participants, its numbers and with the interview questions as an appendix at the end of the thesis.”*

In this example, the supervisor intended to state two topics: the subtitles and the research instrument of interview. It is a compound sentence, but the foci are shifting from one to another. As a result, the compound sentence was marked as two WSF comments. The reason and benefit of breaking down multiple statements into different WSF comments was to see the foci of WSF more clearly than otherwise and avoid coding difficulty.

Regarding the uptake management, what the researcher needed to do was to read the text (words, sentences, paragraphs, etc.) to which a WSF comment points out the problem, and find out the related text in the next draft and numbered it as “uptake of WSFn” (“n” refers to the number given to a WSF comment in the third step above). The EM-students’ uptake can only be acknowledged after the researcher compared the changes between previous and later drafts. For example, after managing the following WSF comment (S1D1, I, WSF4), the researcher carefully read and found out the corresponding text to WSF4 in the later draft (S1D2, I), then gave a number to it (uptake of WSF4).



(Draft 1 on which a WSF comment is identified and numbered as “WSF4”. The italic text is the translation version of the Chinese WSF comment.)



(Draft 2 on which “uptake of WSF4” is numbered)

### 3.3.2 Questionnaire for Students

Dörnyei (2007) pointed out that there are various factors leading a researcher to choose questionnaires for the collection of data from students and teachers. These factors include: (a) questionnaires tend to be more reliable as they are anonymous; (b)

questionnaires encourage greater honesty from respondents; (c) questionnaires save the researcher's and participants' time and effort. Cohen, et al. (2011) stated that questionnaires permit the collection of data from a greater number of people than any other research tool such as experiments. In the current study, a high degree of information was sought from as many students as possible because the more information obtained, the more objective and accurate it would be to understand the ways in which students perceive their supervisors' WSF on BA thesis drafts. Furthermore, the use of questionnaire in second language research is important for the collection of information on uneasily-observed phenomenon such as attitudes or perceptions. However, questionnaire may have some drawbacks. Berg (2007) pointed out that questionnaires rely on individuals' self-reports of their knowledge, attitudes or behavior, and thus the validity of the gleaned information is contingent on the honesty of the respondent.

### **3.3.2.1 Questionnaire Design**

The purpose of the questionnaire was to examine the students' attitudes to different WSF; in particular, whether they preferred certain foci, strategies or connotations or not. The questionnaire in this study (see Appendix A) was designed

into two sections. Section one includes four questions, aiming to solicit students' general information. Section two includes sixteen questions, aiming to ask students' reactions or preferences to the different WSF comments. Specifically, Questions 5 to 10 concerned the students' perceptions of WSF foci, Questions 11 to 17 concerned the students' perceptions of WSF strategy, and Questions 18 to 20 concerned the students' perceptions of WSF connotations. The respondents were asked to express their perceptions of the foci, strategies and connotations of WSF by choosing a response that best describes their opinions on a five-point Likert scale.

### **3.3.2.2 Questionnaire Distribution and Collection**

The electronic mode of questionnaire was distributed by the researcher himself in December of 2018 to all the 32 EM-students whose bachelor's thesis drafts were to be analyzed in the main study after the pilot study was carried out and the questions has been refined. The researcher designed the questionnaire and published it on a popular online survey website ([www.wjx.com](http://www.wjx.com)) in China, then duplicated both the ULR and QR code, and sent a message with the ULR and QR code to all students via the Chinese social media "Wechat". All the students could participate in the survey by clicking the ULR or scan the QR code. Whenever a student completed

the questionnaire, the researcher could view his or her answers immediately. When the researcher decided to finalize the survey, he might go to the website and download every copy of electronic questionnaire answers and conducted the analysis.

The use of electronic mode of questionnaire was because of its convenience and accessibility (Carbonaro & Bainbridge, 2000; Wright, 2005): Participants can fill out the electric questionnaires when they choose to and start and stop a survey at their convenient time, and they have a variety of ways to access the questionnaire including mobile devices, tablets, laptops, desktop computers, etc. This gives control over completing the survey to the individual, which can increase engagement and response rates. Besides these benefits, electronic mode of questionnaire can receive quick results (Ilieva, et al., 2002; Saunders, et al. 2007). As soon as participants have completed the questionnaire, the researcher can view and analyze the responses. Through an online feedback management system, data can quickly be tabulated and presented in a variety of report formats.

The researcher's familiarity with the EM-students was another reason of using electronic mode of questionnaire. Lefever et al. (2007) warned that there is a "need for caution when using an online data collection", because "the participation

rates are low compared to those generally seen in traditional pencil-and-paper surveys” (p. 578-579). However, the researcher taught all the 227 EM-students the course of “*An Introduction to Thesis Writing*” before they started writing their theses. He was familiar with the EM-students and had a good relationship with them, which assisted in the response rate of the 32 interviewees. In the past research, most virtual surveys showed a response rate between 15% and 29% (Comley, 2000), and 30% is considered reasonable (Saunders, et al., 1997). In order to ensure a relatively high response rate in this study, the researcher offered lucky money to the respondents via the online survey to attract the EM-students participation, and then sent invitation messages to the students in person, and lastly found out those who had changed their Wechat accounts because they changed their phone number and sent messages to their new account again.

### 3.3.2.3 Questionnaire Answer Checking and Processing

After receiving the questionnaire answers, the first thing for the researcher to do was to carefully check the completeness of the answers. Those without complete answers (leave some questions unanswered) were removed from the questionnaire data.

The online survey system can automatically assign a number to each submitted questionnaire, so it could be easily traced back to the right questionnaire when referring to a certain answer. In addition, the online survey system can automatically provide most kinds of descriptive or referential data if needed.

### **3.3.3 Semi-Structured Interview**

Semi-structured interview is “well suited for exploring attitudes, values, beliefs, and motives” (Van Teijlingen, 2014. p.21). It allows an interviewer to incorporate new information and follow new ideas as they come up in the interview, without being bound by a preconceived set of ideas. In addition, individual semi-structured interview will also ensure anonymity, which in turn would allow the interviewees to express their views more freely.

In this study, in order to get a deep understanding of the reasons behind the supervisors' WSF practices, as well as the reasons behind the EM-students' perceptions, individual semi-structured interviews with supervisors and with the EM-students were conducted, respectively.

#### **3.3.3.1 Semi-Structured Interview with Students**

The interviews were conducted with 9 student participants from the

32 EM students according to their willingness.

A set of predetermined questions which were formulated as open-ended to elicit the interviewees' own meanings are to be used. The interview questions (see Appendix B for the interview topic guide) yielded information about the participants' perceptions of their supervisors' WSF foci, strategies and connotations. The interview began with some broad questions such as "Did you like your bachelor's thesis writing?" to recall their own experience and warmed them up before an actual interview.

The interviews were conducted through face-to-face, telephone or the social media "Wechat" depending on the student interviewees' convenience because the students had graduated for half a year and they were not at the campus at the time of interview. The researcher firstly made an appointment with each of the interviewees, and then an individual interview was conducted with audio recording. The interviews were conducted in Chinese, as requested by the interviewees themselves.

### **3.3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interview with Supervisors**

The questions for the supervisor interviews (see Appendix C) are different from those used for the students. The respondents were 9 supervisors from

those who advised the 32 EM-students according to their willingness. The foci of the questions were on getting the supervisors to offer comments freely on how and why they provide WSF foci, strategies and connotations on their student's thesis drafts.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face at the supervisors' offices or the meeting room in the SFL at the interviewees' request. Also, the conversations were audio recorded after getting their agreement. After the interview, the conversations with both the EM-students and the supervisors were transcribed and then translated by the researcher for later analysis.

### **3.4 Data Analysis**

The procedure of data analysis corresponds to the three research questions. To address the first research question, the data of WSF were analyzed from their amount, frequencies, distributions and combinations of focus, strategy and connotation. To address the second question, the data of students' uptake were analyzed from its categories, and the high frequency of successful uptake is related to the characteristics of corresponding WSF comments. To deal with the third question, the questionnaire data and interview conversations were used to elicit the students' perceptions.

### 3.4.1 Identification of the Analysis Frameworks

In this study, the documentary resources of WSF and students' uptake were considered the foundational data sources because of their information depth and richness. The other rich sources of data were the questionnaire answers and interview conversations.

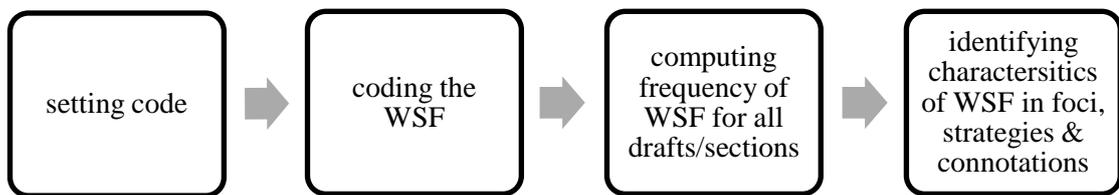
To get sufficient information from different data sources, different analysis methods were adopted. Firstly, two different coding frameworks were used to identify the characteristics of WSF and students' uptake in this study. Then, the associations between WSF foci, strategies and connotations and the frequency of students' different types of uptake were discussed. For the questionnaire, its quantitative data were carried out electronically by means of online SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) which the survey website system provided. And the qualitative data from the semi-structured interview were reviewed and key themes related to the research question were identified. These analysis frameworks can be illustrated in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4** Data Analysis Frameworks for this Study

Research Questions	Data Collection	Data Analysis Frameworks
Q1: What are the characteristics of Chinese EFL supervisors' WSF on BA thesis drafts in terms of foci, strategies and connotations in different drafts stages and in different sections?	32 sets of BA thesis drafts	1. Coding the WSF foci, strategies and connotations; 2. Calculating the frequency of WSF categories in different draft stages and in different sections
Q2: To what extent do Chinese EFL supervisors' WSF foci, strategies and connotations bring about different types of uptake?	32 sets of BA thesis drafts	1. Coding the students' uptake; 2. Calculating different types of uptake in relation to different WSF foci, strategies and connotations.
Q3: How do the students perceive different WSF comments provided by Chinese EFL supervisors?	Questionnaire with 28 students Interview with 9 supervisors & students	1. Statistical analysis for questionnaire answers 2. Thematic analysis for interview conversations

### 3.4.1 Analysis of WSF

For Research Question 1, the answer to it was acquired by examining WSF on BA thesis drafts collected. The analysis procedure can be illustrated in Figure 3.2.



**Figure 3.2** Procedure of WSF Analysis

### 3.4.2.1 Setting Codes

In the present study, the analysis of WSF covered the foci, strategies and connotations. The coding schemes for these three aspects of WSF were adapted from diverse sources because these three aspects have not been studied together in one single study in the literature. The classification of the foci of WSF in this study was adapted from Bitchener et al.'s (2011) and Liu's (2013) classification. Bitchener et al. (2011) divided the foci of written feedback into Content, Requirements, Cohesion and Coherence, Linguistic Accuracy and Appropriateness (p.13-14). However, Bitchener et al.' (2011) classification of foci was not in line with the classification in the traditional Chinese writing teaching because the participants in Bitchener et al's (2011) study were all L1 supervisors. Liu's (2013) classification of written feedback foci was for the Chinese tertiary students' writings and was based on the SAT analytic writing-scoring scales: Grammar, Content, Sentence Structure, Organization and Vocabulary. However, the five

analytic rating categories were not for the academic writing but for general writing. Therefore, this study adapted Bitchener et al.'s (2011) and Liu's (2013) classifications on written feedback foci and integrated them into the coding schemes for WSF foci including six aspects: Content, Requirements, Organizations, Grammar, Linguistic Appropriateness and Writing attitudes. Their definitions and descriptions are illustrated in Table 3.5. Appendix D provides more detailed coding schemes with examples.

**Table 3.5** Coding Schemes for WSF Foci

Category of WSF Focus	Tagging Code	Descriptions
Content	Co	Effectiveness, accuracy, completeness or appropriateness of ideas or argumentation
Requirements	Re	1) academic conventions (including referencing, mechanics, passive voice and objective tone); 2) university requirements
Organizations	Or	1) Order of information/ ideas; 2) Links between information/ ideas; 3) Paragraph/chapter/thesis development; 4) Arrangement of sentence structures
Grammar	Gr	1) Spelling; 2) Tense; 3) Voice; 4) Word class; 5) Word addition and deletion; 6) Article; 7) Punctuation; 8) Chinese English
Linguistic Appropriateness	LC	1) Appropriateness: using suitable, right and proper words; 2) Accuracy: precision or exactness of word choice, especially resulting from careful effort; 3) Formality: using formal words and avoid colloquial expressions

**Table 3.5** Coding Schemes for WSF Foci (Cont.)

Category of WSF Focus	Tagging Code	Descriptions
Writing Attitudes	WA	1) Carefulness, seriousness in writing; 2) Academic behavior (plagiarism); 3) Academic ethics

Note. *The coding schemes are adapted from Bitchener et al. (2011) and Liu (2013).*

The classification of the strategies of WSF was adapted from Ellis' (2009a) and Ene and Upton (2014). Ellis identified six strategies for providing feedback: Direct feedback, Indirect feedback, Metalinguistic feedback, Unfocused/focused feedback, Electronic feedback and Reformulation. However, as stated earlier (see Section 2.2.2.1), there are some overlaps among this classification. Therefore, following Ene and Upton's (2014) classification based on directness, this study divided the WSF strategies into direct and indirect feedback. Since it is not always easy to decide whether a WSF comment is direct or indirect as "directness and indirectness are ends of a continuum, not discrete categories" (Conrad & Goldstein, 1999, p. 179), Ene and Upton divided the WSF strategies into 10 subcategories (7 for the direct feedback and 3 for the indirect), and some of these subcategories were too complicated and unnecessary. For example, in their direct written feedback, there were subcategories like "Du" (Incorrect form is crossed out) and "Dc" (corrections, *such as* correct form provided; replacement, reformulation, insertion). In

either situation, the written feedback can be classified as correction, and there is no need to distinguish whether the supervisors cross out the incorrect form and provide the correct form or reformulate it or do not provide the correct form. Adapted from Ellis (2009a) and Ene and Upton (2014), the coding schemes for the WSF strategies are illustrated in Table 3.6. Appendix E provides a more detailed coding schemes with examples.

**Table 3.6** Coding Schemes for WSF Strategies

Category of feedback strategy		Tagging Code	Descriptions
Direct feedback	Direct corrections or reformulation	Dc	crossing out unnecessary words; inserting missing words; providing correct form or content
	Direct corrections or reformulation with descriptions or explanations	Ds	using statements, directives, examples, references (perhaps with symbols indicating the place) to tell that something is problematic, to explain why it is problematic, or instruct how to improve it after giving direct corrections or reformulations
Indirect feedback	Comments implicitly indicating errors or problems	Is	Commenting on students' texts, without telling or pointing out where the errors exist or how to improve it
	graphical marking	Ig	Underling; Circling; Using a question mark; Ticking or crossing near the text, etc.
	Indirect counting	It	Error count is provided
	Indirect coding	Ic	Error codes are used

Note. *The coding schemes are adapted from Ellis (2009a) and Ene & Upton (2014).*

The coding schemes for the connotations of WSF was based on Tunstall et al.'s (1996) and Hyland and Hyland's (2001) classifications of teachers' feedback. Tunstall et al. (1996) regarded teacher feedback as both evaluative and descriptive. From an evaluation perspective, teacher feedback is either positive or negative; from a description perspective, feedback "is achievement or improvement focused" (p. 393). "The analysis demonstrates that within evaluative types of feedback, judgements are made according to explicit or implicit norms; within descriptive types, feedback more clearly relates to actual competence." (ibid) The supervisors' WSF is also evaluative and descriptive, and one main function of WSF is to help students' theses to meet the requirements set up for a degree thesis. Therefore, this study classified the connotations into positive, negative and neutral, as in those previous studies (e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2001; Stern & Solomon, 2006). The classifications of the connotations of WSF and the coding schemes can be illustrated in the following Table 3.7. Appendix F provides more detailed coding schemes with examples.

**Table 3.7** Coding Schemes for WSF Connotation

Category of WSF Connotation	Tagging code	Definitions or examples
Positive comment	Po	Praise; encouragement; acknowledgement of something positive ( <i>“Good!” “You made good progress in this draft than in the previous one.” “√”</i> )
Negative comment	Ng	comment with criticism, sarcasm, or a total disapproval ( <i>“you have made too much simple mistakes”, “you are a master of mistake maker”, “rewrite it”.</i> )
Neutral comment	Ne	no biased, no judgmental feedback comment indicating, locating the errors, giving suggestions or providing strategies for improvement

Note. *The coding schemes are adapted from Tunstall (1996) and Hyland & Hyland (2001).*

In order to code WSF effectively, the researcher set self-invented codes for the different classifications of the foci, strategies and connotations. Therefore, in the process of coding, the researcher put a self-invented tag to each WSF instance for its classification. The self-invented tagging codes are presented in Tables 3.5, 3.6 and 3.7, respectively.

#### 3.4.1.1 Coding the WSF

After developing the coding schemes for the different classification of WSF in terms of foci, strategies and connotations, the researcher read all WSF

comments from section to section, and input the coding tags for every WSF instance into the self-designed tally sheet in the computer. There was one tally sheet for the analysis of each section. For example, in coding the Introduction section, the coding tally sheet looks like what is shown in Table 3.8.

**Table 3.8** Example Tally Sheet for Coding WSF

Source	WSF Coding					
	WSF1	WSF2	WSF3	WSF4	WSF5	...
S1D1	GrIgNe	CoINeg	GrDcNe	GrIgNe	CoDsNe	
S1D2	ReIgNe	GrDcNe	GrIgNe			
S1D3	GrIgNe					
S2D1	ReDsNe	GrDcNe	GrIgNe			
S2D2	CoDsNe	GrDcNe	OrIgNe	GrDcNe	OrIgNe	
S2D3	GrIgNe	GrIgNe	GrDcNe			
...						

Note. There were no WSF on draft 4, so draft 4 was not designed in this sheet.

However, since the uptake of every WSF instance also needed to be coded, and the relationship between the WSF comments and their uptake needed to be studied, the tally sheet was further developed for coding both WSF and the uptake. Therefore, a tally sheet for both WSF and uptake coding was designed as shown in Table 3.10 (Section 3.4.3.2).

Most of the coding was carried out by the researcher, but before the coding began, an independent coder coded twenty percent of the WSF comments (6

sets of BA thesis drafts from the total 32) to check the inter-coder reliability. The researcher and the independent coder read over the WSF on the six sets of BA thesis drafts, and separately coded all the WSF for their foci, strategies and connotations. After that, the researcher examined the degree of agreement. If the degree of agreement was over 80%, it meant that the coding schemes were consistent, and the inter-coder reliability was acceptable (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999). If so, the researcher would continue to finish the coding of the remaining 26 sets of BA thesis drafts. If the degree of agreement was lower than 80%, then the researcher and the independent coder would review the coding schemes and discuss the differences and then either modified the coding schemes or reached an agreement on these differences. Consequently, the researcher and the independent coder would do some coding of WSF and check the degree of agreement again until it was over 80%. Upon the completion of all the coding, the researcher could calculate and acquire the frequencies of different foci, strategies and connotations of WSF in all the 32 sets of BA thesis drafts, in different drafts and in different sections. These frequencies can reflect the characteristics of WSF given by Chinese EFL supervisors on their students' BA drafts.

### **3.4.2.3 Analysis of WSF Characteristics**

After coding the WSF comments for all the 32 sets of BA thesis drafts, the researcher calculated the amount and frequency (or portion) of WSF foci, strategies and connotations for all the first drafts, the second drafts, the third drafts as well as for different sections. The characteristics of Chinese EFL supervisors' practices of WSF on BA thesis drafts was summarized and interpreted from the differences in the amount and frequency of the three aspects of WSF in different drafts and different sections.

### **3.4.3 Analysis of Students' Uptake**

The analysis of students' uptake could give the researcher and supervisors an overview of the entire development of each thesis and an opportunity to consider any connections between different types of WSF and students' uptake. Therefore, the coding and cataloging the students' uptake was worthwhile. The procedure of uptake coding went through four steps, that is, setting code, coding the uptake, calculating the frequencies and relating the high frequency of successful uptake to the characteristics of WSF.

#### **3.4.3.1 Setting Codes**

The coding schemes for students' uptake was adapted from Conrad and Goldstein's (1999) and Ene and Upton's (2014) studies. Conrad and Goldstein (1999)

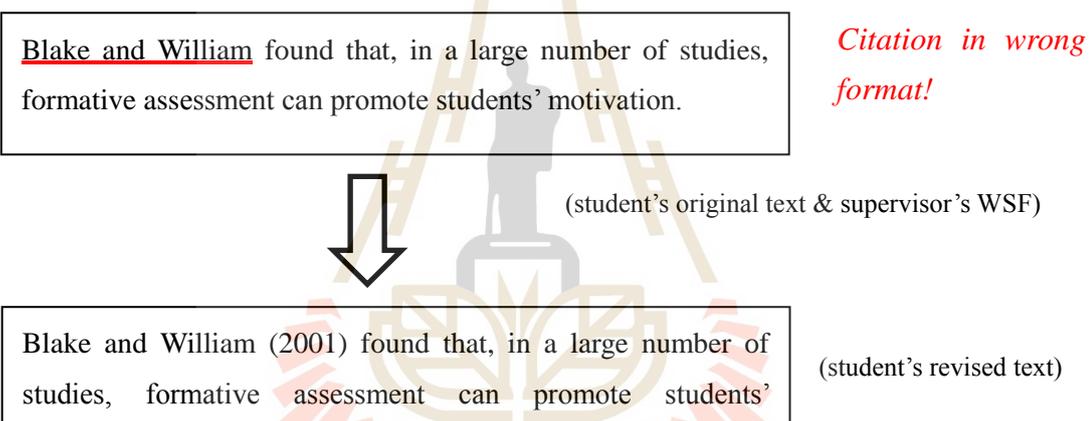
divided students' revisions into successful revision, unsuccessful revision, or no change (not attempted), while Ene and Upton (2014) divided students' uptake into four categories; that is, successful uptake, unsuccessful uptake, unattempted uptake, and unverifiable uptake. In this study, the researcher adapted the "unattempted uptake" to "no uptake" because the latter could cover the type of uptake in a broader sense. Therefore, the students' uptake of each WSF instance on the former drafts was traced through the later drafts using a scheme of "successful uptake", "unsuccessful uptake", "no uptake" and "unverifiable uptake", and they are coded as "Us", "Uu", "U0" and "Ux" respectively in this study. The coding schemes for uptake can be illustrated in the following Table 3.9:

**Table 3.9** Coding Schemes for Uptake

Category of student uptake	Tagging code	Working definition
Successful uptake	Us	A change solving a problem or improving upon a problem area discussed in the feedback
Unsuccessful uptake	Uu	A change does not target the problem addressed in the feedback; A change partially targets the problem; A change brings new problems or errors.
No Uptake	U0	No change is made to the feedback comment
Unverifiable uptake	Ux	No need to revise; Unable to trace the uptake

Note. The coding Schemes are adapted from Conrad & Goldstein (1999) and Ene & Upton (2014).

As introduced by Goldstein and Conrad (1990), a successful uptake is a change solving a problem or improving upon a problem area discussed in the feedback, while being consistent with the writer's purpose, main point, and audience. Unsuccessful revision is defined as a change that does not improve the text or that actually further weakens the text. The following examples illustrate different types of uptake in this study.



### **Example 1** Supervisor's WSF and Student's successful Uptake

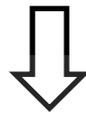
In Example 1, the uptake of the supervisor's WSF is taken as "Us" (successful uptake) because it improves the problem addressed in the WSF (citation with wrong format) and is consistent with the writer's purpose.

In contrast, an unsuccessful uptake occurs when a change made by the student does not target the problem addressed in the WSF, or partially target the

problem, or even bring new problems or errors. For example,

**Title:** Teachers' Oral Evaluation in Primary School English Teaching on the Implementation (of Learning)

*Change it into:  
Research on the  
Implementation of...*



(student's original text & supervisor's WSF)

**Title:** Research on the Implementation of Learning Teachers' Oral Evaluation in Primary School English Teaching

(student's revised text)

### **Example 2** Supervisor's WSF and Student's Unsuccessful Uptake

In Example 2, the uptake of the supervisor's WSF was coded as "Uu" (unsuccessful uptake) because it targeted partial problem addressed in the WSF (thesis titles usually begin with "research on...") but it missed another part of the WSF (deleting "of learning").

Sometimes, the students made no change to WSF on their thesis drafts. This kind of uptake was coded as "U0" (No uptake). For those praises, there is no need to make any change, hence the unverifiable uptake (Ux).

#### **3.4.1.2 Coding the Uptake**

In this study, uptake refers to the EM-students' response to their

supervisors' WSF. Therefore, after setting the coding schemes for different types of uptake, the researcher read each WSF instance and checked the EM-students' modifications to it in the next draft. In a way like in the WSF coding process, the researcher coded the uptake from section to section on all the thesis drafts. Since each WSF instance was related to its uptake, therefore, in coding uptake, the researcher used the coding tally sheet of WSF as the basis, and expanded some columns so that the results of uptake coding could be put into the sheet in the computer. In this way, each WSF instance and its uptake were presented in the same tally sheet so that their relations could be analyzed conveniently. Table 3.10 presents an example of uptake coding in the Introduction section in a thesis draft.

**Table 3.10** Tally Sheet for Coding Uptake in the Introduction Section

Source	Uptake of WSF								
	WSF1	Uptake 1	WSF2	Uptake 2	WSF3	Uptake3	WSF4	Uptake 4	...
S1D1	CoIgNe	Us	GrDcNe	Us	ReIsNe	Uu	GrIgNe	Us	
S1D2	GrIgNe	Us	GrIgNe	Us	GrIgNe	Us	OrIsNe	Un	
S1D3	GrIgNe	Us	CoIsNe	Us	GrIgNe	Us	ReIgNe	Us	
S2D1	GrDcNe	Us	GrIgNe	Us	CoIgNe	Us	ReIgNe	Us	
S2D2	ReIgNe	Uu	GrIgNe	Un	GrDcNe	Us	GrIgNe	Us	
S2D3	ReDcNe	Us	GrIgNe	Us	GrIgNe	Us			
...									

Most of the coding was conducted by the researcher. However, as mentioned in WSF coding (see 3.4.2.2), the same independent coder also helped the

researcher to decide the coding schemes for uptake and checked the degree of agreement.

### 3.4.1.3 Calculating Frequency of Uptake

After finishing uptake coding, the researcher calculated the frequency of different uptake, that is, successful uptake, unsuccessful uptake, no uptake and unverifiable uptake in different drafts and in different sections; then he identified the relationship between the foci, strategies and connotations of WSF and different types of uptake.

Needed to be mentioned here is that the uptake of the frontpage WSF was not coded and not calculated in this study, because frontpage WSF is mostly supervisors' main concerns, offering more general feedback on the writing or some individual chapters of a whole draft. It was unlikely to trace the students' exact uptake of the frontpage WSF. For example, "Pay attention to the verb tense consistency in the thesis" (S4D1, Fr, WSF2). With this WSF comment, the researcher was unable to read every sentence in the next draft and then decided the uptake of it as "Us", "Uu" or any other type of uptake. Therefore, the analysis of students' uptake in this study is only within the scope of marginal or in-text WSF. Admittedly, this is a limitation of the

present study.

#### **3.4.4 Analysis of Questionnaire Data**

The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part included one dichotomous question and three multiple choice questions, soliciting the students' personal information. Part two included sixteen Likert scale questions concerning the students' attitudes towards different WSF foci, strategies and connotations. The survey website can provide different statistic values at the researcher's request, including descriptive statistics such as means, standard deviations and inferential statistics.

#### **3.4.5 Analysis of Semi-Structured Interview**

Both the transcriptions of semi-structured interview with students and supervisors, as having been examined and translated in data management procedure (see 3.3.3), were duplicated into NVivo software for analysis. NVivo is a qualitative data analysis computer software package that has been designed by QSR International for qualitative researchers working with very rich text-based information, where deep levels of analysis on large volumes of data are required (Bazeley, 2007; Edhlund, 2008). NVivo helped the researcher organize the information in a professional manner which made locating the elements of information easy and manageable. The results will

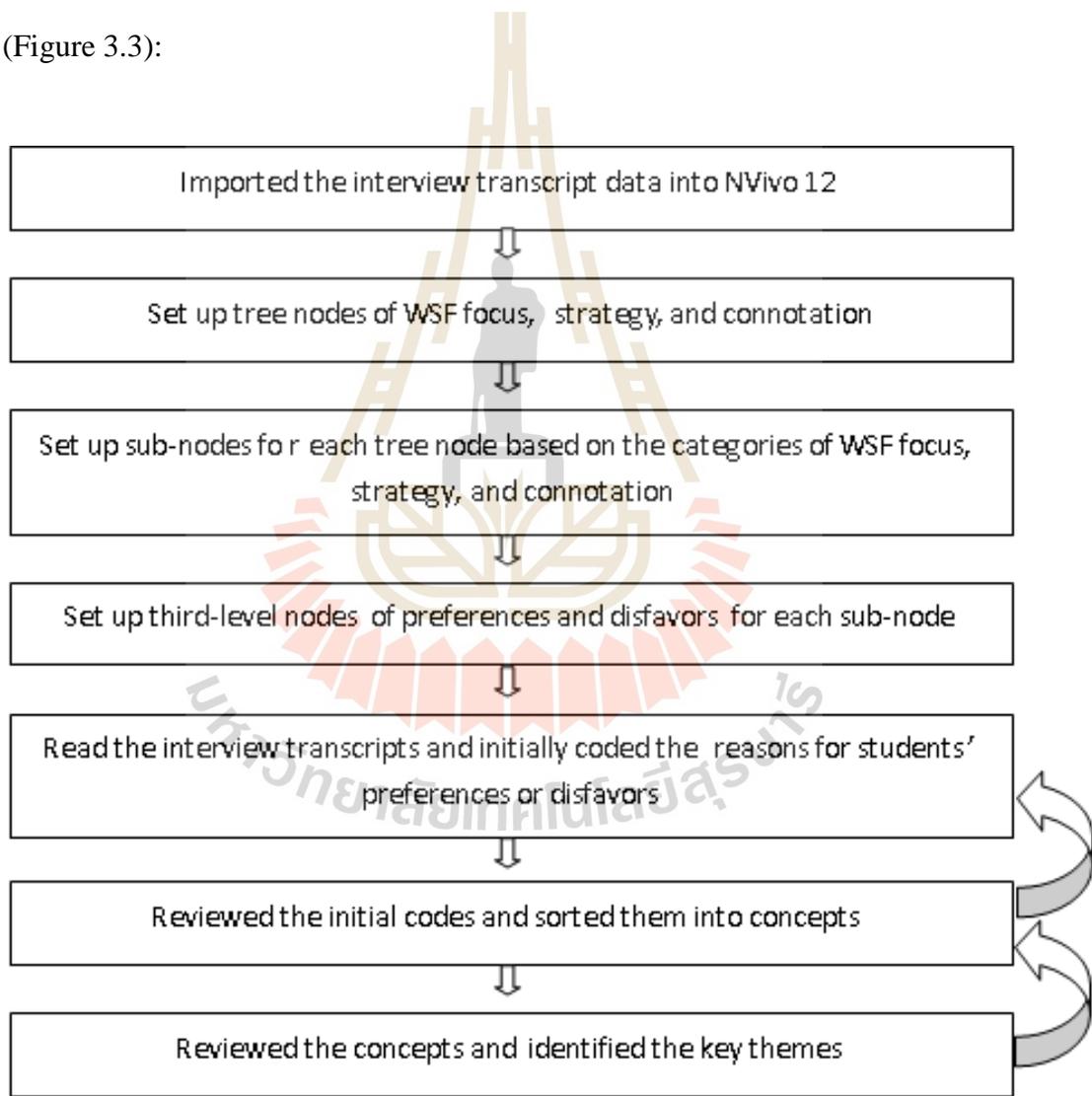
benefit a better understanding of the students' preferences to certain characteristics of WSF.

However, since one aim of this study is to understand the students' perceptions of WSF, the interview conversations with the students were carefully reported in the Results and the Discussion chapters. The study did not intend to examine the supervisors' perceptions of WSF, and the interviews with the supervisors were expected to obtain understanding of their WSF practices, so the analysis of the interview conversations was only used in the discussion part of this study.

Once confirmed that no errors in the interview transcripts existed, the coding of the interviews began. NVivo provides two approaches to coding. A common approach is to start with some general categories, then code the data in more detail (e.g., Coffey & Atkinson, 1996), while the other is to start with detailed analysis and work up to broader categories, which is most often used by those who employ grounded theory, phenomenology or discourse analysis (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013). In this present study, a combination of both approaches was used. Firstly, the researcher created tree nodes of WSF focus, strategy and connotation, sub-nodes for the three tree nodes and third-level nodes for the sub-nodes in which the coding of students'

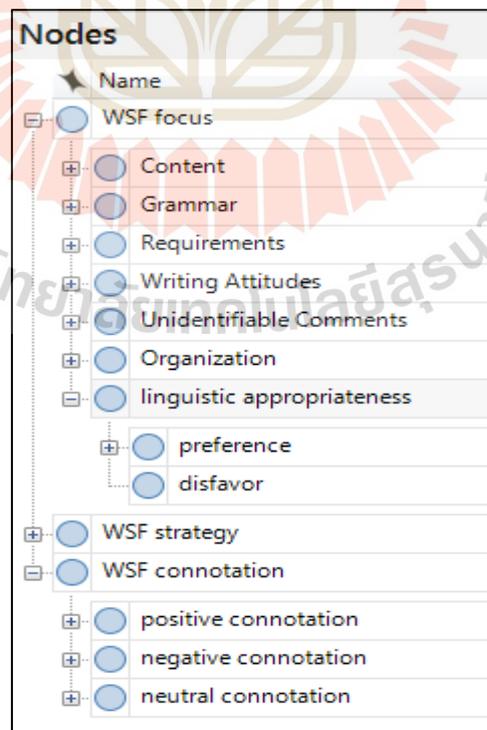
different perceptions can be placed. Secondly, the researcher directly performed detailed coding of the interview manuscript data, and then, sorted the initial codes into concepts and coded the concepts into the key themes consequently. The steps used to analyze the interview manuscript data using the NVivo software are as follows

(Figure 3.3):



**Figure 3.3** Process of Interview Data Coding Using NVivo

In the first step, the researcher imported the 9 students' interview transcripts into NVivo 12. Then, the researcher created three tree nodes of WSF focus, strategy and connotation. The creation of three tree nodes was based on one of the research purposes to understand students' perceptions of supervisors WSF in terms of focus, strategy, and connotation. Since each of these three WSF categories includes a few sub-categories, corresponding sub-nodes were set up under each tree node. In order to understand the reasons for the students' perceptions of different WSF, two third-level nodes of preferences and disavors were created. These nodes set up at this stage are shown in Figure 3.4:



**Figure 3.4** Hierarchical Structure of Interview Transcript Coding

In the second step, the researcher read every student's interview transcript, identified the student's perceptions of any WSF aspect, and provided initial nodes (free nodes) to the reason(s) for their perception. The approach to coding the interview transcripts at this step is to "allow the codes to emerge during the data analysis" (Creswell, 2009, p. 187). That is, there will not be predetermined codes, but the researcher allowed the themes to emerge organically from the data. The researcher read the manuscripts, and then created nodes as needed. For example, when asking about their perceptions of WSF focus, S22 stated she liked supervisors' WSF on linguistic appropriateness because "during the thesis writing, I usually think or write in Chinese, then translate it into English. So, the language (in my thesis) could be unidiomatic or unnatural". The reasons that S22 liked supervisors' WSF on Linguistic Appropriateness is because the WSF could help her to improve the language in her thesis. Then, the researcher coded this reason as "support for language improvement", and placed this initial code under the third level node "preferences" in the sub-node of "linguistic appropriateness" which belongs to the tree node "WSF focus". A total of 98 initial nodes were created for all the interview transcripts.

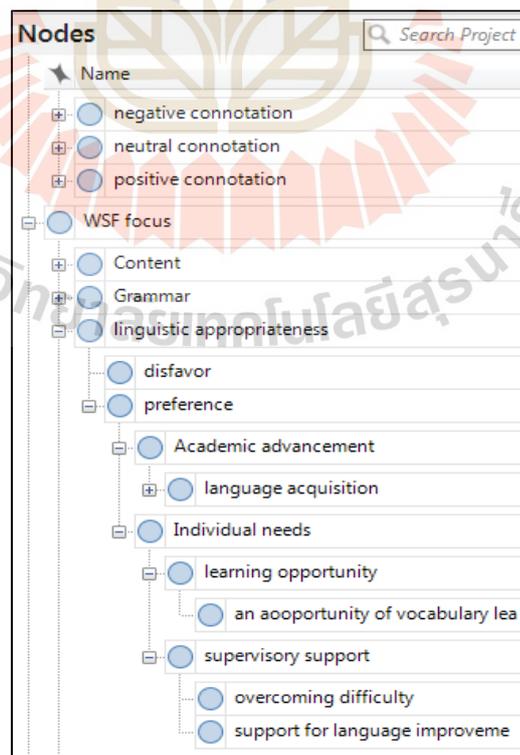
After completing the initial coding of all the interview manuscripts, these

initial codes were carefully reviewed, and then were grouped into concepts according to certain relations between them. The criterion for grouping different codes into a concept in this study is that the codes belong to a particular domain or share the features of the same domain. For example, the initial codes of “support for language improvement”, “overcoming difficulty”, “support for long writing”, “overcoming writing fear”, and “support for language learning” were grouped into the concept “supervisory support”, because all these initial codes share the same feature that supervisors’ WSF can support students, although in different ways. A total of 28 concepts were set up for all the initial nodes.

Lastly, the concepts were reviewed and key themes were identified to cover all the concepts. A key theme is a pattern in the data that are underpinned by a central concept that organizes the analytic observations. It can sit alone and does not need further explanation and the reader can know something about the data (Vaismoradi, Jones, Turunen, & Snelgrove, 2016). The criterion for generating a theme from different concepts in this study is that all the concepts are related to and share some features of a certain area of supervisors’ WSF. For example, the concepts of “feedback clarity”, “feedback quantity”, “learning opportunity”, “practice opportunity”,

“workload”, “supervisory support”, “creativity” and “independence” were coded as the key theme “individual needs” because all these concepts reflected students’ needs related to their supervisors’ WSF. Totally, four key themes were discovered, including “affective experiences”, “cultural influences”, “academic advancement” and “individual needs”.

In this way, the reasons for students’ perceptions of different WSF aspects can be seen in NVivo. Take the sub-category “Linguistic Appropriateness” of WSF focus for example, the reasons for students’ preferences for it belongs to two key themes: “academic advancement” and “individual needs”.



**Figure 3.5** Hierarchical Structure of Detailed Coding of Interview Transcript

When the coding was completed, the researcher exported the information of all the nodes into Excel file, and calculated the numbers and percentages of references for different nodes to gain a better understanding. The results of the interview transcript analysis are presented in Chapter 4.

### **3.4.2 Reliability of Data Analysis**

In this study, the WSF data, the uptake data and the questionnaire data were mostly coded by the researcher. In order to ensure the reliability and validity of data analysis, simple agreement percentage, peer examination and triangulation were implemented in this study.

At first, simple agreement percentage was used, which has been frequently used in studies on written feedback (e.g., Braid, 2002; Iwashita, 2003; Mackey, et al., 2003). The researcher and an independent coder coded twenty percent of the WSF and students' uptake (6 sets of BA thesis drafts from the total 32). The independent coder was an experienced teacher of English with a master's degree in applied linguistics. She was also a colleague of the researcher and had cooperated with the researcher in some coding tasks before the present study. Before the coding, the researcher and the independent coder met for a careful discussion of the coding schemes for WSF (see

3.4.2.1) and for uptake (see 3.4.3.1) to ensure that all of coding schemes were in agreement regarding terms and definitions before the coding began. Then, they separately read and coded all the WSF comments and the students' uptake on the 6 sets of BA thesis drafts. After completing coding, the agreement percentage (or degree of agreement) of their coding was examined. If the agreement percentage of the coding was below 80%, that is, it is "not acceptable in most cases" (Neuendorf, 2002), then the researcher and the independent coder would discuss the differences, analyze the reasons for the differences and recode another set of BA thesis to check the agreement percentage again. If the agreement percentage was still not acceptable, then the researcher had to adjust the coding schemes.

To check the degree of agreement is to check the number of similarities between the researcher and the second coder regarding the application of the codes. Holsti's (1969) formula, one widely used measure of the intercoder reliability, was used in this study:

$$PAO = 2A / (nA + nB)$$

where PAO stands for "proportion agreement observed," A is the number of agreements between two coders, and nA and nB are the number of units coded by

coders A and B, respectively. The results of the inter-rater agreement reliability are presented in Table 3.11.

**Table 3.11** Inter-Coder Reliability of the Coding

	<u>WSF focus</u>			<u>WSF strategy</u>			<u>WSF connotation</u>			<u>Students' uptake</u>		
	A	nA	nB									
S1	111	127	119	114	127	119	117	127	119	104	116	110
S2	92	102	97	94	102	97	94	102	97	85	95	90
S3	215	241	232	224	241	232	229	241	232	212	231	222
S4	71	81	78	73	81	78	75	81	78	67	75	72
S5	117	135	130	125	135	130	127	135	130	102	122	107
S6	140	162	154	148	162	154	151	162	154	133	150	142
Total	746	848	810	778	848	810	793	848	810	703	789	743
<b>A</b>	<b><math>2*746/(848+810)=89.9\%</math></b>			<b><math>2*778/(848+810)=93.8\%</math></b>			<b><math>2*793/(848+810)=95.7\%</math></b>			<b><math>2*703/(789+743)=91.8\%</math></b>		
	<b>9%</b>			<b>8%</b>			<b>7%</b>			<b>1.8%</b>		

Note. *nA* is the number coded by the researcher, and *nB* is the number coded by the independent coder.

Table 3.11 indicates that the total percentage of agreements (89.9%, 93.8%, 95.7% and 91.8%, respectively) between the researcher and the second rater exceeded 80%, which is satisfactory as it is above the minimum acceptable agreement percentage (i.e., 80%) as recommended in the literature (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Neuendorf, 2002; Mackey & Gass, 2005).

Secondly, peer examination was carried out in the process of WSF coding and students' uptake coding. In peer examinations, peers did not participate into the

research and were not present in the research setting (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995). The peers in this study were selected under a few criteria. Firstly, they did not participate in this research; secondly, they did not supervise the students in the academic year 2017-2018; thirdly, they hold a master's degree or above in applied linguistics or related fields. A full professor who had been a visiting scholar to the U. S. in this academic year was selected and he agreed to act as the peer. His comments on the coding of the WSF foci, strategies, connotations, and students' uptake were much positive and claimed the coding schemes were quite clear.

For the analysis of the EM-students' perceptions to different WSF foci, strategies and connotations, both quantitative and qualitative methods were used. Cohen et al. (2000) clarify triangulation as the use of two or more methods of data collection in the study of some aspect of human behavior. The close-ended questions in the questionnaire and the open-ended questions in the semi-structured interview, serving the triangulation of research methods in the questionnaire in this study, could improve validity (i.e., the EM-students' perceptions) of the study.

### **3.5 Pilot Study**

A pilot study is “a small-scale test of the methods and procedures to be used on a large scale...” (Last, 2001, p. 135), and it serves as a preliminary investigation to provide contextual information about the main study and to make sure that the main study is viable (Pauline, 2014). The primary purpose of conducting a pilot study is to examine the feasibility of an approach that is intended to ultimately be used in a large-scale study (Leon, Davis, & Kraemer, 2011).

With regard to this research, a pilot study was carried out for the purpose of testing and improving the coding schemes for WSF and for uptake, the questionnaire and the interview questions, and familiarizing the researcher with the instruments and the procedures of the present study.

#### **3.5.1 Procedures**

The pilot study of this present research took place from December 2017 to February 2018. Six sets of thesis drafts written by six students under six different supervisors from the academic year 2016-2017 were selected. The six theses addressed the topics in four different areas, which are English literature, English teaching, English linguistics, and English and Chinese culture. The average length of the six thesis drafts

(the final drafts) was about 7000 words. An independent coder was invited to help the researcher to analyze the first three sets of the pilot data (that is, thesis drafts of S1, S2, S3) to ensure the coding reliability. the agreement percentages of WSF foci, strategies, connotations and students' uptake were 85.8%, 93.3%, 94.6% and 88.9%, respectively, that is, all of them were acceptable (above 80%). Then, the researcher continued to finish analyzing the other three sets of BA thesis drafts.

Meanwhile, the researcher interviewed four student authors and three supervisors individually according to their willingness. The interview conversations were audio recorded. From January 31st to February 6th of 2018, the researcher distributed the online questionnaire to forty students in an intact third-year class, whom the researcher taught a writing course, and seventeen responded and completed the questionnaire.

### **3.5.2 Implications for the Main Study**

The results of the pilot study ascertained that the instruments were viable and the procedure was feasible. It also provided many implications for the main study in a few perspectives, including for the selection of the participants, for the coding schemes, for the questionnaire design, and for the interview questions.

### **3.5.1.1 Implication for the Participant Selection**

As for the supervisors, the researcher found that those with higher professional ranks gave much fewer WSF comments than those with lower ones, and the supervisor with a doctorate gave fewer WSF comments on grammar than those without a master's degree. Thus, it was decided that the main study would include supervisors with a wide range of professional ranks and degrees.

### **3.5.1.2 Implication for the Coding Schemes**

One of the main purposes of the pilot study was to test whether the coding schemes were effective. In general, the coding schemes were effective in coding WSF foci, strategies, connotations and students' uptake. However, in coding the thesis draft of S1, the two raters found that they could not reach an agreement on some underlinings or circlings provided by a supervisor. To solve this disagreement, the researcher consulted the supervisor who gave the WSF and learnt that some underlinings or circlings were the notes made for her own reading, or were notes made during her conferencing with the student. Therefore, the two coders agreed to add a new type of WSF focus to the coding scheme-“Unidentifiable Comments”, or “UC”, to indicate those notes unrelated to the WSF but to oral one or symbols made by supervisor for his/her own

use (e.g., indicating the place of previous reading), or anything unidentifiable. So, the final coding schemes for WSF foci were shown Table 3.12.

**Table 3.12** Modified Coding Schemes for WSF Foci

Category of WSF Foci	Tagging Code	Descriptions
Content	Co	Effectiveness, accuracy, completeness or appropriateness of ideas or argumentation
Requirements	Re	academic conventions (including referencing, mechanics, passive voice and objective tone) university requirements
Organizations	Or	Order of information/ ideas; Links between information/ ideas; Paragraph/chapter/thesis development; Arrangement of sentence structures
Grammar	Gr	Spelling; Tense; Voice; Word class; Word addition and deletion; Article; Punctuation; Chinese English
Linguistic Appropriateness	LC	Appropriateness: using suitable, right and proper words; Accuracy: precision or exactness of word choice, especially resulting from careful effort; Formality: using formal words and avoid colloquial expressions
Writing Attitude	WA	Carefulness, seriousness in writing; Academic behavior (plagiarism); Academic ethics
Unidentifiable Comments	UC	Notes unrelated to written feedback (e.g., for oral conferencing or for supervisor's own use); unidentifiable symbols or phrases

Therefore, a coding scheme of seven WSF foci was used in the main study, that is, Content (Co), Grammar (Gr), Requirements (Re), Organization (Or), Linguistic Appropriateness (LC), Writing Attitudes (WA) and Unidentifiable Comments (UC).

### 3.5.1.3 Implication for the Questionnaire Design

In the second part of the questionnaire, students were required to tell their perceptions of the WSF comments with different foci, strategies and connotations. From the pilot test, the students answered well, which showed that there were no problems in the wording of items and instructions. There were no technical problems identified in the survey process. But in Part One, the personal information items should change into selection bars since some students did not like typing in doing an online survey.

However, the students revealed that asking them to give their reasons for the answers when doing multiple choice questions in Part Two would be a repeated job since they were invited to participate in a semi-structured interview concerning their preferences and reasons for some WSF foci, strategies and connotations. Therefore, the researcher deleted the “blank-filling” part beside 5-point

Likert scale items in the questionnaire.

#### **3.5.2.4 Implication for the Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

For the semi-structured interview questions, students answered them well with their thesis writing experiences and did not have any problems in understanding the questions. However, supervisors were not sure of the meaning of the term “feedback content or focus” in the second question and considered it as what they did or what they asked students to do in their WSF (e.g., “I usually underline the problems”) rather than what kinds of problems their WSF addressed. Therefore, the researcher refined the question as “which aspects do you consider most important for supervisors to look at?”.

### **3.6 Summary**

The purpose of this study was to examine the supervisors’ WSF characteristics in terms of foci, strategies and connotations, their relationships with students’ uptake on 32 archived sets of bachelor’s thesis drafts, and students’ perceptions of their supervisors’ WSF practices. Three research questions were devised to guide the study. After receiving the committee’s approval, the researcher collected and analyzed the data. The results are presented in the following chapter.

# **CHAPTER 4**

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this study was to investigate the characteristics of written supervisory feedback (WSF) on bachelors' thesis writing, the feedback effects brought to students' uptake and the students' perceptions of supervisors' WSF. In preparation for achieving the purposes, Chapter One established the background of the study, Chapter Two surveyed the pertinent literature, and Chapter 3 explained the specific research methodology. This chapter is devoted to the research findings and discussion regarding supervisors' WSF practices in different draft stages (Section 4.2), in different draft sections (Section 4.3), students' uptake of their supervisors' WSF (Section 4.4) and the students' perceptions of supervisors' WSF (Section 4.5).

### **4.1 Overview of the Findings**

#### **4.1.1 Overview of WSF analysis**

In this study, a total of 32 sets of BA thesis drafts at a Chinese university were analyzed to understand the supervisors' WSF practices and students' uptake. Table 4.1

presents the WSF instances identified in different draft stages and Table 4.2 presents the WSF instances identified in different sections.

**Table 4.1** WSF instances in Different Draft Stages

Stage	Frontpage WSF instances (FF)	Mean	In-text WSF instances (IF)	Mean
D1	155	4.84	1191	37.22
D2	131	4.09	1115	34.84
D3	92	2.88	536	16.75
Total	378	3.94	2842	29.60

Note. *D1=Draft 1; D2=Draft 2; D3=draft3.*

*Since there were 32 thesis drafts in each stage, the Mean for each draft=FF (or IF)÷32.*

**Table 4.2** WSF instances in Different Sections

Section	WSF instances	Mean
FT	378	3.94
TL	26	0.27
CT	180	1.87
AB	158	1.65
IN	386	4.02
LR	612	6.38
MT	619	6.45
RD	558	5.81
CO	191	1.99
BB	79	0.82
AA	33	0.34
Total	3220	$3220 \div 96 \div 11 = 3.14$

Note. *FT=the Frontpage; TL=the Title; CT=the Content Table; AB=the Abstract; In=the Introduction; LR=the Literature Review; MT=the Methodology; RD= the Results/Discussion; Co=the Conclusion; BB=the Bibliography; AA=the Appendices and Acknowledgement.*

*Since there were 96 thesis drafts on the whole, the Mean for each section = WSF instances ÷ 96. And there were 11 sections for each draft, so the Mean for each section per draft = WSF instances ÷ 96 ÷ 11.*

As can be seen from Table 4.1, the supervisors made a total of 378 frontpage WSF instances and 2842 in-text WSF instances across the three draft stages, averaging 3.94 instances per draft on the frontpage and 29.60 instances per draft in the text. In addition, the supervisors provided less WSF instances from Draft 1 to Draft 3 both on the frontpage in the text.

From Table 4.2, it can be seen that the supervisors made 3.14 WSF instances for each section per draft. Of the feedback instances, the Methodology section (MT) took the largest share with a mean of 6.45, and the Title section (TL) took the least portion with a mean of 0.27 instances.

#### **4.1.2 Overview of the Uptake Analysis**

Consequently, the students' uptake to the supervisors' WSF instances were identified. Table 4.3 and Table 4.4 presents the students' uptake in different draft stages and in different draft sections, respectively.

**Table 4.3** Uptake in Different Draft Stages

Stage	Uptake of WSF				Subtotal
	Us	Uu	U0	Ux	
D 1	896(75.2%)	109(9.2%)	121(10.2%)	65(5.4%)	1191
D 2	906(81.3%)	72(6.5%)	65(5.7%)	72(6.5%)	1115
D 3	456(85.1%)	24(4.5%)	34(6.3%)	22(4.1%)	536
Total	2258(79.5%)	205(7.2%)	220(7.7%)	159(5.6%)	2842

Note. *Us=Successful uptake; Uu=unsuccessful uptake; U0= no uptake; Ux=unverifiable uptake.*

*The percentage for each type of uptake = the number of the uptake ÷ the subtotal.*

**Table 4.4** Uptake in Different Sections

Section	Uptake of WSF				Subtotal
	Us	Uu	U0	Ux	
TL	20(76.9%)	4(15.4%)	2(7.7%)	0	26
CT	166(91.2%)	6(3.3%)	7(3.9%)	1(0.6%)	180
AB	143(90.5%)	6(3.8%)	5(3.2%)	4(2.5%)	158
IN	303(78.5%)	26(6.7%)	32(8.3%)	25(6.5%)	386
LR	445(73.2%)	59(9.6%)	64(10.4%)	44(6.8%)	612
MT	502(81.1%)	25(4%)	51(8%)	41(7%)	619
RD	458(82.1%)	48(8.6%)	32(5.7%)	20(3.6%)	558
CO	142(74.3%)	23(12.2%)	13(6.7%)	13(6.7%)	191
BB	58(73.4%)	7(8.9%)	7(8.9%)	7(8.9%)	79
AA	21(63.6%)	1(3%)	7(21.2%)	4(12.2%)	33
Total	2258(79.5%)	205(7.2%)	220(7.7%)	159(5.6%)	2842

Note. *TL=the Title; CT=the Content Table; AB=the Abstract; In=the Introduction; LR=the Literature Review; MT=the Methodology; RD= the Results/Discussion; Co=the Conclusion; BB=the Bibliography; AA=the Appendices and Acknowledgement.*

*The percentage for each type of uptake = the number of the uptake ÷ the subtotal.*

As revealed in Table 4.3, the overall percentage of successful uptake (Us) across the three draft stages was 79.5%, while that of unsuccessful uptake (Uu) was

7.2%. There was also some no uptake (U0) or unverifiable uptake (Ux) of the supervisors' WSF practices, and the overall percentages was 7.7% and 5.6%, respectively.

It can also be seen that the proportion of the different types of uptake varied in different draft stages. On Draft 1, the percentage of successful uptake was 75.2%, and there was a little unsuccessful uptake (9.2%) and no uptake (10.2%). However, the percentage of successful uptake increased gradually over the three draft stages (75.2%, 81.3%, and 85.1%, respectively). On the contrary, the percentages of both unsuccessful uptake (9.2%, 6.5%, and 4.5%, respectively) and no uptake (10.2%, 5.7%, and 4.5%, respectively) decreased gradually over the three draft stages. The percentage of unverifiable uptake increased from 5.4% on Draft 1 to 6.5% on Draft 2, but decreased to 4.1% on Draft 3. Therefore, a general conclusion can be drawn from Table 4.3 that the successful uptake increased and other types of uptake decreased over the three draft stages.

Table 4.4 displays the distribution of the four types of uptake in different sections. If the table is interpreted from the perspective of percentage, it reveals that the percentages of successful uptake (Us) in the sections of Content Table (CT) and

Abstract (AB) are relatively high (91.2% and 90.5%, respectively) while those in the sections of Acknowledgment and Appendix (AA), Bibliography (BB), Literature Review (LR) and Conclusion (CO) are relatively low (63.6%, 74.3%, 73.2%, and 74.3%, respectively). The percentage of unsuccessful uptake (Uu) in the section of Title (TL) was relatively high (15.4%), but there was not any great variation in other sections. On the contrary, the percentage of no uptake (U0) in the section of Acknowledgment and Appendix (AA) reached relatively high (21.2%). As for the unverifiable uptake (Ux), it appeared in all sections except the Title (TL), and its percentage varied from 0.6% to 12.2% in different sections.

#### **4.1.3 Overview of the Finding from Questionnaire and Interview**

To understand the students' perceptions, a questionnaire survey and a semi-structured interview were carried out. A total of 28 students joined in the survey and 9 students participated the interview. In addition, 9 supervisors were interviewed to gain better understanding of their WSF practices.

Based on Ferris's (1995), Covill's (1996) and Hyland's (2015) studies, a five-point (Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Undecided=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5) Likert scale questionnaire (Appendix A) was designed and administered to

collect the students' responses regarding the supervisors' written supervisory feedback (WSF) practices. The 32 students whose bachelor's thesis drafts were analyzed were invited to take part in the questionnaire, and a total of 28 students agreed to participate. The participants were asked to state their perceptions of the extent that they strongly disagree – to strongly agree. The questionnaire, besides collecting the background information of the participants, are mainly concerned the following questions:

- (1) What kinds of supervisors' WSF foci were the most preferable from the students' view?
- (2) What kinds of supervisors' WSF strategies were the most preferable from the students' view?
- (3) What kinds of supervisors' WSF connotations were the most preferable from the students' view?

Each respondent was asked to answer a few background questions concerning gender, English proficiency, bachelor's thesis topics and the final results of bachelor's thesis. Table 4.5 displays the descriptive statistics of the background information of the participants.

**Table 4.5** Participants' Background Information in the Main Study

		Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	0	0%
	Female	28	100%
English proficiency	Passed TEM-8	12	43%
	Passed TEM-4	13	46%
	Passed none of TEMs	1	4%
	Not like to tell	2	7%
BA thesis topic	English Teaching	21	75%
	English Literature	2	7%
	English and Chinese Translation	3	11%
	English Linguistics	2	7%
	English Culture	0	/
	Others	0	/
Final results of the participants' BA theses	Excellent (>90)	1	3.5%
	Good (80-89)	19	68%
	Average (70-79)	7	25%
	Passed (60-69)	1	3.5%
	Failed (<60)	0	/

As shown in Table 4.5, a total of 28 students participated in this survey. However, all the participants were female students as the EM-students were mainly females in the present study.

The participants' English proficiency level, as determined by TEM administered by the Ministry of Education of China, is presented in Table 4.5. Most of the participants reached the level of TEM-4 or above (89%), and few passed neither of the tests or would not like to tell (11%).

Their bachelor's thesis topics covered a wide range of areas including English Teaching, English Literature, English and Chinese Translation, and English Linguistics, but were mainly on English Teaching (75%). This is not surprising because they were supposed to become English teachers after their graduation.

The final results for the bachelor's thesis were calculated by five grades. As shown in Table 4.5, most of the participants received "Good" (68%), seven of them got "Average" (25%), and one participant got the result of "Excellent" (4%). None of them failed.

In addition, the 32 students were invited for a further semi-structured interview to deeply understand their perceptions of the supervisors' WSF practices, and 9 students agreed to participate the interview. All the 9 participants, all of them were females (100%), and 8 of them passed TEM-4 or TEM-8 (89%). Their thesis topics included English Teaching (56%), English and Chinese Translation (11%), and English Literature (22%), and English Linguistics (11%). One of them got "Excellent" in the final results (11%), 7 of them got "Good" (78%), and 1 student got "Average" (11%).

To gain a further information about the students' perceptions of WSF, an interview was carried out with 9 students. The questions are adapted from Ferris, Liu,

Sinha and Senna's (2013) and Cookson's (2015) studies, and created by the researcher according to the purpose of the research.

When the interview conversation was transcribed, translated, and confirmed that there was no error, the transcripts were imported into NVivo 12 (See Section 3.4.5). The researcher read the transcripts, found out the students' preferences or disfavours and their reasons, and looked for key words and then tagged initial nodes (free nodes) to the reasons. Through constant comparison, the researcher provided 98 initial nodes for all the reasons for students' perceptions. Examples of the initial nodes are shown in Table 4.6.

**Table 4.6** Examples of Initial Nodes in the Interview Transcript Analysis

Initial nodes	Original text (key phrases or sentences)
Recognizing errors	We cannot identify what error it is if it is not pointed out (S16); to understand the error deeply and better (S18); We make mistake mostly because of unawareness (S22); to better understand errors (S23); to know/learn to revise (S27)
Time saving	to save supervisors time (S4); to save students' time (S18); helps us to save time, because it can avoid the situation in which we have to rewrite the theses (S4); [to save our time for] looking them up a dictionary (S27)
Overcoming difficulty	to overcome difficulty beyond ability (S22); overcome vocabulary difficulty beyond our ability (S32);

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**Table 4.6** Examples of Initial Nodes in the Interview Transcript Analysis (Cont.)

Initial nodes	Original text (key phrases or sentences)
independent thinking	let us think (S19); to make the students dependent (S26)
Lacking own ideas	lack our own ideas (S19)
Self-revision	help in self-correction (S23); because we are senior undergraduates, we can find out methods to solve the problems and correct errors (S26)
Communication promotion	to increase communication with supervisors (S16); let you contact the supervisor (S19); to help face-to-face conference (S23)
Support for language improvement	It is even difficult for those undergraduates who have been stayed abroad to use synonyms correctly (S4); I usually think or write in Chinese, then translate it into English (S22)
...	...

Note. *S* stands for student participant.

After the initial nodes were created, the researcher managed to find out the similarity or connections among them. The aim of finding the similarity or connections is to connect the concepts of accidents with similar logical connections and extract the categories. By exploring the relationship among the initial nodes, the researcher extracted 25 concepts. An example of the concepts for the initial nodes is illustrated in Table 4.7.

**Table 4.7** Examples of Concepts in the Interview Transcript Analysis

Concepts	Initial nodes
Knowledge acquisition	Recognizing errors; Telling the writing directions; Recognizing errors and revision; Knowing the emphasis; Understanding basics ...
Positive emotion	Feeling happy; Feeling confirmed; Feeling safe ...
Academic training	Improving summary ability; Information retrieval instruction; Structure instruction; Informing future writing ...
Feedback clarity	Not knowing error types; Better understanding intensions; Being confused ...
Independence	Independent thinking; Independent writing; Self-revision; Autonomous learning ...
...	...

In order to discover the categories that influence students' perceptions of supervisors' WSF, it is needed to sort the concepts into key themes and analyze their relations. The researcher reviewed all the 25 concepts, and grouped them into four key themes. The results of the key themes are presented in Table 4.8.

**Table 4.8** Key Themes Discovered in the Interview Transcript Analysis

Key themes	Concepts included	References	Subtotal (%)
Affective experience	Negative emotion	8	27 (19.3%)
	Positive emotion	5	
	Self esteem	3	
	Social interaction needs	2	
	Writing attitude	7	
	Writing motivation	2	
Social influence	Supervisory relations	7	10 (7.1%)
	Traditional teaching	3	
Academic advancement	Academic training	8	63 (45.0%)
	Expediting writing	3	
	Future career	3	
	Knowledge acquisition	27	
	Language learning	5	
	Student responsibility	2	
	Supervisor responsibility	1	
	Thesis assessment	6	
	Thesis quality	8	
Individual needs	Creativity	4	40 (28.6%)
	Feedback clarity	4	
	Feedback quantity	2	
	Independence	9	
	Learning opportunity	3	
	Practicality	5	
	Practice opportunity	7	
	Supervisory support	6	
Total		140	

It can be seen from Table 4.8 that, among the reasons for their perceptions, students mentioned “academic advancement” the most, accounting for 45.0% (63 references) of all the explanations and “individual needs” was the second most of students’ explanations, accounting for 28.6% (40 references). “Affective experience” was an important category that influences students’ perceptions of supervisors’ WSF, taking 19.3% of their explanations (27 references), and the “social influence” (10 references) received the least explanations, only takes about 7.1%. The complete structure of key themes, concepts, initial nodes and original texts are presented in Appendix K.

The detailed findings of the WSF characteristics, the relationship between the students’ uptake and the supervisors’ WSF, and the students’ perceptions and their discussion will be presented in the following sections.

## **4.2 Practices of WSF in Different Draft Stages**

In order to examine the supervisors’ WSF practices in the multi-drafts, this study divided the bachelor’s thesis writing into four draft stages, as the English major students (EM-students) were required to submit their thesis drafts no less than three

times to their supervisors before the oral defense (See 1.1.4). The four draft stages are the first draft stage (Draft 1), the second draft stage (Draft 2), the third draft stage (Draft 3), and the fourth draft stage (Draft 4). Since the fourth drafts were what the students submitted to the committee for their oral defense, there were no WSF on it. Therefore, the analysis of WSF practices was only carried out on Draft 1, Draft 2 and Draft 3. Since the frontpage WSF practices are general feedback instances to the whole thesis and it is difficult to know the uptake of them, this thesis separated the frontpage WSF from in-text WSF during the analysis.

#### **4.2.1 WSF Focus in Different Draft Stages**

##### **4.2.1.1 Results**

The numbers and frequencies of occurrences for each focus category in different draft stages were presented in Table 4.9 and Table 4.10. Table 4.9 presents the supervisors' WSF focus distributions on the frontpage while Table 4.10 presents the supervisors' WSF focus distributions in the text through all the three draft stages. As revealed in Section 3.5.2.2, the WSF foci in this study were divided into seven categories: Content (Co), Grammar (Gr), Requirements (Re), Organizations (Or), Linguistic Appropriateness (LC), Writing Attitudes (WA) and Unidentifiable Comments (UC).

**Table 4.9** Supervisors' WSF Focus on the Frontpage in Different Draft Stages

Stage	WSF Focus							Sub-total
	Co	Gr	Re	Or	LC	WA	UC	
D1	85(54.8%)	22(14.2%)	24(15.4%)	20(12.9%)	3(1.9%)	1(0.6%)	0	155
D2	54 (41.2%)	24(18.3%)	30(22.9%)	18(13.7%)	2(1.5%)	3(2.2%)	0	131
D3	25(27.2%)	22(23.9%)	35(37.8%)	6(0.7%)	0	4(4.4%)	0	92
Total	164(43.3%)	68(18%)	89(23.5%)	44(11.6%)	5(1.3%)	8(2.1%)	0	378

Note. *D1=Draft 1; D2=Draft 2; D3=draft3.*

*The percentage of each focus= the number of its occurrence ÷ the number of subtotals.*

From Table 4.9, we can see that the supervisors provided much WSF on Content (43.3%), Requirements (23.5%), Grammar (18%) and Organization (11.6%), but little on Linguistic Appropriateness (1.3%) or Writing Attitudes (2.1%). No Unidentifiable Comment was found in the WSF on the frontpage. A closer look may also reveal that the supervisors provided gradually less WSF on Content (54.8%, 41.2% and 27.2%, respectively), on Organization (12.9%, 13.7%, 0.7%, respectively), and on Linguistic Appropriateness (1.9%, 1.5%, 0%, respectively) at the later stages than at the first stage. On the contrary, they provided much more WSF on Grammar (14.2%, 18.3%, 23.9%), on Requirements (15.4%, 22.9%, and 37.8%, respectively), and Writing Attitudes (0.6%, 2.2%, and 4.4%, respectively) at the later stages than at the initial stage.

**Table 4.10** Supervisors' WSF Focus in the Text in Different Draft Stages

Stage	WSF Focus							Subtotal
	Co	Gr	Re	Or	LC	WA	UC	
D 1	264(22.2%)	421(35.3%)	291(24.4%)	83(7%)	126(10.6%)	0	6(0.5%)	1191
D 2	213(19.1%)	524(47%)	250(22.4%)	33(3%)	84(7.5%)	4(0.4%)	7(0.6%)	1115
D 3	61(11.4%)	264(49.3%)	124(23.1%)	15(2.8%)	68(12.7%)	0	4(0.7%)	536
Total	538 (18.9%)	1209 (42.5%)	665 (23.4%)	131 (4.6%)	278 (9.8%)	4 (0.1%)	17 (0.6%)	2842

Note. *The percentage of each focus = the number of its occurrence ÷ the number of subtotals.*

From Table 4.10, it may be noted that the supervisors focused on Grammar (42.5%), Requirements (23.4%), Content (18.9%), Linguistic Appropriateness (9.8%) and Organizations (4.6%) in the order of frequencies in general during the three draft stages. There were very few WSF instances of Writing Attitudes (0.1%) or Unidentifiable Comments (0.6%). It turns out that Grammar, Requirements, and Content were the main focused aspects of the supervisors' attention, receiving over 85% of all the WSF instances. Among the three categories, Grammar received much more WSF instances (42.5%) than the other two categories. This might not be a surprising finding because the EM-students were EFL students, and there must contain a lot of errors in their first trial of academic writing over 5000 words. Especially in the first draft, the students were mainly concentrating on content, trying to complete the writing, so they usually made a lot of grammatical errors

because they were writing in English while they were thinking in Chinese. Facing many grammatical errors in the students' drafts, the supervisors could not ignore these errors but to give written feedback. An example (Extract 1) probably can tell why the supervisors would give such a large portion of WSF instances on Grammar.

In this extract, the student (S1) was trying to but incapable of briefly summarizing some domestic literature about “teacher talk” that she had read. Many sentences in this extract are unreadable. Therefore, her supervisor underlined these unreadable sentences and told the reasons for this underlining (“I cannot understand it”, “confusing”, “non-understandable”).

2.3.2 The Study of Teacher Talk in China

The author uses the English teacher's classroom language as a key word to search <sup>on</sup> in cnki.net, a total of 1050 related articles have been found, It can be seen from the publication of the article that relevant articles have been increasing with years, which means that primary school teacher talk in our country is becoming more and more important. From these articles, we can find that in the research on the problems encountered by primary English teachers in the use of classroom teaching language, we can find that many primary English teachers' classroom evaluation language is vague and lacks pertinence and affection. The motivational speech assessment of primary school English teachers is one-sided. For the different classroom performance of students, teachers are only general evaluation. For students' self-learning efforts, the inadequacies of the answers, the students' personal feelings are good or bad, teachers almost ignored, and thus one-sided evaluation led to students' English learning efficiency is greatly Lowering is not conducive to effectively promote the overall development of students.

*I can't understand it.*

*Quite confusing*

*Nonunderstandable*

*Nonunderstandable!*

*听不懂*

*听不懂*

*听不懂*

### 2.3.2 The Study of Teacher Talk in China

没了吗? 在好的基础上?

#### Have you revised it? On the basis of Draft 1?

The author uses the English teacher's classroom language as a key word to search in cnki.net, a total of 1050 related articles have been found. It can be seen from the publication of the article that relevant articles have been increasing with years, which means that primary school teacher talk in our country is becoming more and more important. From these articles, we can find that in the research on the problems encountered by primary English teachers in the use of classroom teaching language, we can find that many primary English teachers' classroom evaluation language is vague and lacks pertinence and affection. The motivational speech assessment of primary school English teachers is one-sided. For the different classroom performance of students, teachers are only general evaluation. For students' self-learning efforts, the inadequacies of the answers, the students' personal feelings are

#### **Extract 1** *A Supervisor's WSF focus on Grammar (SID1, p. 8; SID2, p. 8)*

*(All the corresponding English to the Chinese WSF in this and the following extracts was translated by the author.)*

Except for Grammar, Requirements received much attention (23.4%). This shows that the supervisors considered Requirements as a very important aspect of thesis writing. Since there is a "Bibliography" part in each thesis, this part would receive much WSF from the supervisors. Extract 2 is an example of such an occurrence.

B.A. Thesis On the Translation Strategies of Children's Literature

### Bibliography

[1] Crosman, Robert. Do Readers Make Meaning? In: S.R. Suleiman, and I. Crosman (eds.) *The Reader in the Text*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

[2] Oittinen, R. *Translating for children* [M]. New York/London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000. *Use italics*

[3] 李红叶. 叶圣陶与安徒生-兼论中国现代儿童文学对安徒生童话的接[J]. 中国文学研究, 2002, 2, 76 .

[4] 阮. 简明大不列颠百科全书·第 2 卷·安徒生[M].北京:中国大百科全书出版社, 1985:794.

[5] 王泉根. 中国现代儿童文学文论选[M].广西人民出版社, 1989:938 .

[6] 王泉根. 安徒生童话艺术[J].西南大学学报(人文社会科学版) 1981:1.68 .

[7] 王泉根. 周作人与儿童文学[M]. 杭州:浙江少年儿童出版社, 1985.78;100.

[8] 郑振铎. 安徒生的作品及关于安徒生的参考书籍[J].小说月报, 1925,16(8):10.

B.A. Thesis On the Translation Strategy of Children's Literature

### Bibliography

[1] Crosman, Robert. Do Readers Make Meaning? In: S.R.S, & I. Crosman (eds.). *The Reader in the Text*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980.

[2] Oittinen, R. *Translating for children* [M]. New York/London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000, 2: 76.

[3] 李红叶. 叶圣陶与安徒生-兼论中国现代儿童文学对安徒生童话的接受 [J]. 中国文学研究, 2002.

[4] 王泉根. 中国现代儿童文学文论选[M]. 广西人民出版社, 1989.

[5] 王泉根. 安徒生童话艺术[J]. 西南大学学报(人文社会科学版), 1981, 1: 68.

#### Extract 2 A Supervisor's WSF focus on Requirements (S23D3, p. 26; S23D4, p. 24)

In this extract, the student (S23) made some errors in the bibliography: wrong publication information, non-use of italics for books, and wrong use of punctuations between the journal volume number and page numbers. So, the

supervisor pointed out most of the errors in the reference list.

Besides in the Biography, the supervisors also point out the requirement errors in the thesis body. Thesis writing is not the same as general writing, so it should follow the accurate mechanics required by the university or academic community including citations, italics, capitalization, abbreviations, font, typesetting and so on. Extract 3 is another example of a supervisor's WSF on Requirements in her student's thesis text:

good judge of humor, whose appreciation lies in the quiet mind of his heart, has a taste of not being able to speak with outsiders. Unlike vulgar jokes, the more quiet the humor, the better. (Lin Yutang, 1924).  
 Place the period after the right bracket in citations.  
 句号括弧外打句号

**2.1.1 Definition of Humor**

Humor, described as funny or funny but meaningful. The word "humor" firstly appeared in Qu Yuan's *Jiu Zhang Huaisha* in China. However, the meaning of "humor" here is quiet. Now the word "humor" is a transliteration of the English word "Humor". It was first introduced into China in 1924 by Mr. Lin Yutang, a master of Chinese culture.  
 Any notes for this [Chinese literature]?  
 林语堂  
 Put a space after a period or comma. Similarly hereinafter.

Humor is divided into broad sense and narrow sense. In western language, it often includes vulgar jokes and so on. In a narrow sense, humor is distinguished from melancholy, sarcasm, and ridicule. But there are wry smiles, wild laugh, smile, giggles, and other different laughter. Some are sour, some are gentle, some are despicable, some are sympathetic, some are jargon, some are based on the whole outlook on life, and some have the sustenance of thought. The best humor, of course, is to show the brilliance of the soul and the richness of wisdom. Of all the styles, humor is the most emotional. (Lin Yutang, 1924).  
 句号逗号后加空格, 下同  
 下同

good judge of humor, whose appreciation lies in the quiet mind of his heart, has a taste of not being able to speak with outsiders.

Unlike vulgar jokes, the more quiet the humor, the better (Lin Yutang, 1924).

### 2.2.1 Definition of Humor

Humor, described as funny or funny but meaningful. The word "humor" firstly appeared in Qu Yuan's *Jiu Zhang · Huaisha* (Qu Yuan, Chu Guo) in China. However, the meaning of "humor" here is quiet. Now the word "humor" is a transliteration of the English word "Humor". It was first introduced into China in 1924 by Mr. Lin Yutang, a master of Chinese culture.

Humor is divided into broad sense and narrow sense. In western language, it often includes vulgar jokes and so on. In a narrow sense, humor is distinguished from melancholy, sarcasm, and ridicule. But there are wry smiles, wild laugh, smile, giggles, and other different laughter. Some are sour, some are gentle, some are despicable, some are sympathetic, some are jargon, some are based on the whole outlook on life, and some have the sustenance of thought. The best humor, of course, is to show the brilliance of the soul and the richness of wisdom. Of all the styles, humor is the most emotional (Lin Yutang, 1924).

Format!

### Extract 3 A Supervisor's WSF focus on Requirements (S14D1, p. 3; S14D2, p. 3)

In this extract, the supervisor gave WSF on the citation of Chinese references, on the spacing after punctuation marks, and on the place of punctuation marks.

The supervisors also gave much WSF on Content (18.9%). In this study, "Content (Co)" refers to the effectiveness, accuracy, completeness or appropriateness of ideas or argumentation. The below example shows that a supervisor's response to a student's inappropriate idea.

communicative competence.

This topic firstly helps you understand humor and verbal humor. Then explain the principle of cooperation and its guidelines and violate the cooperative principle. Finally, by analyzing the typical conversation of the tenth season of the *Big Bang Theory*, it is demonstrated that if the cooperative principle is violated, another conversational implicature will be generated, thus producing humor.

Introduce the contents of each chapter.

~~Chapter one~~  
Chapter one

communicative competence.

Chapter one is a brief introduction about the thesis. Chapter two explains the principle of cooperation and its guidelines and violate the cooperative principle, helps you understand humor and verbal humor. Chapter three, by analyzing the typical conversation of the tenth season of the *Big Bang Theory*, it is demonstrated that if the cooperative principle is violated, another conversational implicature will be generated, thus producing humor.

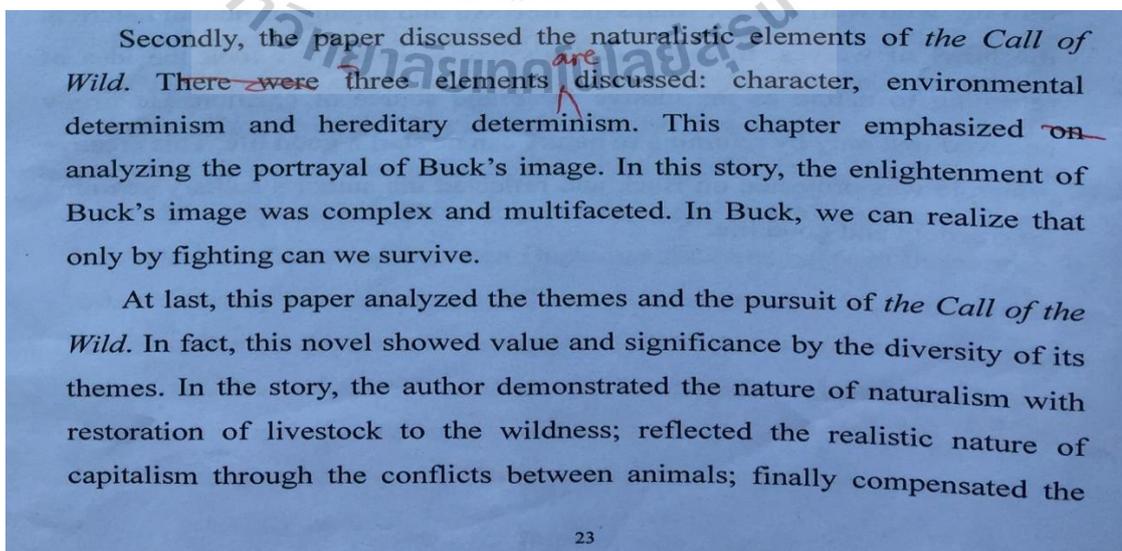
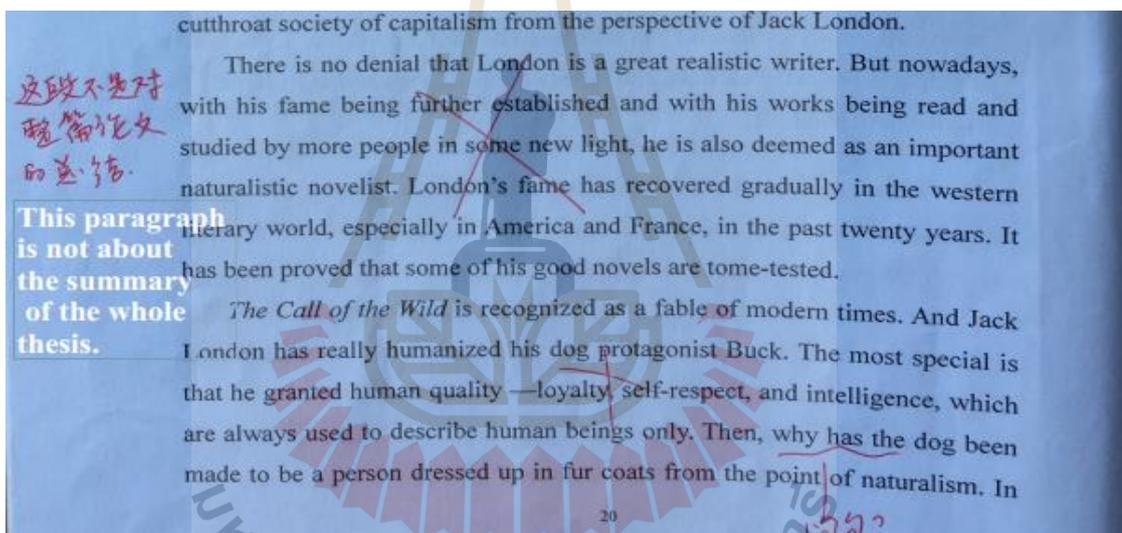
Chapter four

five

**Extract 4** A Supervisor's WSF focus on Content (S14D1, p. 2; S14D2, p.2)

In this example, the student (S14) did not follow the usual way of presenting the thesis outline, that is, her conclusion paragraph did not cover the whole picture of the thesis, so the supervisor gave feedback and set examples for the student to ask her to write in an appropriate way.

Since a bachelor's thesis would be a long text for the students, their ideas sometimes seemed to be not relevant to the main topic. In this situation, the supervisors would help the students to be aware of the irrelevance and to concentrate on the thesis topic. The following example (Extract 5) illustrates that the student's (S4) summary was not related to her conclusion, and her supervisor provided WSF on this aspect (Content).



**Extract 5** A Supervisor's WSF focus on Content (S4D1, p. 20; S4D2, p. 23)

Although the supervisors' WSF practices focused much on Grammar, Requirement and Content on the whole, the frequencies of these three categories varied across different draft stages. As revealed in Table 4.10, the supervisors provided gradually more WSF on Grammar from Draft 1 (35.3%) to Draft 2 (47%) and Draft 3 (49.3%). Conversely, the supervisors gave gradually less WSF on Content from Draft 1 (22.2%) to Draft 2 (19.1%) and Draft 3 (11.4%). However, the supervisors gave a balanced WSF on Requirements (24.4%, 22.4%, 23.1%, respectively) across Draft 1, Draft 2 and Draft 3. This shows that the supervisors focused more on Grammar and less on Content as the thesis writing process went on and regraded Requirements as an important area during the whole process.

As for other aspects, the supervisors' WSF instances were almost balanced on Linguistic Appropriateness (10.6%, 7.5%, 12.7%, respectively) and Organizations (7%, 3%, 2.8%, respectively) over the three draft stages. This demonstrates that the supervisors always kept an eye on other aspects although they focused on Grammar, Content and Requirements.

#### 4.2.1.2 Discussion

The quality of L2 classroom writing is decided by many elements including syntax, semantics, cohesion, coherence, lexicon, style and non-linguistic knowledge (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). For the same reason, the quality of bachelor's thesis is also decided by many aspects such as language, Content, Organization, and format style. This research tries to include all these aspects into the WSF foci, which include Content (Co), Grammar (CGr), Organizations (Or), Linguistic Appropriateness (LC), Writing Attitudes (WA), and Unidentifiable Comments (UC).

##### 4.2.1.2.1 WSF Focus on Grammar

As the findings revealed, the Chinese supervisors in this study gave the most WSF focus on Grammar with a frequency of 42.5% on average across the three draft stages. This finding echoes the results in other studies (Alkhatib, 2015; Bitchener, 2010; Lee, 2008; Liu, 2013; Montgomery & Bake, 2007) in EFL contexts and it proves that for Chinese students, grammatical mistakes are still the most significant problem in English thesis writing. This is true with the results of the interview with the supervisors. For most of the supervisors in this study, their students made a lot of grammatical errors in their thesis writing, while the accuracy of language

is one of the important aspects of thesis quality, which is stated in the *Syllabus (2001)* saying that “in addition to considering language proficiency, the scoring [of BA thesis] should also consider independent insights and innovative consciousness as important basis”. What is more, some students’ theses were written in informal language.

Besides, the supervisors are required to give written feedback to students’ thesis drafts for at least three times by the School of Foreign Languages in the hope to ensure the thesis quality. In this context, adherence to national guideline and the School’s requirements shaped teachers’ WSF practices. Therefore, both plenty of students’ grammatical errors and supervisors’ conception of the importance of accuracy accounted for the largest proportion in WSF on Grammar. This finding is similar to Lee’s (2008a) findings that teachers tend to use the required written feedback approach in order to abide by their school’s policy and that teachers desired to demonstrate to the authorities that they are hard working.

On the contrary, the finding of the supervisors’ WSF focus on Grammar in this research contradicted some other studies (e.g., Alshahrani & Storcy, 2014; Nurie, 2018). However, there was not any consensus on the classifications of feedback foci, some different categories in these previous studies (e.g., “mechanics” in

Alshahrani & Storch, 2014) were categorized as Grammar in this study. Therefore, it could be concluded the teachers also paid much attention to grammar in the above study. In addition, the participants in other studies were senior MA graduates (Nurie, 2018) and their English proficiency possibly reached a much better level than that of the undergraduates in this study, it is natural that their supervisors paid less attention to their thesis writings.

However, in the interview with the supervisors, one supervisor (Hu) claimed that there existed some problems in the counting method of the instances for each WSF focus in this study. He believed that although all focus categories could appear at any level of the thesis, “Content” and “Organization” were something more often at a macro level, or on paragraph or discourse level, while “Grammar”, “Linguistic Appropriateness” and “Requirements” were more often at a micro level, that is, at a phrase or sentence level. Therefore, the large portion of WSF on Grammar did not mean the supervisors paid more attention on grammar than on the other areas. This is similar to the findings in Bitchener, Basturkmen and East’s (2010) study that some supervisors did not consider the linguistic error identifications and corrections they gave as feedback by saying that “This is just what we do to make sense

of what we are reading. Because more ink is given to these points, does not mean that we are more concerned about grammar than content issues” (p.92).

In summary, the findings of WSF on Grammar in this study echoed the previous studies that the supervisors gave most written feedback on Grammar, and the EFL students’ proficiency and the institutional policy affected the supervisors’ practice of WSF on Grammar.

#### 4.2.1.2.2 WSF Focus on Requirements

The finding of this study found that the supervisors gave WSF on Requirements with a frequency of 23.4% on average across the three stages, only less than WSF on Grammar, which proves that Chinese supervisors attached great importance to the formatting, citation, and referencing and related matters to students’ thesis drafts.

However, teachers’ written feedback on the “Requirements” was not extensively reported in previous literature. It was because either the academic conventions were not a concern in some studies for the classroom writing (e.g., Ferris, 2007; Lee, 2004, 2008; Montgomery & Bake, 2007), or this aspect was little touched upon with no further study (e.g., Bitchener, Basturkmen, East & Meyer, 2011;

Basturkmen, East & Bitchener, 2014) because the texts analyzed were dissertations or theses at master's or doctoral level, so the students were much knowledgeable about the academic conventions than the undergraduate students in this study. Bitchener et al. (2011) and Basturkmen et al. (2014) found that the supervisors provided feedback on Requirements on 11 scripts out of a total of 15 scripts, with only 1.77 comments per four-page script on average, which was much less than the written feedback on other areas. Their finding of teachers' written feedback on Requirements were different from that in this study.

One of the reasons for the differences between the result of this study and the previous studies might be that the students in this study were not familiar with the academic conventions nor did they realize its importance as this is their first time to write research papers. The interview with the supervisors revealed that many students had difficulty in complying and following their university's thesis guideline and reference style. Therefore, the supervisors wanted to take the opportunity of thesis writing to help the students with the detailed academic requirements in thesis writing and to help the students to understand the importance of the academic requirements. Supervisor Xu, who believed in the importance of WSF on

“Requirements”, explained:

*As a supervisor, I need to tell the students at the beginning that degree thesis must be written in an “academic” way: some students wrote in spoken English, some students did not understand why they need to refer to the authors when citing their words. In other words, many students cannot figure out the difference between the classroom essay and the thesis. So, I must give instructions and guidance.*

In fact, some students had little knowledge about the citation, referencing, footnotes or endnotes, although they had had a course about academic writing before they started writing their theses. However, the students did not put their learning into practice and their mistakes in the aspect of “Requirements” were really irritating.

Another reason for the fact that the supervisors provided much WSF on “Requirements” might also be institutional policy. The School provided the detailed guidelines for bachelors’ thesis writing according to the characteristics of its disciplines. As the interview with the supervisors discovered that since the students’ thesis portfolio will be examined by the university and education authorities sometime after the students’ graduation as an indicator of the teaching quality, the supervisors could not ignore these problems in “Requirements” for fear that the authorities

regarded them as “lazier” or “irresponsible” since “you cannot help the students reach a high level in the innovation, but you can help them reach the accurate academic conventions” (Supervisor Mao).

#### 4.2.1.2.3 WSF Focus on Content

The supervisors provided WSF on the accuracy, completeness and relevance of “Content” to 18.9% of all the WSF instances. This showed “Content” was an important issue for the supervisors and showed the Chinese supervisors identified much content problems because such problems usually directly affect the persuasiveness of students’ thesis.

In the previous studies, there was a mixture of the findings of written feedback related to Content. For example, Ferris (1997) found that 85% of teachers’ comments addressed students’ ideas and rhetorical development, and Bitchener et al. (2010) found that feedback on content was mentioned more frequently than feedback on other areas by the supervisors across all the three disciplines. However, Lee (2008) identified only 3.8% written feedback on content by 26 Hong Kong secondary English teachers, and other studies (Liu, 2013; Montgomery & Bake, 2007; Nurie, 2018) reported that teachers’ feedback on content was much less than

feedback on other areas.

The major justification for the supervisors' not giving too much attention to Content in this study is that Content is from the students' mind, not from the supervisors. For example, Supervisor Chen explained that she could not give much help in students' thesis writing, saying:

*In terms of content, as the supervisors, I can only play a role in guiding the direction. Some students have only a small amount of literature reading, so they could have only a shallow thinking about the cases in their research. Therefore, I can only enlighten them on their thinking and help them express their existing thoughts accurately.*

For Supervisor Chen, the content of a thesis refers to its main idea or the opinion, which stems from the students' mind. The supervisors should not interfere with it and force some ideas on the students' thesis; otherwise, it would be the supervisor's ideas. What the supervisors do is just to give some suggestion on the content and help the students write up the content in a proper way.

#### 4.2.1.2.4 WSF Focus on Linguistic Appropriateness

The Chinese supervisors provided 9.8% of WSF on Linguistic Appropriateness on average across the three draft stages. This result aligns with the findings of most previous research. For example, Irwin (2017) found 16.9% of

teachers' written feedback was on lexical problems by Japanese college teachers, and Nurie (2018) found 12.98% of teachers' feedback was on linguistic accuracy and appropriateness. Liu (2013) reported a small portion of teachers' written feedback on vocabulary, and Storch's (2014) study identified 12.6% feedback on language expression.

However, the study is different from some other studies (e.g., Basturkmen et al., 2014; Lee, 2008). The main reason for the differences might be because Bastrukmen et al. (2014) regarded all feedback related to grammar, vocabulary and mechanics as the "linguistic" feedback. Similarly, Lee (2008) took all feedback on grammar and vocabulary as feedback on "language". However, the "linguistic appropriateness" in this study is narrower than the "linguistic" feedback in Bastrukmen et al.'s (2014) study or "language" in Lee's (2008a) study. Since the linguistic feedback or language feedback was a much broader concept than WSF on Linguistic Appropriateness in this study, it was not surprising the results were quite different.

#### 4.2.1.2.5 WSF Focus on Organizations

The findings of this research show that the supervisors provided only 4.6% WSF on the Organization, which was a very small portion. In

previous studies, Lee (2008a) identified 0.4% of written feedback on Organization. Basturkmen et al.'s (2014) study discovered 0.5% written feedback on Organization (14 out of the total of 365 feedback instances). Although not reported on frequency, Montgomery and Baker (2007) found “little” amount of teachers’ written feedback on Organization. In a word, the finding of this study is similar to those of the previous studies that the frequency of written feedback on Organization was small.

However, the interview with the supervisors showed that they attached the most importance to the organization of thesis writing. They thought the organization of a thesis was as important as the content, if not more, since “the organization is like a thread; it can string the pearls of thoughts into a beautiful bracelet”, and “it necessitates efficient and orderly thinking for students” (Supervisor Cheng).

Bitchener et al. (2011) explained one of the reasons for supervisors’ giving a small portion of written feedback on Organization. They believed that Organization was a topic that supervisors gave feedback on through other channels, such as in face-to-face meeting or global feedback sheets. Another reason might be that Organization is a topic more related to higher level: it appears more on paragraph or

discourse level than on sentence or phrase levels. This argument was also recognized by Montgomery and Baker (2007) by claiming “because global features usually encompass more than a sentence or at times even a paragraph, it seemed reasonable to assume that there would be fewer comments for global than local issues” (p.90). Similarly, Junqueira and Payant (2015) explained this small portion of Organization feedback by saying that “feedback on organization ... might be addressed with one or two comments while local issues, such as verb tenses, might elicit more WCF instances throughout the essay (p. 26).”

The above reasons fit this study which found a little WSF on Organization. In addition, in this study, the thesis drafts were written after the EM-students have had their proposal defended, in other words, the structure of the theses has been discussed between supervisors and supervisees for several times and approved by the thesis committee. What is more, the essays analyzed in most of the previous studies were classroom writing, and the organization was considered as a less urgent issue in feedback as “the text patterns are limited” (Lee, 2008a, p.80).

#### 4.2.1.2.6 WSF Focus on Writing Attitudes

Writing attitudes are often a concern of the Chinese

supervisors. This study only identified 0.1% of feedback on Writing Attitudes, which accounted for the least portion of the supervisors' written feedback practices. Many supervisors believed that the students' attitudes towards thesis writing would affect the quality of thesis drafts greatly, and sometimes the supervisors were irritated or frustrated by students' writing and attributed the poor quality to students' inappropriate writing attitudes, and wrote comments on the students' attitudes on the thesis drafts.

However, a clear contrast occurred between the supervisors' and the students' responses in the interview. The students believed that thesis writing is the responsibility of the students and their poor writing quality is likely an indicator of their difficulties which need the supervisors' help, while the supervisors believed that some students had too bad attitudes towards thesis writing and did not concentrate on writing.

There was scant information about written feedback on students' writing attitudes. Li (2011) studied the quality of the bachelor's degree thesis, and found that 30% supervisors (N=9) and 32% students (N=25) believed the causes for the unsatisfactory thesis quality were from the students' poor writing attitudes, because "although the students lacked the ability to collect data or related theoretical

knowledge, after the guidance and help of the supervisor, their final draft of the thesis has reached the relevant requirements” (p.199). However, a lack of accurate attitudes could never enable the students to write a satisfactory thesis. Liu and Wang’s (2019) study found that some students did not take the thesis writing as important, just copying or plagiarizing others to finish their degree thesis assignment because they were busy with preparing the postgraduate entrance exam during the thesis writing period. Cheng (2018) even proposed that the quality of the thesis is just an attitude issue.

Therefore, a few supervisors would provide WSF on the students’ Writing Attitudes. “I sometimes wrote harsh criticisms on the students’ writing attitudes; if I were not strict [with the students], they would never write seriously” (Supervisor Mao). This might be influenced by the traditional Chinese culture that believes “talent students are trained by strict teachers” or “tough love” (Liu & Xu, 2018).

However, the few instances of WSF on Writing Attitudes in this study indicate most of the supervisors would not like to provide this type of WSF. The interview with the supervisors revealed that one reason for the lack of WSF on Writing Attitudes is the supervisors’ acknowledgement on its negative effects. They

kept their WSF on Writing Attitudes to protect the students' self-esteem because "severe criticism may greatly hurt the students' confidence", and "I would talk to him/her personally if he/she has a poor writing attitudes towards thesis writing" (Supervisor Xu).

Another reason might be that the supervisors have become more rational after a long period of teaching experiences. Most supervisors in the interview expressed that they had given written criticism on the students' poor writing attitudes, but now they would not like to write WSF on Writing Attitudes anymore because "I would not get angry so easily like before and become calm to the few students' poor thesis drafts" (Supervisor Chen). In addition, "I found that providing WSF on writing attitudes was useless, so I would not use my personal emotions to suppress or force students to write or revise" (Supervisor Chang).

#### 4.2.1.2.7 Unidentifiable Comments

As for the Unidentifiable Comments, the study found a frequency of 0.6% on the whole. Although not much, they would confuse the students. In previous studies, Ferris (1995) reported such problems in her study that half of the university student participants noted specific problems with the teachers' feedback:

some complained about not being able to read their teachers' handwriting, the remaining mentioned the difficulty in understanding supervisors' specific grammar terms (fragment, verb tense) and symbols used to indicate a grammatical error (abbreviations, arrows, and circles).

In this study, from the text analysis on the supervisors' WSF practices, these Unidentifiable Comments were all symbols such as underlings. From the interview, these feedback instances were written by the supervisors as signs for their own reading. This indicates that the supervisors need to be trained to avoid such confusing comments.

#### 4.2.1.2.8 WSF Focus in Different Draft Stages

On Draft 1, the findings of this study revealed that the supervisors provided most WSF on Grammar in the text while they provided most WSF on Content on the frontpage. From the interview, all the supervisors believed that Organization or both Organization and Content would be the priority of WSF focus for the first stage, because "without a logic structure, a thesis is impossible to present a convincing idea" (Supervisor Mao). This is incongruent with their practices which focused on Grammar in the text at the first stage.

On Draft 2, the supervisors provided most WSF on Grammar in the text while they provided most WSF on Content on the frontpage. In the interview, the supervisors differed in their foci. Most supervisors (N=6, or 67%) stated they would focus on Content and Grammar, because “whether their content is relevant with their chapter titles or sections titles, whether the argument is right and whether their evidences are enough to support their argument decides the thesis quality” and “the thesis content has been basically settled [after the revision of the first drafts], so the students need to focus on grammar to express their ideas clearly [in the second drafts]” (Supervisor Kang). Another supervisor stated his focus was on all aspects because “you need to tell the students to have a comprehensive understanding and evaluation of the thesis until the third draft in which it is too late” (Supervisor Hu), while the other claimed to focus on Content and Requirements because “the structure of the thesis is basically formed after the feedback and revision in the first draft, and the mistakes made by students at this stage are mainly in the field of content and format” (Supervisor He). However, this contrasts with their practices which focused on Grammar in the text.

On Draft 3, the supervisors provided the most WSF on Grammar in the text and the most WSF on Requirements on the frontpage. In the

interview, all the supervisors agreed on focusing on Grammar and Requirements, since “this is the last draft for the students to revise before their oral defense, and there is not enough time or necessity to ask them to make big modification” (Supervisor Xu). This is completely congruent with the supervisor’ WSF practices in the third draft stage.

The supervisors’ responses in the interview that Organization and Content should be focused at the first draft stage and Grammar and Requirements should be focused at the third draft stage echoed many previous studies. For example, Zamel (1985) and Ferris (2003) noted that focusing on global issues in early drafts and on local ones in second or later drafts can be beneficial for several reasons, including avoiding having to correct local issues on sentences and paragraphs that may be deleted or changed in later drafts anyway. What is more, if accuracy of local issues is stressed in early drafts, then students may feel inhibited and, therefore, limited in their ability to develop the global aspects of their compositions. More importantly, if teachers focus on form throughout the writing process, it teaches students that the product, not the process, is most important to the teacher (Hamp-Lyons, 2006).

That the supervisors' practices were different from what they responded at the first and the second draft stages were similar to Montgomery and Baker' (2007) study, in which the teachers believed that they should focus their feedback on global issues like organization on the first drafts, but they actually gave “a lot” of feedback on local issues like grammar or mechanics on the first drafts and throughout the writing process. Montgomery and Baker (2007) explained that the teachers “felt that this was what was needed to help their students improve their writing” (p. 93). The teachers were not aware of their actual practices as most of them felt surprised at the findings because they had assumed that “they had been focusing on global issues on first drafts and local issues on later drafts” (ibid). Montgomery and Baker's (2007) explanation that that the teachers thought their written feedback on grammar meets students' needs might be one reason for the differences in this study, because these teachers might be “trained by linguists rather than rhetoric/ composition experts” (Ferris, 2003, p. 22).

Another possible reason for the differences between the supervisors' WSF practices and what they said in the interview on the first and second drafts might be that Grammar is still a big issue for the English major students. No

matter how innovative the students' ideas are, the first and most important thing of a thesis is to help the readers understand what the students say. Therefore, the supervisors provided much WSF on Grammar on the first and second drafts in the text.

A further reason for the differences between the supervisors' practices and their responses from the interview about the feedback focus might be the institutional policy. Since the students' thesis portfolios would be examined later by the authorities, the supervisors would mark most of the grammatical errors in the earlier drafts to seem to be responsible.

The finding of this study also revealed that the supervisors decreased their WSF on Content and Organization both in the text and on the frontpage from Draft 1 to Draft 3. On the contrary, they increased their WSF on Grammar both in the text and on the frontpage from Draft 1 to Draft 3. As for the number of WSF on Requirements, it was kept in balance in the text but increased greatly on the frontpage through all the three drafts.

According to Elser (2008), Content and Organization are considered more related to higher order thinking skills (HOTS) than Grammar. Conversely, Grammar, Linguistic Appropriateness, and Requirements are considered

lower order thinking skills (LOTS). HOTS involves the learning of complex judgmental skills such as critical thinking and problem solving, so it is more difficult to learn or teach but also more valuable because such skills are more likely to be used in novel situations (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). Therefore, it can be concluded that supervisors in this study provided more WSF related to higher order thinking skills on the early drafts, and provided more WSF related to lower-level thinking skills on the later (second and third) drafts. This matches the process writing approach (Ferris, 2002) and shows the Chinese supervisors gave written feedback foci in different drafts in a manner aligned with the process writing. Supervisor Xu explained why she focused on Organization on the initial draft by saying:

*I hope that students' understanding of the bachelor's thesis is a top-down, or a macro-to-micro way. If they can understand the thesis from the top down [at first stage], they will have a holistic grasp of it. Then, in the process of writing or revision, they might consider both back and forth together.*

The written feedback focus in different drafts was not much reported in previous studies. In Bitchener et al.'s (2011) study, the 35 supervisor participants claimed in the questionnaire that they gave written feedback on early draft, advanced draft and near final draft, but the supervisors were not asked about their

feedback focus on each draft. In Montgomery and Bake's (2007) questionnaire, more participants reported giving "a lot" of written feedback on the later drafts than on the first draft on all the five foci except Organization. For Organization feedback, no participants reported giving "a lot" either on the first draft or the later drafts. That is, the teachers tended to give more written feedback on both higher order thinking skills and lower order thinking skills on the later drafts than on the first draft.

#### **4.2.2 WSF Strategy in Different Draft Stages**

##### **4.2.2.1 Results**

The supervisors adopted different strategies while providing WSF. Since the WSF on the frontpage is the general feedback on the most important aspects or the most serious errors about the thesis drafts, the supervisors used only "Is" strategy. Among the 378 WSF instances on the frontpage in the three draft stages, all of them were provided with "Is" strategy. Therefore, this section mainly reports the results of the WSF strategy used in the in-text WSF.

Table 4.11 demonstrates the findings of WSF strategies that the supervisors provided on their students' thesis drafts in terms of number and frequency of WSF occurrence in the thesis texts in different draft stages.

**Table 4.11** Supervisors' WSF Strategy in the Text in Different Draft Stages

Stage	WSF Strategy								Total
	Direct WSF			Indirect WSF					
	Dc	Ds	Subtotal	Ig	Is	It	Ic	Subtotal	
D1	418 (35.1%)	35 (2.9%)	453 (38%)	311 (26.1%)	427 (35.9%)	0	0	738 (62%)	1191
D2	455 (40.8%)	19 (1.7%)	474 (42.5%)	344 (30.9%)	297 (26.7%)	0	0	641 (57.4%)	1115
D3	258 (48.1%)	12 (2.2%)	270 (50.3%)	153 (28.6%)	113 (21.1%)	0	0	266 (49.7%)	536
Total per category	1131 (39.8%)	66 (2.3%)	1197 (42.1%)	808 (28.5%)	837 (29.5%)	0	0	1645 (57.8%)	2842

Note. *Dc*=direct correction/ reformulation; *Ds*=direct correction/ reformulation with description or explanation; *Ig*=graphical marking; *Is*=comments indicating an error with or without graphical marking. *It*= numerals indicating the quantity of errors in a line or a paragraph; *Ic*= metalinguistic codes indicating the error nature or error reason.

The percentage of each strategy= the number of the strategy instances÷the number of the total.

As can be seen from Table 4.11, the supervisors tended to use both direct and indirect strategies across the three stages. However, none of the supervisors used “It” or “Ic” as suggested by native-speaker-scholars (e.g., Ellis, 2009; Bitchener et al., 2011), that is, using numerals to indicate the error quantity in a line or in a paragraph (“It”), or using codes to indicate the error nature or reasons (“Ic”) throughout all the three draft stages. Instead, the most often used WSF strategies were “Dc” (39.8%), “Ig” (28.5%), and “Is” (29.5%). On the whole, the supervisors

provided more indirect strategies (57.8%) than direct ones (42.1%). Among the direct strategies, the supervisors used much more “Dc” (39.8%) than “Ds” (2.3%). Extract 6 below is an example of a supervisor’s “Dc” strategy with the students’ errors:

3.1.3 Interesting Principle.....	17
3.1.4 Guiding Principle.....	15
3.2 The Steps of Role-playing Method in Primary English Teaching...	16
3.2.1 Identify Goals and Create Situations.....	16
3.2.2 Assign role tasks based on actual conditions.....	16
3.2.3 Organize activities and gain experience.....	17
3.2.4 Report on the activities and summarize the learning results...	17
<b>Chapter Four The Role of Teachers in Role-playing Method</b> .....	19
4.1 The Significance of Teachers in Role Playing Method.....	19

3.1.3 Interesting Principle.....	17
3.1.4 Guiding Principle.....	15
3.2 The Steps of Role-playing Method to Primary English Teaching.....	16
3.2.1 Identifying Goals and Creating Situations.....	16
3.2.2 Assigning role tasks based on actual conditions.....	16
3.2.3 Organizing activities and gaining experience.....	17
3.2.4 Feedback to reporting on the activities and summarizing the learning results.....	17
<b>Chapter Four The Role of Teachers in Role-playing Method</b> .....	19
4.1 The Significance of Teachers in Role-playing Method.....	19

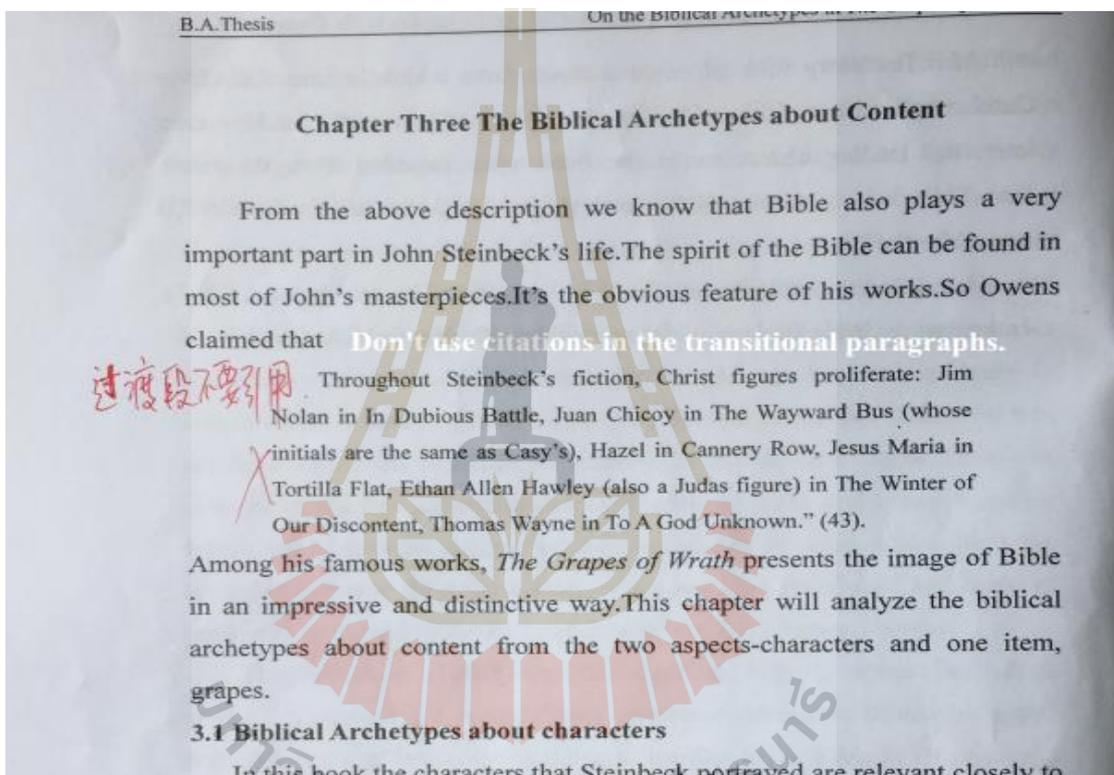
Chapter titles should be capitalized.

节  
标题  
大小写?(需大写)

**Extract 6** A Supervisor’s Dc strategy (S31D1, p. 1; S31D2, p. 1)

In this extract, the student (S31) used verb phrases in the section titles. The supervisor directly corrected the verbs with gerunds.

For some errors, the supervisors did not only give corrections, but also provided comments to tell the error natures or the reasons for their correction. The following example illustrates a supervisor's direct correction with the comments indicating the reasons for correction.



### Chapter Three The Biblical Archetypes about Content

From the above description we know that Bible also plays a very important part in John Steinbeck's life. The spirit of the Bible can be found in most of John's masterpieces. It's the obvious feature of his works. Among his famous works, *The Grapes of Wrath* presents the image of Bible in an impressive and distinctive way. This chapter will analyze the biblical archetypes about content from the two aspects—characters and one item, grapes.

#### 3.1 Biblical Archetypes about characters

In this book, the characters that Steinbeck portrays are relevant closely to

#### Extract 7 A Supervisor's Ds Strategy (S30D1, p. 8; S30D2, p.8)

In this extract, the student (S30) applied a block citation in the transitional paragraph between the chapter title and the section title. The supervisor deleted the citation directly with a cross and gave the reason "Do not use citations in the transitional paragraphs".

As for the indirect strategies, the supervisors tended to use "Ig" and "Is" in similar proportions (28.5% and 29.5%, respectively). "Ig" refers to a strategy that the supervisors used to point out errors indirectly with graphical markings, such as underling, circling or question marks. Extract 8 illustrates how a supervisor used "Ig" to point out errors.

### 3.1.3 Lack of Reading Enthusiasm

Through the observation of students, the author found the students were not active in English reading lesson, and did not reading English book after class. The students' reading enthusiasm is generally low. In class, the teacher using simple and single teaching mode to teach English. This way let the students think English reading lesson is learn words, learn phrases and answer this question. It is boring for high-grade pupils. If things continue this way, the enthusiasm of students for English reading is slowly down, because they don't think English reading is interest.

After class, students want to found a suitable English books is hardly, they don't know how can get the suitable English books. At home, no one will supervise extracurricular reading of students. Parents have no time or energy to accompany children to read, maybe the training class more suitable

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### 3.1.3 Lack of Reading Enthusiasm

The students' reading enthusiasm is generally low. Through the observation of students, the author found the students are not active in English reading lesson, and they do not read in English after class, so their reading enthusiasm is generally not high. In class, the teacher uses a simple and single teaching mode to teach primary English reading class. It makes students feel that English reading class is learning words, learning phrases and answering questions. It is boring for high-grade pupils. If things continue this way, the enthusiasm of students for English reading is slowly down, because they don't think English reading is interest.

After class, it is hard for students to find a book suitable for their own reading. At home, no one will supervise extracurricular reading of students. Parents have no time or energy to accompany children to read, and parents will think that training class is more important than reading. Gradually, students' enthusiasm will decrease.

In this extract, the student (S24) wrote many Chinese English sentences which impede the readability of the text. The supervisor underlined these non-grammatical sentences as well as used an arrow to restructure a sentence.

“Is” stands for the strategy of pointing out errors with comments indicating the error nature or reasons for correction, and with or without any graphical markings. Extract 9 demonstrates one example of the “Is” strategy.

	2.4 Significance of game teaching.....	7
	<b>Chapter Three problems of game teaching.....</b>	<b>10</b>
	3.1 Types of games is single.....	10
	3.2 The rules of the game are too complicated.....	10
	3.3 The class are too noisy and uncontrollable.....	11
	<b>Use gerund phrases.</b>	
	<b>Chapter Four Strategies.....</b>	<b>14</b>
	4.1 Realize the innovation of games.....	14
	4.2 Simplify the forms of games.....	15
	4.3 Pay attention to the discipline of the game.....	16
	<b>Use gerund phrases.</b>	
	<b>Chapter Five Conclusion.....</b>	<b>18</b>
	<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>20</b>

2.4 Significance of game teaching in vocabulary teaching.....	6
<b>Chapter Three Problems of game teaching in primary English vocabulary teaching .....</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 Single types of games in vocabulary teaching.....	8
3.2 Imperfect class rewards.....	9
3.3 Noisy and uncontrollable class .....	10
<b>Chapter Four Solutions to the problems of game teaching.....</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1 Realizing the innovation of games.....	13
4.2 Establishing and perfecting the system of rewards .....	15
4.3 Paying attention to the discipline of the games .....	16
<b>Chapter Five Conclusion .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>20</b>

**Extract 9** *A Supervisor's Is Strategy (S16D1, p. 1; S16D2, p. 1)*

In this extract, the supervisor gave comments “too general and short” to the section titles and “use gerund phrases” to the subtitles, and she also used underlings or brackets to locate the errors.

It could also be seen from Table 4.11 that the supervisors' WSF strategies varied across the different draft stages. On Draft 1, the supervisors used more indirect WSF strategies (62%) than the direct ones (38%). On Draft 2, the indirect strategies decreased and the direct ones increased (57.4% and 42.5%, respectively). While on Draft 3, the supervisors used direct and indirect WSF strategies at almost the same frequency (50.3% and 49.7%, respectively). Regarding

the direct WSF strategies, the supervisors tended to use much more “Dc” than “Ds” across the three draft stages (35.1% vs 2.9%, 40.8% vs 1.7% and 48.1% vs 2.2%, respectively). As for the indirect WSF strategies, the supervisors liked to use more “Is” than “Ig” (35.9% vs 26.1%) on Draft 1, but they used less “Is” than “Ig” (26.7% vs 30.9% and 21.1% vs 28.6%, respectively) on Draft 2 and Draft 3. This might be explained by the students’ increased awareness of their own error natures if the supervisors located the errors since the supervisors’ WSF reminded them of their errors repeatedly in previous draft stages. Therefore, in summary, the supervisors provided gradually more direct strategies and gradually less indirect strategies from Draft 1 to Draft 3.

#### **4.2.2.2 Discussion**

What types of written feedback or what feedback strategies are used by the teachers is a great concern for many scholars (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010; Hanaoka & Izumi, 2012; Bitchener, 2012; Ferris, Liu, & Senna, 2013). This section first discusses the WSF strategies on the whole, and then discusses them in different draft stages.

#### 4.2.2.2.1 Direct and Indirect WSF Strategies

As the findings in Section 4.2.2.1 revealed, the supervisors used a combination of both direct strategies including “direct correction or reformulation” (“Dc”) and “direct correction or reformulation with explanation or description” (“Ds”), and indirect strategies including “graphic marking” (“Ig”) and “graphic marking with explanation or description” (“Is”). This finding is in accordance with Ferris et al. (1997), Lee (2004), and Bitchener and Ferris (2012), who argued that providing a mixture of direct and indirect feedback is the most effective way to scaffold the students’ learning and understanding of feedback.

The strategies used by the supervisors was  $Dc > Is > Ig > Ds$  in the order of frequency on the whole. However, the indirect strategies of “numerals indicating the quantity of errors in a line or in a paragraph” (“It”) and “metalinguistic codes indicating the error nature or error reason” (“Ic”) were never used by Chinese supervisors on all the three drafts. This contradicts Ellis’ (2009) study that the metalinguistic feedback strategy (“It” or “Ic”) was much used by teachers. The reasons for the scant use of “It” and “Ic” might be that the Chinese supervisors were never trained to use “It” and “Ic”, and that “It” and “Ic” may cause

the students to be confused because some students even felt difficult to understand the supervisors' comments written in Chinese.

Although the supervisors mostly used “Dc” in giving WSF, the total number of “Ig” and “Is” was much more than that of “Dc” and “Ds”, that is, the indirect strategies were used more than direct strategies. This result fails to confirm Lee (2003, 2008), Jodaie and Farrokhi, (2012), and Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) in which the teachers used or claimed to use more direct written feedback. The reason for the teachers' favor in direct feedback strategies in the above studies was that the direct strategies were more beneficial for the students' reflection and cognitive engagement (Ferris, 2002) and they avoid possible difficulties in deciphering and utilizing codes to modify their drafts (Ferris, 2003), or because the students do not have the linguistic competence to correct their errors (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010). This is true to the supervisors in this study for their use of direct feedback. For example, Supervisor Hu explained his use of direct strategies by saying that:

*For some errors, without the supervisors' answers, the students would never correct them because they cannot, even if you point out the errors again and again.*

However, the supervisors in this study justified their major use of indirect strategies by referring to the increase of cognitive engagement, the time constraint, and the students' responsibility for correcting the errors by themselves.

For example, Supervisor Ou, who preferred the "Is" strategy, argued:

*As a supervisor, I would like to tell [the students] the reasons after pointing out of the error, but not to give the correct answers. In this way, the students will think [what errors they are] and try to revise themselves.*

For Supervisor Ou, the "Is" strategy could increase students' engagement, and only when the students engage themselves in thesis writing can they make effective revision and write good thesis. Otherwise, the students would become dependent and passive, always waiting for the supervisors to correct, to revise, even to rewrite the thesis for them. Therefore, indirect strategies provided an opportunity for the students to improve their writing skills independently.

Other supervisors thought time constraint as an important reason for their adoption of indirect strategies. Since each supervisor supervised several thesis students, and all the students' theses need written feedback, indirect strategies would be a good choice for supervisors as Supervisor Wang explained:

*It's impossible for me to correct all the errors or problems to all the [eight] students within a short period of time. I would only point out the errors, and the students need to think why and how to correct them. If they have any confusions on my [graphical] written feedback, they can call and ask me.*

For supervisor Wang, some students made a lot of errors in their thesis drafts, and it is time-consuming to correct these errors, but the indirect strategies could save time and be effective.

Another justification for the supervisors' use of indirect strategies is the students' responsibility. Supervisor Liu, who would not like to give direct corrections, explained:

*In general, I would not correct the errors for my students. I think [thesis writing] is also a skill learning, and it is the students' responsibility to figure out why [the errors were made] and how to correct the errors. They can ask me, they can seek advice after their revision, but they cannot depend on me for correcting for them.*

For Supervisor Liu, it is the students' responsibility to write and revise the thesis, and the supervisors should not give a hand-to-hand supervision.

These arguments for the indirect strategies are supported by many previous studies. For example, Pearson and Kayrooz (2004) concluded that

providing indirect feedback to students gives students the opportunity to reflect on their work and to modify it in order to become more effective. Ghandi and Maghsoudi (2014) and Jodaie and Farrokhi (2012) found that as learners' level of proficiency increases, they become more capable of correcting their own mistakes.

#### 4.2.2.2.2 WSF Strategies in Different Draft Stages

The findings of the study reveal that, on Draft 1, indirect strategies ("Ig" and "Is", with a frequency of 62%) were used much more than direct strategies ("Dc" and "Ds" with a frequency of 38%). In the interview, most of the supervisors (N=8, or 89%) believed they would use the indirect strategies on Draft 1, which is congruent with their practices.

One reason for the supervisors' use of and beliefs in the indirect strategies is to increase the students' thinking. Supervisor Xu explained that:

*At the first draft stage, the students still have enough time to think and revise [the drafts]. I would like to let them think why they have made the errors so they can learn [to avoid the similar errors].*

For Supervisor Xu, the WSF is a kind of supervisor's instruction to students in thesis writing. An indirect way to point out the errors in the thesis may not only help the students to notice the errors, but also serve as an

opportunity to understand what the errors are and to revise the errors by themselves. Therefore, at the first draft stage, the students should be given opportunity to think carefully about their thesis errors with indirect WSF strategies because they still have enough time to think before they submit the drafts for oral defense. However, at the second and third draft stages, the students would have less time to think because they were pushed to complete the drafts within a deadline, otherwise they would not be allowed to take part in the oral defense.

The most important reason for the use of indirect strategies might be that the supervisors' WSF focused on Organization at this stage, and Organization problems cannot easily be given WSF with direct strategies. Supervisor Wang claimed that she primarily used the indirect strategies because "on the first draft, I mainly gave comments on the structure problems. I did not make comments or corrections paragraph by paragraph, nor sentence by sentence". Her idea was supported by some other supervisors.

On Draft 2, the indirect strategies were still used more than the direct strategies (57.4% and 42.5%, respectively), but the frequency of the direct strategies increased compared to that on Draft 1. In the interview, the supervisors

believed that they mainly used direct strategies at this stage. This shows the incongruence between their perceptions and practices.

The main reason for the supervisors' preference for direct strategies at this stage is the shift of WSF focus. Supervisor He stated that "at the second draft stage, the main errors in the students' thesis were the errors on Grammar and Requirements. For these errors, the direct correction is more effective than indirect comments".

Another justification for the supervisors' preference for direct strategies at the second draft stage might be the students' linguistic or academic competence. For example, Supervisor Chen attributed her use of direct strategies on Draft 2 to the students' poor academic proficiency:

*At this stage, we can know that a few students are really incapable of correcting (their errors). So, I will directly correct the errors for those students based on my judgments about their poor proficiency.*

The mismatch between the supervisors' practices and perceptions in the WSF strategies at the second draft stage might be explained by the different WSF foci. As stated in Section 4.2.1.2.8, the supervisors differed in the WSF focus at the second draft stages in the interview. However, the supervisors provided

most WSF on Grammar in the text in practices. So, they might wrongly assume they have used more direct strategies than indirect ones.

On Draft 3, the direct strategies and the indirect ones were used at almost the same frequency (50.3% and 49.7%, respectively), but the direct strategies increased when compared to that at the second draft stage. In the interview, most of the supervisors preferred the direct strategies to the indirect strategies at the third draft stage, which matched their practices.

The main reason for the supervisors' practices and preferences in direct strategies at Draft 3 can be attributed to the WSF focus and time-efficiency. For example, when asked why she prefers indirect strategies at the third draft stage, Supervisor Wang stated:

*At this stage, students' errors are mainly related to grammar and format. It is better to correct them directly, which will not only save the time for the students, but also promote the students' revision. The students are required to submit their drafts for defense soon [after their third drafts], they don't have much time to think and find out the way to modify it [if the supervisors provide their WSF with indirect strategies].*

For Supervisor Wang, the direct strategies would be more effective than indirect ones for the grammar or format errors because the students can

make quick revision and be ready for submitting their final drafts.

Within the researcher's knowledge, there has not been any studies reporting the changes of feedback strategies in different drafts. In this study, the supervisors justified their strategy changes throughout the three draft stages mainly by claiming the changes of their feedback foci. In addition, the students' academic competence and the time constraint also attributed to the changes of feedback strategies on the later drafts.

### **4.2.3 WSF Connotation in Different Draft Stages**

#### **4.2.3.1 Results**

The findings of connotations, as presented in Table 4.12 and Table 4.13, revealed that the supervisors' WSF instances on their students' thesis drafts were predominantly neutral (95.5% on the frontpage WSF and 98.7% in the text) throughout all the three draft stages.

**Table 4.12** Supervisors' WSF Connotation on the Frontpage in Different Draft Stages

Stage	WSF Connotation			Total
	Po	Ng	Ne	
D1	3(1.9%)	2(1.3%)	150(96.8%)	155
D2	6(4.6%)	1(0.8%)	124(94.6%)	131
D3	4(4.3%)	1(1.1%)	87(94.6%)	92
Total per category	13(3.4%)	4(1.1%)	361(95.5%)	378

Note. *Po*= positive connotation; *Ng*=negative connotation; *Ne*=neutral connotation.

*The percentage for each connotation= the number of its occurrence ÷ the number of the total.*

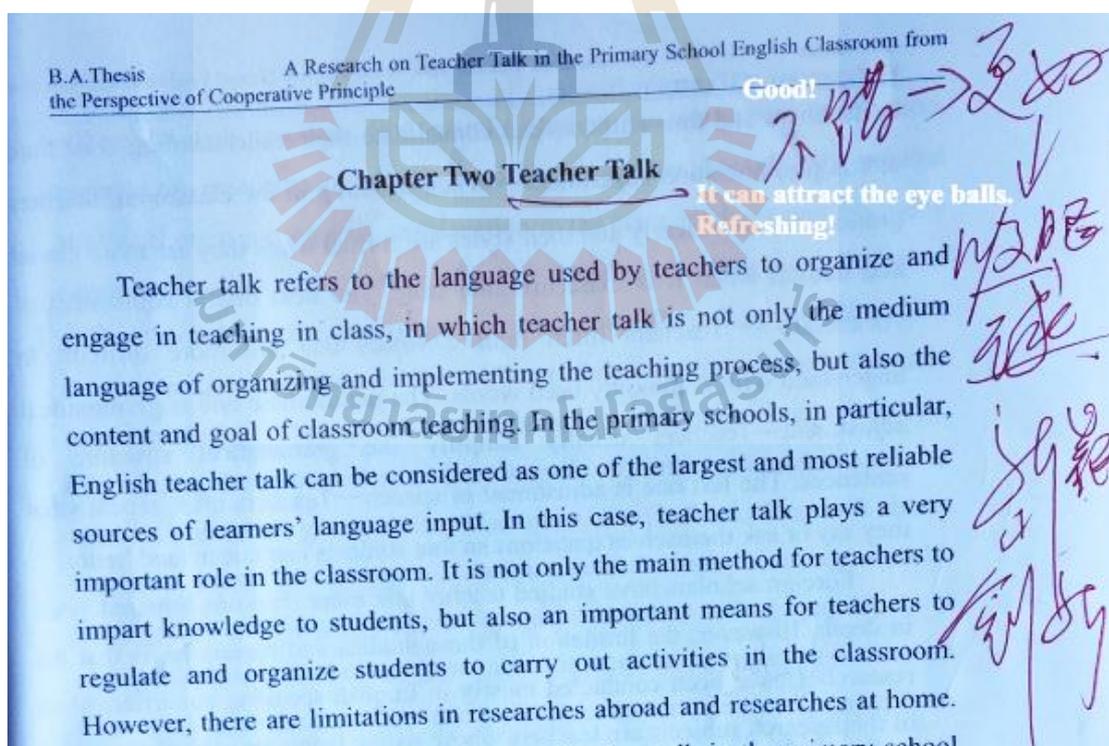
From Table 4.12, it can be seen that the supervisors provided little WSF either in positive connotation (3.4%) or in negative one (1.1%) across the three draft stages. It also shows that the supervisors provided more positive WSF instances at the later stages (4.6% on D2 and 4.3% on D3, respectively) than at the first draft stage (1.9%).

**Table 4.13** Supervisors' WSF Connotation in the text in Different Draft Stages

Stage	WSF Connotation			Total
	Po	Ng	Ne	
D 1	0	10(0.8%)	1181(99.2%)	1191
D 2	4(0.4%)	19 (1.7%)	1092(97.9%)	1115
D 3	0	3(0.6%)	533(99.4%)	536
Total per category	4(0.1%)	32(1.1%)	2806(98.7%)	2842

Note. *The percentage for each connotation= the number of its occurrence ÷ the number of the total.*

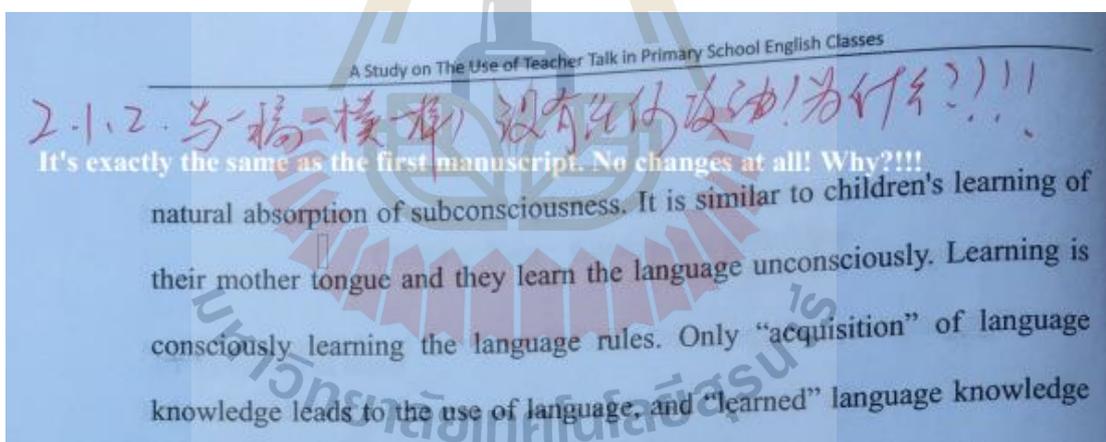
Table 4.13 presents the results of WSF connotations in the thesis text in different draft stages. Among the total of 2842 WSF instances, there were only 0.4% of positive feedback instances on Draft 2 and no positive feedback instance on Draft 1 and Draft 3. The proportion of positive connotation across the three stages (0.1% and 1.1%, respectively) could be neglected when compared to that of the neutral connotation (98.7%). This shows that the supervisors hardly used any positive feedback instances in the text on students' thesis drafts. Extract 10 is an example of the minor positive WSF connotation in the text.



**Extract 10** A Supervisor's Positive Connotation (S18D2, p.3)

In this example, the supervisor did not correct the chapter title into “Literature Review”, instead, he praised the student (S18) for using “Teacher Talk” as the chapter title because “it can attract eyeballs” for its refreshingness and novelty.

Similarly, there were only a few instances of negative WSF throughout the three draft stages, taking account of a quite minor part (1.1%) on the whole. This reveals that the supervisors carefully used the negative connotations in providing WSF. Extract 11 below is an example which demonstrates the supervisor’s negative connotation.



“acquisition” and “learning” in language. Acquisition is the natural absorption of subconsciousness. It is similar to student's learning of their mother tongue and they learn the language unconsciously. Learning is consciously learning the language rules. Only “acquisition” of language knowledge leads to the use of language, and “learned” language knowledge

**Extract 11** *A Supervisor’s Negative Connotation (SID2, p.14; SID3, p. 14)*

In Extract 11, the supervisor was irritated by the student's (S1) writing attitude for revising nothing for the whole section and used a question mark and three exclamation marks at the end of her comments to ask the student why she did so.

On the contrary, the neutral connotations took a dominant position (98.7%) in all the three draft stages. This means that the supervisors mostly pointed out errors without any personal emotions in their WSF. Extract 12 below is an example of neutral WSF.

B. A. Thesis *An Interpretation of Naturalism in The Call of the Wild*

Generally the first person is not used in BA thesis.  
Change it into third person.  
论文写作一般不用第一人称  
改为第三人称

Chapter Five Conclusion

Use italics.  
斜体字

In this paper, I had already interpreted the naturalism of the *Call of the Wild*. Based on the discussion mentioned before, one can learn that as a literary movement, naturalism played an important role in American literature, even in the whole Western countries. In general, naturalism as a genre of literary writing style was derived from realistic writing style which emphasizes on the painstaking depiction of real life. Besides, it puts rules of survival in the first place and values nothing but survival. At the mid-late of 19<sup>th</sup> century, naturalistic writing style had become commonplace in France, as well as the principles of naturalism permeated into the field of politics, economics, sociology, anthropology, literature and so on. That is to say, Naturalism had a profound influence not only for French literature but for the |

Keep consistent in tense  
同一篇文章  
时态保持一致

tense should be consistent.  
时态保持一致

on  
en

### Chapter Five Conclusion

To use the present tense unless there is a clear past tense clause.

This paper <sup>has</sup> had already interpreted the naturalism of *the Call of the Wild*.  
The main procedures <sup>are</sup> were as follows: 除非有明确的过去时间状语, 通常用现在时

At first, the definition of naturalism had been discussed in chapter one. 现在时  
We learned that the term naturalism was referred to a genre of literature that took efforts to apply scientific principles of objectivity and detachment to its study of human beings. Based on the discussion mentioned before, one could learn that as a literary movement, naturalism played an important role in American literature, even in the whole Western countries. Then the history and characteristics of naturalism were explained successively. But the most important part of chapter one was the influence of naturalism literature on Jack London. Jack London was just living in the period when naturalistic thoughts abounded everywhere in the United States. Among most of his works, the illustration of environmental determinism and hereditary determinism were repeatedly applied to reveal the rules of naturalism.

#### Extract 12 A Supervisor's Neutral Connotation (S4D1, p.20; S4D2, p. 20)

In conclusion, the supervisors' WSF practices were predominantly neutral, with little positive or negative instances, but both positive and negative connotations were used more on Draft 2 than on Draft 1 or Draft 3.

#### 4.2.3.2 Discussion

The supervisors provided WSF chiefly in neutral connotation, with a few WSF instances in negative and nearly no instances in positive connotation. These results are similar to Lee's (2008a) study in which the 26 Hong Kong secondary teachers provided only 3.3% of the total feedback in positive connotation, which was rather minimal. Alkhatib (2015) and Ferris (1995) also reported little positive feedback

in the written feedback in their studies. This may indicate that the supervisors in the present study were not aware of the effect of praise in thesis writing, which is not consistent with previous studies in which the teachers believed in the importance and positive effects of praising in increasing the students' self-esteem and motivation (Bates, Lane, & Lange, 1993; Connors & Lunsford, 1993; Ferris, 1995).

On Draft 1, the supervisors only provided a small portion of positive feedback on the frontpage but no positive feedback in the text. They provided a few negative feedback instances both on the frontpage and in the text. The WSF both on the frontpage and in the text was mostly in neutral connotation. This demonstrates that, at the first draft stage, the supervisors mainly provided the students with feedback of information, but rarely motivated the students through praising their writing, nor criticized the students with harsh terms or rhetorical questions.

One main reason for the little use of the positive feedback might be the aspects that the supervisors' positive feedback should be given for. Some supervisors believed only on the progress compared to previous work or the Content should be given positive comments, while only for the poor writing attitudes would be criticized. For example, Supervisor Mao claimed:

*Generally, I do not give positive or negative WSF to the students' theses. Only if the students make great progress or write in a bad attitude will I give them praise or criticism. But at the first draft stage, I don't have anything to compare, so I don't give positive feedback. In addition, there is rarely any student who is writing in very bad attitudes, so I don't give negative feedback.*

For Supervisor Mao, only great progress in revision could receive his praise, and since there is no previous drafts to compare to know whether the students make any progress on the first draft, he will maintain his praise until the second or third drafts. His idea was supported by some other supervisors who thought that, at the first stage, they mainly give WSF on Organization, and Organization was not an aspect that should receive praise. What is more, since there were rather few students who did not deal with their theses seriously at this stage, the supervisors gave little negative WSF.

On Draft 2, the supervisors provided more neutral WSF both on the frontpage and in the text than on Draft 1. The supervisors were very cautious in giving positive or negative feedback either on the frontpage or in the text. However, the frequency of positive feedback increased on Draft 2 compared to that on Draft 1.

One reason for more positive connotation at the second draft stage is that the supervisors mainly gave positive feedback on Content, and praise on Content was believed to be an effective way to motivate the students. Supervisor Chen stated:

*On the second draft I [mostly] focused on the content of the student's thesis, and if the thesis is clear in argument, sufficient in discussion, typical in supporting materials, I will definitely write praise to it, because I like students to speak with data instead of empty reasoning, and the theses with these kinds of content are often something that touch my heart.*

For Supervisor Chen, it should be appreciated if the content was supported with data, which is one of the basic requirements in academic writing. Supporting their ideas with real data shows a great change in the students' way of thinking because it is often found that the Chinese students write their essays with imagination or based on their personal experiences in the classroom writing.

On Draft 3, the supervisors provided fewer positive WSF on the frontpage than on the second draft, and provided no positive feedback in the text. The negative WSF was provided both on the frontpage and in the text, but in a very small portion. The WSF on the frontpage and in the text was still predominantly in neutral connotation.

One reason for the supervisors' little use of positive connotation on Draft 3 might be that the supervisors would only give praise to those students who strictly followed the supervisors' WSF, or those students with great progress in grammar, so that their fourth drafts submitted to the thesis committee would be little

flawed. Supervisor Xu explained:

*I like those students who strictly followed my advices, and I would give positive feedback [on their writing attitudes] on the third draft even if the quality of their theses were not satisfactory, because they had tried their best. An [modest] writing attitude is important [in academic writing].*

For supervisor Xu, a good attitude, that is, listening to the supervisors' advice deserves acknowledgements, because the students' theses would be judged by the supervisors and the committee members. As students, they could write at their own will in their later career life, but for the degree thesis, it is best to follow the supervisors.

In summary, on the whole, the supervisors provided little positive or negative WSF and provided their WSF predominantly in neutral connotation throughout the three draft stages.

The main reason for the minimal occurrence of WSF in positive connotation in the Chinese supervisors' WSF might be related to Chinese culture in education. In Chinese context, it is not good for teachers to praise students, because praise will make students become proud, and being proud will hinder them from continuing to study hard. In the interview with the supervisors, they claimed they received little praise during their thesis or dissertation writing. One supervisor (Supervisor Tang) stated she even never realized she could give written feedback in a

positive way on students' thesis. When asked about when she would give WSF in positive connotation to students' theses, Supervisor Tang stated:

*I didn't know we can give students positive written comments. For me, the supervisors' written feedback is to point out what errors the students have and how to revise them.*

For Supervisor Tang, giving feedback on errors seemed granted and natural to the supervisors; praise is not a concern for the supervisors in giving WSF. Her idea was supported by other supervisors (Supervisors Mao, Wang, and Chang). This certainly contradicted many previous scholars (e.g., Bean, 2011; Spandel & Stiggins, 1990) who claimed that positive feedback is advocated by many scholars as "positive emotions enhance cognition" (Zull, 2000).

The reason for the little use of negative feedback in this study was justified by the Chinese supervisors for students' academic proficiency and students' face-saving. Given the fact that the thesis students were university level undergraduates, the supervisors considered it not surprising for the students to have many problems in their theses, so there is no need to criticize them (Supervisors Mao, Chen, Ou, and Wang). In addition, negative feedback would cause the students to lose face. Therefore, from the interview with the supervisors, instead of writing negative

feedback on paper, they criticized the students through other channels such as face-to-face meeting if the students really made many serious or repeated errors.

There was not much empirical research on the negative feedback, so it is unable to know teachers' practices in the frequency of negative feedback in other situations or contexts. However, negative feedback is claimed to be harmful to students in many studies (Bean, 2011; Smith, 2008; Weaver, 2006) as it has a potential of affecting students negatively (Nurie, 2018). The supervisors' little use of negative feedback in this study demonstrated that they take students' characteristics and needs into consideration when giving WSF.

The result of a large number of the neutral WSF instances supports the findings of some previous research that effective feedback should be information-loaded and offers a sense of direction and guidance to students in order to improve on subsequent pieces of work (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; Glover & Brown, 2006; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Nicol, 2010). The excessive use of neutral WSF reported in this study may have implications for students in understanding supervisors' communication patterns. In other words, most of the supervisors took the neutral WSF as their communication tool to provide directions to students on how to revise their

essays (Kumar & Stracke, 2007). In the same vein, Hyland and Hyland (2006) claimed that in order for improvement to take place, feedback should be loaded with information.

Furthermore, the results of this study also revealed that the supervisors only gave a few positive feedback instances on the second draft, while they gave both negative and neutral feedback through all the three drafts. This disconfirmed Bean (2011) who suggested positive feedback on the early drafts. Bean (2011) further claimed that, when giving written feedback at the early draft stage, the teachers' purpose is not to point out everything wrong with the paper but to facilitate improvement. Therefore, teachers' goal is to provide useful instruction, good advice, and warm encouragement. At the later stage of the writing process, when the students submit revised copies, the teachers' role is to judge and uphold the standards of the profession, giving out high marks only to those essays that meet the criteria. It is possible, of course, to do both simultaneously at all the draft stages.

Finally, although the positive WSF occurred a little more on Draft 2 than on Draft 3, the supervisors also use positive or negative connotations on both the second and third drafts. However, they claimed they gave positive or negative

connotations at will as Supervisor Wang claimed:

*I don't know on which drafts I provided or should provide more positive or negative comments. It depends on the theses and the students. If I were reading a thesis that was in very poor quality, I would possibly give some harsh words. However, if it is written by a low-achieving student, I would give a little praise instead to encourage him or her.*

Her idea was supported by other supervisors. They admitted that they gave positive or negative WSF randomly, without having an awareness at which draft stage they should give more or less positive or negative feedback. Instead, wherever they felt the students made much progress or spotted something valuable in the theses, they possibly gave a praise; wherever they felt the students wrote in a bad manner or made too many errors, they might give negative comments.

#### **4.2.4 Interactions of WSF Focus and Strategy in Different Draft Stages**

##### **4.2.4.1 Results**

Providing WSF on bachelor's thesis drafts was a dynamic process, in which the supervisors would adopt different strategies in accordance with different types of errors or WSF foci. As the WSF on the frontpage is the general feedback on the most important aspects or the most serious errors about the thesis drafts, the supervisors used only "Is" strategy. Among the 378 WSF instances on the frontpage in

the three draft stages, all of them were provided with “Is” strategy, no matter what aspects they were on.

As for the in-text WSF, Table 4.14 illustrates the interactions of WSF foci and strategies that were revealed from the feedback analysis on the students’ drafts.



**Table 4.14** Interaction of WSF Foci and WSF strategies in Different Stages

Stage	Co				Gr				Re			
	Dc	Ds	Ig	Is	Dc	Ds	Ig	Is	Dc	Ds	Ig	Is
D1	70(27%)	7(3%)	37(14%)	150(57%)	209(50%)	2(0%)	142(34%)	68(16%)	45(15%)	20(7%)	94(32%)	132(45%)
D2	87(41%)	3(0%)	33(15%)	90(42%)	260(50%)	2(0%)	185(35%)	77(15%)	32(13%)	13(5%)	105(42%)	100(40%)
D3	21(34%)	0	6(10%)	34(56%)	152(58%)	6(2%)	79(30%)	27(10%)	21(17%)	4(3%)	61(49%)	38(31%)
Total	178(33%)	10(0%)	76(14%)	274(51%)	621(51%)	10(1%)	406(34%)	172(14%)	98(15%)	37(6%)	260(39%)	270(41%)

**Table 4.14** Interaction of WSF Foci and WSF strategies in Different Stages (Cont.)

Stage	Or				LC				WA			
	Dc	Ds	Ig	Is	Dc	Ds	Ig	Is	Dc	Ds	Ig	Is
D1	9(11%)	6(7%)	17(20%)	51(61%)	85(67%)	0	15(12%)	26(21%)	0	0	0	0
D2	5(15%)	0	8(24%)	20(61%)	71(85%)	0	6(7%)	7(8%)	0	0	0	4(100%)
D3	4(27%)	1(7%)	2(13%)	8(53%)	60(88%)	2(3%)	1(1%)	5(7%)	0	0	0	0
Total	18(14%)	7(5%)	27(21%)	79(60%)	216(78%)	2(1%)	22(8%)	38(14%)	0	0	0	4(100%)

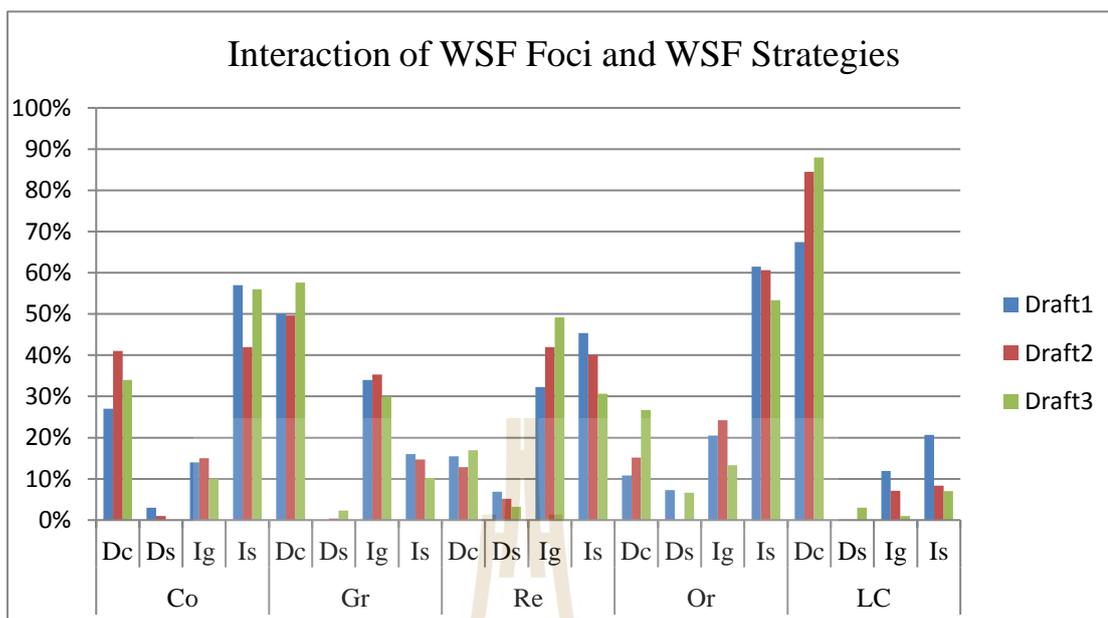
**Table 4.14** Interaction of WSF Foci and WSF strategies in Different Stages (Cont.)

Stage	UC			
	Dc	Ds	Ig	Is
D1	0	0	6(100%)	0
D2	0	0	7(100)	0
D3	0	0	4(100)	0
Total	0	0	17(100%)	0

Note. The percentage of interaction of a focus and a strategy at a stage= the number of its occurrence ÷ the number of the total focus at that stage.

As can be seen from Table 4.14, on the whole, the supervisors preferred the direct “Dc” strategy to any other strategy when giving WSF on Linguistic Appropriateness (78%) and Grammar (51%), and preferred the indirect “Is” strategy to any other strategy when giving WSF on Organizations (60%) and Content (51%), but they preferred both “Ig” (39%) and “Is” (41%) when giving WSF on Requirements. In other words, in the practices of providing WSF on Linguistic Appropriateness or Grammar, the supervisors liked to correct the errors directly (78% and 51%, respectively), but in providing WSF on Organizations and Content, the supervisors favored locating the errors with explanations (60% and 51%, respectively). Besides, when providing WSF on Requirements, the supervisors preferred to use both the “Ig” (39%) and “Is” (41%) strategies. As for the other two areas, all the supervisors used the “Is” strategy when giving WSF on Writing Attitudes and all used the “Ig” strategy on Unidentifiable Comments, respectively.

Figure 4.1 might show vividly the supervisors’ strategies related to the different WSF foci in different draft stages. From the figure, it can be seen that the supervisors’ WSF strategies to different foci varied across the three draft stages. In all the three draft stages, the strategies mainly used in the WSF on all the five aspects were “Dc”, “Ig” and “Is” (the strategies in WSF on WA and UC were completely “Is” and “Ig”, respectively, so these two aspects were not included in Figure 4.1).



**Figure 4.1** Interactions of WSF Foci and WSF Strategies in Different Draft Stages

Concerning the Content, it can be seen from Figure 4.1 that the frequencies of strategies “Dc” and “Ig” increased on Draft 2 and decreased on Draft 3, while the frequencies of “Is” decreased on Draft 2 and then increased on Draft 3.

Concerning Grammar, the frequencies of strategy “Dc” increased while that of “Is” decreased from Draft 1 to Draft 3, and the frequencies of strategy “Ig” increased on Draft 2 but decreased on Draft 3.

Regarding Requirements, both the frequencies of “Ds” and “Is” decreased from Draft 1 to Draft 3, while those of “Ig” increased markedly from Draft 1 to Draft 3.

Regarding Organization, the frequencies of strategy “Dc” increased from Draft 1 to Draft 3 while those of “Is” decreased; and for the

Linguistic Appropriateness, the frequencies of strategy “Dc” increased much while those of “Ig” and “Is” decreased from Draft 1 to Draft 3.

In conclusion, the frequencies of strategy “Dc” increased in WSF on Grammar, Organization, and Linguistic Appropriateness, but that of “Is” decreased in WSF on Grammar, Requirements, Organization and Linguistic Appropriateness throughout all the three stage. The “Ig” strategy increased in WSF on Requirements, but decreased in WSF on Content, Grammar, Organization and Linguistic Appropriateness from Draft 1 to Draft 3 (although it increased a little bit at Draft 2 in WSF on Content, Grammar, and Organization). As for the infrequently used “Ds” strategy, its frequencies increased in WSF on Grammar and Linguistic Appropriateness, but decreased in WSF on Content, Requirements and Organizations.

#### **4.2.4.2 Discussion**

As revealed in Section 4.2.4.1, on the whole, the supervisors preferred the direct strategy “Dc” to any other strategies when giving WSF on Linguistic Appropriateness (78%) and Grammar (51%), and preferred the indirect strategy “Is” to any other strategies when giving WSF on Organizations (60%) and Content (51%), but they preferred both “Ig” (39%) and “Is” (41%) when giving WSF on Requirements.

This result confirmed Ferris (2002, 2006) who suggested that

different feedback strategies should be given to different types of errors. However, she recommended giving indirect feedback on treatable errors and direct feedback on untreatable errors. According to Ferris (2002), “treatable” errors refer to errors in structures which are rule-bound and thus can be self-corrected by students and “untreatable” errors are errors that can be difficult to self-correct because the structures have no specific rules. An example of a treatable error is an error in subject-verb agreement; an example of an untreatable error is an error in word choice. Based on this definition, errors in Grammar and Requirements in this study are treatable errors, while errors in Linguistic Appropriateness, Content, and Organization are untreatable errors. However, the results of this study show that the supervisors mainly provided direct feedback strategy (“Dc”) to errors in Grammar (treatable errors) while provided indirect feedback strategy to errors in Content and Organization (“untreatable errors”), which contrasts with Ferris (2002).

Secondly, the results of this study also reveal that the interaction of WSF focus and strategy changed greatly from the first to the third draft. The strategy of “Dc” increased in three WSF foci (Grammar, Organization, and Linguistic Appropriateness) and “Is” decreased in four WSF foci (Grammar, Requirements, Organization and Linguistic Appropriateness) from the first to the third draft stages. However, the “Ig” strategy increased in one WSF focus (Requirements), but decreased in four WSF foci (Content, Grammar, Organization and Linguistic

Appropriateness), and the “Ds” strategy increased in two WSF foci (Grammar and Linguistic Appropriateness), but decreased in three WSF foci (Content, Requirements and Organizations) from Draft 1 to Draft 3. This proves that the Chinese supervisors were flexible on the interaction between WSF foci and strategies.

The supervisors were not conscious about how exactly they changed their interactions of WSF focus and strategy, but they justified their changes of the interaction between WSF focus and strategy from the first to the third draft by referring to error difficulty and students’ familiarity of supervisors’ WSF patterns. If the errors cannot be corrected on the first or the second draft, the supervisors would assume the error corrections were beyond the students’ ability. Then, they would correct the errors for the students, and thus “Dc” increased on the second and third drafts. Similarly, the supervisors thought their students had become familiar with their supervisors’ indirect feedback strategies from the first draft, so they gave less descriptions or explanations in pointing out the errors, and thus “Is” decreased and “Ig” increased on the second and the third drafts.

#### **4.2.5 Interactions of WSF Focus and Connotation in Different Draft Stages**

##### **4.2.5.1 Results**

The supervisors have their feelings or emotions responding to the quality of their students’ thesis drafts and the students’ revisions after receiving feedback, and these feelings or emotions could likely be reflected on their WSF in

different connotations. Table 4.15 presents the interaction of supervisors' WSF focus and connotation on the frontpage in the three draft stages.

**Table 4.15** Interaction of WSF Focus and Connotation on the Frontpage in Different Draft Stages

Stage	Co			Gr			Re			Or		
	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne
D1	0	1	84	0	1	21	0	0	24	3	0	17
		(1%)	(99%)		(5%)	(95%)			(100%)	(15%)		(85%)
D2	3	1	50	0	0	24	0	0	30	3	0	15
	(6%)	(2%)	(93%)			(100%)			(100%)	(17%)		(83%)
D3	2	1	22	0	0	22	0	0	35	1	0	5
	(8%)	(4%)	(88%)			(100%)			(100%)	(17%)		(83%)
Total	5	3	156	0	1	67	0	0	89	7	0	37
	(3%)	(2%)	(95%)		(1%)	(99%)			(100%)	(16%)		(84%)

**Table 4.15** Interaction of WSF Focus and Connotation on the Frontpage in Different Draft Stages (Cont.)

Stage	LC			WA			UC		
	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne
D1	0	0	2	0	0	2	0	0	0
			(100%)			(100%)			
D2	0	0	2	0	0	3	0	0	0
			(100%)			(100%)			
D3	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	0	0
				(25%)		(75%)			
Total	0	0	4	1	0	8	0	0	0
			(100%)	(11%)		(89%)			

From Table 4.15, it can be seen that the supervisors used much more positive connotation in WSF on Content (3%) and Organization (16%) than on the other aspects, and they used negative connotation only in WSF on Content (2%) and Grammar (1%).

On Draft 1, they tended to use positive connotation only in WSF on Organization (3 instances), and used little negative connotation (1 instance on Content and 1 on Grammar).

On Draft 2, the supervisors gave positive connotation in WSF on Content (3 instances) and Organization (3 instances), and used negative connotation only in WSF on Content (1 instance).

On Draft 3, the supervisors gave positive connotation in WSF on Content (2 instances), Organization (1 instance) and Writing Attitudes (1 instance), and used negative connotation only in WSF on Content (1 instance).

It might can be concluded that the supervisors had a stronger feeling toward the Content and Organizations than the other aspects on the frontpage because they used much more positive or negative connotations in WSF on these two aspects.

**Table 4.16** Interaction of WSF Focus and Connotation in the Text in Different Stages

Stage	Co			Gr			Re			Or		
	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne
D1	0	4 (2%)	260 (98%)	0	4 (0%)	418 (99%)	0	0	282 (100%)	0	2 (0%)	90 (98%)
D2	3 (0%)	1 (0%)	209 (98%)	0	9 (2%)	514 (98%)	1 (0%)	2 (0%)	247 (99%)	0	0	33 (100%)
D3	0	0	61 (100%)	0	1 (0%)	263 (100%)	0	2 (0%)	122 (98%)	0	0	15 (100%)
Total	3 (1%)	5 (1%)	530 (99%)	0	14 (1%)	1195 (99%)	1 (0%)	4 (1%)	651 (99%)	0	2 (1%)	138 (99%)

**Table 4.16** Interaction of WSF Focus and Connotation in the Text in Different Stages (Cont.)

Stage	LC			WA			UC		
	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne
D1	0	1(0%)	124(99%)	0	0	0	0	0	6(100%)
D2	0	1(0%)	84(99%)	0	4(100%)	0	0	0	7(100%)
D3	0	1(0%)	67(99%)	0	0	0	0	0	4(100%)
Total	0	3(1%)	275(99%)	0	4(100%)	0	0	0	17(100%)

*The percentage of the interaction of a focus and a connotation=the number of its occurrence ÷ the total of the focus in that stage. For example, in D1, the total Co is 264 (4+260), and the occurrence of the interaction of Co and Ng is 4, so the percentage is about 2% (4÷264).*

As Table 4.16 shows, there was little positive in-text WSF (only 4 out of the total 2842 instances) provided by the supervisors on the students' thesis drafts, and they were mostly provided on the issues related to the Content (3 instances) and Requirement (1 instance). This is an example of a supervisor's positive connotation on the Content of students' thesis.

***“The content of this chapter is satisfying now.” (S23D3, p.3)***

In this example, the supervisor praised the quality of the Content of one chapter, implying that the student could leave this chapter aside and focus on revising the other chapters.

Compared to the positive feedback, there were more negative WSF (32 instances, or 1%) provided by the supervisors on the students' thesis drafts. The negative WSF was mostly provided on Writing Attitudes (4 instances Or 100%), Grammar (14 instances Or 1%), Content (5 instances Or 1%), and Requirements (4

instances or 1%). The following examples illustrate how the supervisors provided negative feedback on students' Writing Attitudes:

*"The percentage of plagiarism is too high!" (S3D3, p. 4)*

*"You have not revise anything according to my feedback again?!" (S1D2, p. 26)*

Another two examples could show how the supervisors blended their negative connotation in WSF on Grammar:

*"More and more chaotic! The sentences have no structures!" (S25D2, p.22)*

*"I cannot continue to read it! No sentence is grammatically correct." (S2D2, p.14)*

In these two examples, it can be seen that the supervisors were irritated by the students' grammatical errors. They used "chaotic" and "I cannot continue to read it" to express their negative emotions on the quality of the students' grammar.

However, the most popular connotation in the supervisors' WSF was neutral. That is, the supervisors only pointed out or described the errors in the students' thesis drafts, with no judgmental, emotive or critical comments. The neutral connotation was used in every aspect except for Writing Attitudes. For example:

<b>Errors in the drafts</b>	<b>Category of errors</b>	<b>Supervisors' WSF</b>
Once Oliver Twist was published, it has aroused extensive attention. (S6D1, p.3)	Requirements	Once <u>Olive Twist</u> was... <i>Italics.</i>

In this example, the supervisor underlined the error and used one word “italics” to tell the student how to revise it. This shows that the supervisors used their written feedback as a means to improve students’ academic writing performance, but not a means to please or criticize students.

As for the connotations in different draft stages, there was no WSF in positive connotation on Draft 1, but few negative connotation instances were related to some WSF on Content (4 instances), Grammar (4 instances), and Organization (2 instances). On Draft 2, most positive connotation was related to WSF on Content (3 instances), and most negative connotation was related to WSF on Grammar (9 instances) and Writing Attitudes (4 instances). On Draft 3, there was no WSF in positive connotation, and the few WSF instances in negative connotation was related to Requirements (2 instances), Grammar (1 instance) and Linguistic Appropriateness (1 instance).

In summary, the findings showed that while few WSF instances on Content (1%) were provided in positive connotation and few WSF on Writing Attitudes (100%), Grammar (1%), Content (1%) and Requirements (1%) were provided in negative connotation, dominant WSF instances on all aspects were

provided in neutral connotation. In addition, all positive and most negative WSF (53%) appeared on Draft 2.

#### 4.5.2.2 Discussion

Given the very small number of positive WSF instances, it cannot be concluded that the supervisors would like to provide positive feedback on certain foci in certain sections. As the interview with the supervisors revealed, they were not sure in which sections and whether they should give positive WSF or not. Even among the four important sections they would give more feedback, that is, the Abstract, Content Table, Literature Review, and Conclusion (See Section 4.3.1.1), the supervisors only provided a fraction of positive feedback in the section of Literature Review. This finding suggested some implications for the supervisor training on the importance of positive WSF.

Similarly, it cannot be concluded that the supervisors preferred interactions of the negative connotation and certain WSF foci in certain sections, providing the fact that there were a very small number of interactions of negative connotation with different feedback foci in each section.

The supervisors provided neutral WSF on every focus at a high frequency in each section, so it can only be concluded that the supervisors preferred the interaction of neutral connotation and every WSF focus in each section.

### 4.3 Practices of WSF in Different Sections

A bachelor's thesis consists of several parts. In order to understand the supervisors' WSF practices in different parts, this study divided a bachelor's thesis into eleven components: Frontpage (FT), Title (TL), Content Table (CT), Abstract (AB), Introduction (IN), Literature Review or Theoretical Basis (LR), Methodology or Analysis (MT), Results and Discussion or Countermeasures and Suggestions (RD), Conclusion (CO), Bibliography (BB), Appendices and Acknowledgements (AA) (See Table 3.3 in Section 3.3.1.4). This part presents the findings of the supervisors' WSF practices in these eleven sections.

#### 4.3.1 WSF Focus in Different Sections

##### 4.3.1.1 Results

Table 4.17 presents the WSF focus on the Frontpage. It can be seen from the table that the supervisors provided most of their WSF on Content (43.4%), then, they provided much WSF on Requirements (23.5%), Grammar (17.9%) and Organization (11.6%). They provided little WSF on Linguistic Appropriateness (1.3%) or Writing Attitudes (2.1%). In this section, there was no Unidentifiable comments. This shows that the supervisors attached most importance to Content when they considered the general quality of the thesis drafts.

**Table 4.17** Supervisors' WSF Focus on Frontpage in Different Sections

Section	WSF Focus							Total
	Co	Gr	Re	Or	LC	WA	UC	
FT	164 (43.4%)	68 (17.9%)	89 (23.5%)	44 (11.6%)	5 (1.3%)	8 (2.1%)	0	378

Note. *FT=Frontpage; The percentage of each focus=the number of its occurrence ÷ the number of the total.*

Table 4.18 presents the findings of WSF focus in different thesis sections. From the table, it can be noticed that the supervisors liked to provide different WSF foci in different sections.

**Table 4.18** Supervisors' WSF Focus in Different Sections

Section	WSF Foci						
	Co	Gr	Re	Or	LC	WA	UC
TL	2(8%)	11(42%)	12(46%)	0	1(4%)	0	0
CT	55(31%)	28(16%)	62(34%)	20(11%)	15(8%)	0	0
AB	31(20%)	67(42%)	22(14%)	3(2%)	33(21%)	0	2(1%)
IN	67(17%)	166(43%)	84(22%)	21(5%)	48(12%)	0	0
LR	79(13%)	274(45%)	186(30%)	20(3%)	44(7%)	4(1%)	5(1%)
MT	118(19%)	301(49%)	90(15%)	35(6%)	71(11%)	0	4(1%)
RD	131(23%)	260(47%)	98(18%)	25(4%)	42(8%)	0	2(0%)
CO	36(19%)	99(52%)	26(14%)	6(3%)	24(13%)	0	0
BB	0	1(1%)	74(94%)	0	0	0	4(5%)
AA	19(58%)	2(6%)	11(33%)	1(3%)	0	0	0
Total	538 (18.9%)	1209 (42.5%)	665 (23.4%)	131 (4.6%)	278 (9.8%)	4 (0.1%)	17 (0.6%)

Note. *TL=title; CT=content table; AB=abstract; IN=introduction; LR=literature review; MT=methods; RD=results and discussion; CO=conclusion; BB=bibliography; AA=Appendices and Acknowledgements.*

*The percentage of each focus in a section=the number of its occurrence ÷ the number of the total WSF foci in that section.*

In the Title section (TL), the supervisors mainly provided WSF on Grammar (42%) and Requirements (46%). In the Content Table, the supervisors

preferred to give WSF on Requirements (34%) and Content (31%). In the Abstract, the supervisors provided much WSF on Grammar (42%), Content (20%) and Linguistic Appropriateness (21%). Then, in the Introduction, they gave much WSF on Grammar (43%) and Requirements (22%). In the Literature Review, the supervisors gave attention to Grammar (45%) and Requirements (30%), and in the Methodology, they paid attention to Grammar (49%) and Content (19%). In the Results and Discussion, the supervisors focused on Grammar (47%) and Content (23%), and in the Conclusion, they emphasized Grammar (52%) and Content (19%). In the Bibliography, they definitely gave much WSF on Requirements (94%), and in the Appendices and Acknowledgements, the supervisors gave much WSF on Content (58%) and Requirements (33%).

In other words, the supervisors mainly provided WSF on Content in these sections: Appendices and Acknowledgement (58%), Content Table (31%), Results or Discussions (23%), Abstracts (20%), Methodology (19%) and Conclusion (19%). However, they gave much WSF on Grammar in the sections of Title (42%), Abstracts (42%), Introduction (43%), Literature Review (45%), Methodology (49%), Results and Discussions (47%), and Conclusions (52%), that is, they provided WSF on Grammar throughout the main body of a thesis from Abstract to Conclusion. As for the WSF on Requirements, the supervisors liked to pay their attention on Bibliography (94%), Title (46%), Content Table (34%), Appendices and

Acknowledgements (33%), Introduction (22%) And Literature Review (30%). Regarding the WSF on Organization, the supervisors paid their attention on the part of Content Table (11%) rather than in any other part. Also, the supervisors liked to provide WSF on Linguistic Appropriateness in the parts of Abstract (21%), Introduction (12%) and Conclusion (13%). All their WSF on Writing Attitudes (1%) appeared in the section of Literature Review.

#### **4.3.1.2 Discussion**

As Bitchener (2016) pointed out, knowing the WSF foci that supervisors typically provide written feedback in different sections is very important because it can reveal not only the priorities of supervisors but also the strengths and shortcomings of their students' writing in different sections. Additionally, insights into the written feedback practices may be instructive for less experienced supervisors and inspirational for more experienced supervisors. In this study, a bachelor's thesis was divided into eleven sections (Frontpage, Title, Content Table, Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results and Discussion, Conclusion, Bibliography, and Appendices and Acknowledgement), and the results found the supervisors laid different importance on different foci in different sections.

Since the length of each section is different, it is not appropriate to judge which sections received the most WSF from the supervisors by calculating the number of WSF instances in each section. From the interview with the supervisors,

the sections in which the supervisors would like to give most WSF included Abstract (AB), Content Table (CT), Literature Review (LR), and Conclusion (Co). For the supervisors, Abstract is “an important genre for the EM -students’ academic development”, “the compression of the whole thesis” (Supervisor Ou), or a section “to cultivate the students’ writing skill to outline the main points of their theses” (Supervisor Kang). Content Table is the structure of the thesis, “guiding the whole thesis into a logic way” and “is an indispensable part of a thesis” (Supervisor Mao). Literature Review is important because it “can reflect the quality of the students’ theses because you can understand how much the students know about the related studies on their topics” (Supervisor Ou; Supervisor Xu). Finally, Conclusion is an essential part and was explained by the supervisors that it is the section in which the students’ final conclusion and contributions lay.

From Section 4.1.2.1, in Abstract, the supervisors provided WSF mostly on Grammar (42%), Linguistic Appropriateness (21%), and Content (20%); In Content Table, the supervisors gave WSF mostly on Requirements (34%) and Content (31%); In Literature Review, they provided WSF mostly on Grammar (45%) and Requirements (30%); In Conclusion, they provided most WSF on Grammar (52%) and Content (19%).

The results seemed to disconfirm with Bitchener (2016)’s study which divided a doctoral dissertation into seven sections: Abstract, Introduction,

Literature Review, Methodology, Results/Findings, Discussion, and Conclusion, and then asked 30 doctoral supervisors in Applied Linguistics from New Zealand and Australia whether there are any areas of content within these sections they frequently comment on. The results showed that the supervisors provided written feedback mainly on three sections: Literature Review, Methodology, and Discussion. In addition, in the Literature Review, the supervisors commented on critical evaluation of literature, on literature coverage, and on the theoretical underpinnings of the student's research. In the Methodology section, the supervisors mainly provided written feedback on literature support for particular aspects of the methodology that have been described, such as why a mixed-method approach to data collection was appropriate, or why and how a triangulation of data would occur with the data sources referred to. In the Discussion section, the supervisors mostly provided written feedback on the students' discussion of their findings in light of the bigger picture, that is, the discussion should not be superficial on how their research findings advance our knowledge, but use the literature to discuss why their findings occurred as they did and what their findings add to or suggest about the research reported in the Literature Review. In other words, the 30 supervisors would provide most Content feedback on the Literature Review, Methodology and Discussion chapters.

The difference between the results in the present study and those in Bitchener's (2016) study may be explained by the great language proficiency gap

between the EM-students and the doctoral students as well as the different requirements between bachelor's degree thesis and doctoral dissertation. For the EM-students, they were EFL learners at the undergraduate level with a relatively low language proficiency compared with the doctorate candidates, especially in writing skills. In addition, it was the first time for them to write a thesis. So, the supervisors' responsibility was to help the EM-students with many aspects including Content, Grammar, Requirements in those sections they considered important. However, in Bitchener's (2016) study, the supervisors were native English speakers, and the possible doctorate candidates would be advanced EFL learners or L1 speakers with experiences in academic writing, familiar with the academic or institutional requirements, and good at grammar. Then, the supervisors would focus more on Content for those sections they considered important.

### **4.3.2 WSF Strategy in Different Sections**

#### **4.3.2.1 Results**

Since the WSF on the Frontpage is the general feedback about the thesis drafts, all the 378 WSF instances on it were provided with "Is" strategy.

The supervisors' WSF strategies on other sections, as presented in Table 4.19, revealed that the supervisors used the four strategies in all the sections except the appendices and acknowledgement (AA).

**Table 4.19** Supervisors' WSF Strategy in Different Sections

Section	WSF Strategies					Subtotal
	Dc	Ds	subtotal	Ig	Is	
TL	11(42%)	1(4%)	12(46%)	6(23%)	8(31%)	14(54%)
CT	83(46%)	12(7%)	95(53%)	37(21%)	48(27%)	85(48%)
AB	97(61%)	3(2%)	100(63%)	40(25%)	18(11%)	58(36%)
IN	157(41%)	7(2%)	164(43%)	105(27%)	117(30%)	222(57%)
LR	227(37%)	20(3%)	247(40%)	162(26%)	203(33%)	365(59%)
MT	261(42%)	13(2%)	274(44%)	195(32%)	150(24%)	345(56%)
RD	200(36%)	8(1%)	208(37%)	162(29%)	188(34%)	350(63%)
CO	76(40%)	1(1%)	77(41%)	50(26%)	64(34%)	114(60%)
BB	4(5%)	1(1%)	5(6%)	35(44%)	39(49%)	74(94%)
AA	15(45%)	0	15(45%)	16(48%)	2(6%)	18(54%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1131(40%)</b>	<b>66(2%)</b>	<b>1197(42%)</b>	<b>808(28%)</b>	<b>837(29%)</b>	<b>1645(58%)</b>

Note. *The percentage of a strategy in a section= the number of its occurrence ÷ the total of all strategies in that section.*

As shown in Table 4.19, the supervisors liked to use indirect strategies more than direct ones in the sections of title (54%), introduction (57%), literature review (59%), methods (56%), results and discussion (63%), conclusion (60%), bibliography (94%), and appendices and acknowledgements (54%). Only in two of these sections, that is, content table and abstract, the supervisors liked to correct the students directly (53% and 63%, respectively) more than to point out the areas for improvement indirectly.

In different sections, the supervisors used the direct strategies almost in a stable manner. They used "Dc" throughout all the sections except the bibliography at about 40% (37% to 61%), and used "Ds" at about 2% in all the sections except for Appendices and Acknowledgements. However, the supervisors

used indirect strategies throughout different sections with great variations. The “Ig” strategy was used over 20% to 30% in most sections, but was used much more in the sections of Bibliography (44%) and Appendices and Acknowledgements (48%). Conversely, the strategy “Is” was used in Bibliography at 7% and in Abstract at 11%, and then at about 30% in other six sections, but reached 49% in Bibliography. In addition, the number of “Is” strategy was more than that of “Ig” in most sections, but in the sections of Abstract, Methodology and Appendices and acknowledgements, “Ig” was more often used than “Is”.

To conclude, the supervisors tended to use all the four strategies, but they used “Dc” at a stable manner, and used few “Ds” strategy in different sections. However, the supervisors used “Ig” and “Is” with fluctuations in different sections.

#### **4.3.2.2 Discussion**

As revealed in Section 4.3.2.1, the supervisors used both direct and indirect strategies in all sections of thesis drafts. However, they used direct strategies more than indirect strategies in two sections: Abstract and Content Table. Specifically, the supervisors used 46% of “Dc” (direct correction without description) in the Content Table and 61% of “Dc” in the Abstract. In the other sections, they used indirect strategies more than direct ones.

This finding can be explained by the supervisors’ use of direct

strategies to correct the students' errors in difficult sections. As a specific genre, abstract writing needs great summarizing skills, and the students lack the training and practice of writing such a genre. So, it is a common phenomenon that the students have many problems in the integration of basic elements, cohesiveness, formality, objectivity, and conciseness (Zhang, He, & Han, 2007) in the section of Abstract. Similarly, the Content Table is the leading line for the whole thesis; it decides the logical connection of different sections and the organization of the whole thesis. Moreover, students usually neglected the writing of the Content Table. It is quite common to see sentences, predicate verbs, and non-grammatical units in Content Tables, or the subtitles not covering or unrelated to the Content in the text. Therefore, the supervisors used more direct strategies in these two important sections to instruct the students how to write and revise.

In addition, this finding may also be explained by the workload brought by the direct strategy. Giving WSF with direct strategies would be more time-consuming than with indirect strategies, but the Abstract and Content Table can be said to be the shortest sections in a bachelor's thesis. Therefore, the supervisors used the direct strategies in these two shortest sections while used the indirect strategies in other sections to avoid their heavy workload.

### 4.3.3 WSF Connotation in Different Sections

#### 4.3.3.1 Results

The connotations which the supervisors used in their WSF practices on the frontpage are presented in Table 4.20. From the table, neutral connotation was found to be the most popular (95.5%), and positive connotation was little given (3.4%), but negative connotation was cautiously given (1.1%) by the supervisors in the section of the frontpage.

**Table 4.20** Supervisors' WSF Connotation on the Frontpage in Different Sections

Po	Ng	Ne	Total
13(3.4%)	4(1.1%)	361(95.5%)	378

Note. *The percentage of a connotation = the number of its occurrence ÷ the total.*

Table 4.21 displays the results of WSF connotations in the other ten sections. It can be easily seen that the supervisors used almost neutral connotation in their WSF practices in all the sections.

**Table 4.21** Supervisors' WSF Connotation in the Text in Different Sections

Section	WSF Connotations			Subtotal
	Po	Ng	Ne	
TL	0	0	26(100%)	26
CT	0	2(1.1%)	178(98.9%)	180
AB	0	2(1.3%)	156(98.7%)	158
IN	0	5(1.3%)	381(98.7%)	386
LR	2(0.3%)	7(1.1%)	603(98.9%)	612
MT	0	2(0.3%)	617(99.7%)	619
RD	0	11(2%)	547(98%)	558
CO	0	1(0.5%)	190(99.5%)	191
BB	1(1.3%)	2(2.5%)	76(96.2%)	79
AA	1(3%)	0	32(97%)	33
Total (%)	4(0.1%)	32(1.1%)	2806(98.8%)	2842

Note. *The percentage of a connotation in a section = the number of its occurrence ÷ the subtotal.*

From Table 4.21, it can be seen that only 4 WSF instances containing positive connotation, which were in the section of Literature Review (0.3%), Bibliography (1.3%) and Appendices and Acknowledgements (3%). It shows that the supervisors did not like to give affirmative feedback in all the sections.

However, negative connotation can be found in all the sections except the Title (TL) and Appendices and Acknowledgements (AA). In the sections of Results and Discussion (RD) and Bibliography (BB), the supervisors provided WSF in negative connotation at 2% and 2.5%, respectively; but in the other sections, the percentage of negative connotation in their WSF practices was about 1%. This shows that the supervisors used the negative connotation in their WSF cautiously.

Concerning the neutral connotation, it took a dominant position in all the sections. In TL, the percentage of the neutral connotation in WSF practices reached 100%, and in the other sections, the percentages of the neutral connotation in WSF instances varied from 96.2% to 99.7%.

In summary, the supervisors were found to provide WSF in positive, negative and neutral connotations. However, the positive connotation was only found in the sections of the Frontpage (3.4%), Literature Review (0.3%), Bibliography (1.3%), And Acknowledgement and Appendices (3%), and negative connotation was found in all the sections except Title and Acknowledgement and

Appendices. Both positive and negative connotations were given in small percentages in different sections.

#### 4.3.3.2 Discussion

The results revealed that the supervisors provided positive WSF only in a few sections: the Frontpage, the Literature Review, the Bibliography, and the Acknowledgement and Appendices. The positive WSF mostly occurred on the Frontage. This can be explained by the supervisors' negative attitude towards positive WSF. According to them, only great progress and achievements on the important aspects could receive praise. So, they took the students' minor progress in the text for granted, and focused on the weaknesses of the theses. Similarly, Nurie (2018) found that the supervisors gave little positive written feedback.

In contrast to the positive connotation, the negative connotation occurred in all the sections except Title, Appendices and Acknowledgement. In addition, the negative WSF mainly occurred in the text. This can be explained by the students' poor writing in every section. Since the Title has been decided in the proposal before the draft thesis writing, and the Appendices and the Acknowledgement were either decided in the proposal or were imitated from others, there would be few serious errors in them, so the supervisors gave no negative WSF in these two sections. However, the EM-students made plenty of errors on all aspects in the other sections, and some were really irritating, so the supervisors gave negative

WSF to them in order to display their dissatisfaction and attract the students' attention, and hoped the students to correct these errors with priority.

The findings demonstrated that the neutral WSF occurred in every section and appeared in a predominant frequency. It can be understood that the supervisors wanted to provide the students with suggestions or information so that the students' theses could reach the criterion set by their institutions.

#### 4.3.4 Interactions of WSF Focus and Strategy in Different Sections

##### 4.3.4.1 Results

Since all the WSF instances were provided with "Is" strategy on the Frontpage, they were not included in this report on the interaction of WSF focus and strategy in different sections. The findings of the interactions of WSF foci and strategies, as presented in Table 4.22, reveals that the supervisors varied on their strategies depending on WSF foci in different sections.

**Table 4.22** Interactions of WSF Foci and Strategies in the Text in Different Sections

Section	Co				Gr			
	Dc	Ds	Ig	Is	Dc	Ds	Ig	Is
TL	2(100%)	0	0	0	8(73%)	0	1(9%)	2(18%)
CT	27(49%)	0	8(15%)	20(36%)	20(71%)	3(11%)	3(11%)	2(7%)
AB	19(61%)	0	4(13%)	8(26%)	41(61%)	2(3%)	16(24%)	8(12%)
IN	27(40%)	2(3%)	4(6%)	34(51%)	98(59%)	1(1%)	43(26%)	24(14%)
LR	29(37%)	1(1%)	11(14%)	38(48%)	130(47%)	3(1%)	84(31%)	57(21%)
MT	25(21%)	2(1%)	19(16%)	72(61%)	135(45%)	1(0%)	124(41%)	41(14%)
RD	24(18%)	4(3%)	15(11%)	88(67%)	129(50%)	0	113(43%)	18(7%)
CO	11(30%)	0	5(14%)	20(56%)	54(55%)	0	23(23%)	22(22%)
BB	0	0	0	0	0	1(100%)	0	0
AA	129(63%)	0	7(37%)	0	1(50%)	0	1(50%)	0



**Table 4.22** Interactions of WSF Foci and Strategies in Text in Different Sections  
(Cont.)

Section	UC				Total
	Dc	Ds	Ig	Is	
TL	0	0	0	0	26
CT	0	0	0	0	180
AB	0	0	2(100%)	0	158
IN	0	0	0	0	386
LR	0	0	5(100%)	0	612
MT	0	0	4(100%)	0	619
RD	0	0	2(100%)	0	558
CN	0	0	0	0	191
BB	0	0	4(100%)	0	79
AA	0	0	0	0	33

Note. The percentage= the number of the interaction occurrence ÷ the total of the focus instances in that section. For example, in CT section, the total of the Co instances is 55 (27+8+20), so the percentage of interaction of Co and Dc=27÷55=49%.

For WSF on Content, the supervisors used more indirect strategies than direct strategies. “Dc” strategy was mostly used in the sections of Content Table (62%), Abstract (54%), and Appendices and Acknowledgement (50%), while the “Ig” strategy was mostly used in the sections of the Title (100%) and Appendices and Acknowledgement (50%), and “Is” was mostly used in the sections of Introduction (70%), Literature Review (58%), Methodology (54%), Results and Discussion (55%) and Conclusion (77%).

Regarding WSF on Grammar, the supervisors used more direct strategies than indirect strategies in different sections. “Dc” was much used in the Title (89%), Content Table (75%), Abstract (74%), Introduction (%), Literature Review (%), Conclusion (%) and Bibliography (%), while “Ig” was much used in

the Introduction (30%), Methodology (44%), Results and Discussion (40%), and Conclusion (33%), but the “Is” strategy was used less than 20% in all the sections.

Concerning WSF on Requirements, the supervisors used overwhelmingly the indirect strategies in all the sections. In the Content Table, the percentage of direct strategies reached 38%, but in the other sections, the percentage of indirect strategies exceeded 80%.

Concerning WSF on Organization, the supervisors also used much more indirect strategies than direct ones in all the sections. Relating to Linguistic Appropriateness, the supervisors used more direct strategies than indirect ones in all the sections. With reference to Writing Attitudes and Unidentifiable Comments, the supervisors used all indirect strategies in the WSF practices.

To conclude, the supervisors used both direct and indirect strategies in WSF on Content, Grammar, Requirements, Organization, and Linguistic Appropriateness in all the sections, but the WSF focus on Writing Attitudes and the Unidentifiable Comments were provided with only indirect strategies (“Is” or “Ig”). However, they used more direct strategies in WSF on Grammar and Linguistic Appropriateness, and more indirect strategies in WSF on Requirements, Organizations and Content.

#### 4.3.4.2 Discussion

The study revealed that the supervisors used more direct strategies than indirect strategies for the focus of Content in two sections of the Title and the Abstract, for the focus of Grammar in all the sections except the Literature Review and the Methodology, and for the focus of Linguistic Appropriateness in all the sections. On the contrary, they used more indirect strategies than direct strategies for the foci of Requirements and Organization in all the sections.

This finding may firstly be explained by the time-saving of error correction on different aspects. Generally, the correction of errors on Content is more time consuming than that on Grammar and Linguistic Appropriateness. Therefore, the supervisors provided more indirect strategies on Content, and provided more direct strategies on Grammar. However, considering the Content as an important aspect, the supervisors provided Content feedback with direct strategies in some short sections such as the Title and the Abstract, so that they could take both the time-saving and the importance of feedback focus into account.

Another reason might be that the supervisors wanted to give opportunities to their students for practicing their thinking because feedback provision is also an academic instruction. For the grammar, the supervisors believed that the students have a relatively good command, and their grammatical errors would be due to their carelessness or their concentration on Content. However, for the errors on other

aspects such as Requirements or Organization, the supervisors believed that they could be good opportunities for the students to improve their academic writing. As a result, the supervisors used more indirect strategies for Requirements feedback and Organization feedback in all the sections, and for Content feedback in most sections.

#### 4.3.5 Interactions of WSF Focus and Connotation in Different Sections

##### 4.3.5.1 Results

Table 4.23 presents the interaction of WSF foci and connotations on the frontpage. From the table, it can be observed that the neutral connotation was mostly used in WSF on Content (95.2%), Grammar (98.5%), Requirements (100%), Organization (84.1%), Linguistic Appropriateness (100%), and Writing Attitudes (87.5%). However, the supervisors used positive connotation only in WSF on Content (3%), Organization (15.9%), and Writing Attitudes (12.5%), and they used negative connotation only in WSF on Content (1.8%) and Grammar (1.5%).

**Table 4.23** Interactions of WSF Foci and Connotations on the Frontpage

	Co	Gr	Re	Or	LC	WA	UC
Po	5(3%)	0	0	7(15.9%)	0	1(12.5%)	0
Ng	3(1.8%)	1(1.5%)	0	0	0	0	0
Ne	156(95.2%)	67(98.5%)	89(100%)	37(84.1%)	5(100%)	7(87.5%)	0
Total	164	68	89	44	5	8	0

Note. *The percentage of the interaction of a focus and a connotation = the number of its occurrence ÷ the total of the focus. For example, the total of Content (Co) is 164, and the number of the interaction of Co and Po is 5, so the percentage is  $5 \div 164 = 3\%$ .*

Table 4.24 shows the interactions of the supervisors' WSF foci and connotations in the other ten sections. As the table shows, the supervisors provided

their WSF on all foci except Writing Attitudes with neutral connotation in all sections. Specifically, in the Title, the supervisors provided four WSF foci (Content, Grammar, Requirements, and Linguistic Appropriateness) with 100% neutral connotation. In Content Table, the supervisors provided four WSF foci (Content, Requirements, Organization, and Linguistic Appropriateness) with 100% neutral connotation. In Abstract, they provided five WSF foci (Grammar, Requirements, Organization, Linguistic Appropriateness, Unidentifiable Comments) with 100% neutral connotations. In Introduction, they provided three WSF foci (Grammar, Organization, and Linguistic Appropriateness) with 100% neutral connotation. Similarly, the supervisors provided five WSF foci (Grammar, Requirements, Organization, Linguistic Appropriateness, Unidentifiable Comments) in Literature Review, five WSF foci (Content, Grammar, Organization, Linguistic Appropriateness, and Unidentifiable Comments) in Methodology, four WSF foci (Content, Requirements, Linguistic Appropriateness, and Unidentifiable Comments) in Results And Discussion, four WSF foci ( Grammar, Requirements, Organization, and Linguistic Appropriateness) in Conclusion, two WSF foci (Grammar, and Unidentifiable Comments) in Bibliography, and three WSF foci (Grammar, Requirements, and Organization) in Appendices and Acknowledgement with 100% neutral connotation. The supervisors only provided WSF in positive connotation in the section of Literature Review on Content (1%), in Bibliography on Requirements

(3%), and in Appendices and Acknowledgement on Content (1%). Conversely, they provided WSF in negative connotation in the section of Content Table on Grammar (14%), in Abstract on Content (3%), in Introduction on Content (4%) and on Requirements (4%), in Literature Review on Writing Attitudes (100%), in Methodology on Requirements (1%), in Results and Discussion on Grammar (4%) and Organization (12%), in Conclusion on Content (3%).

**Table 4.24** Interactions of WSF Foci and Connotations in Different Sections

Section	Co			Gr			Re		
	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne
TL	0	0	2(100%)	0	0	11(100%)	0	0	12(100%)
CT	0	0	55(100%)	0	4(14%)	24(86%)	0	0	62(100%)
AB	0	1(3%)	30(97%)	0	0	67(100%)	0	0	22(100%)
IN	0	4(6%)	63(94%)	0	0	166(100%)	0	3(4%)	81(96%)
LR	1(1%)	0	78(99%)	0	0	274(100%)	0	0	186(100%)
MT	0	0	118(100%)	0	0	301(100%)	0	1(1%)	89(99%)
RD	0	0	131(100%)	0	11(4%)	249(96%)	0	0	98(100%)
CO	0	1(3%)	35(97%)	0	0	99(100%)	0	0	26(100%)
BB	0	0	0	0	0	1(100%)	2(3%)	0	72(97%)
AA	1(5%)	0	18(95%)	0	0	2(100%)	0	0	11(100%)

**Table 4.24** Interactions of WSF Foci and Connotations in Different Sections (Cont.)

Section	Or			LC			WA		
	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne	Po	Ng	Ne
TL	0	0	0	0	0	1(100%)	0	0	0
CT	0	0	20(100%)	0	0	15(100%)	0	0	0
AB	0	0	3(100%)	0	0	33(100%)	0	0	0
IN	0	0	21(100%)	0	0	48(100%)	0	0	0
LR	0	0	20(100%)	0	0	44(100%)	0	4(100%)	0
MT	0	0	35(100%)	0	0	71(100%)	0	0	0
RD	0	3(12%)	22(88%)	0	0	42(100%)	0	0	0
CO	0	0	6(100%)	0	0	24(100%)	0	0	0
BB	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
AA	0	0	1(100%)	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 4.24** Interactions of WSF Foci and Connotations in Different Sections (Cont.)

Section	UC			Total
	Po	Ng	Ne	
TL	0	0	0	26
CT	0	0	0	180
AB	0	0	2(100%)	158
IN	0	0	0	386
LR	0	0	5(100%)	612
MT	0	0	4(100%)	619
RD	0	0	2(100%)	558
CO	0	0	0	191
BB	0	0	4(100%)	79
AA	0	0	0	33

To conclude, in the eleven sections, the supervisors provided WSF on all foci (except Writing Attitudes) mainly in neutral connotation. They also provided little WSF in positive connotation in the sections of Frontpage, Literature Review, Bibliography, and Appendices and Acknowledgement, and related the positive connotation to Content, Organization, Requirements, and Writing Attitudes. Conversely, the supervisors used the negative connotation in all the sections except the title, and related the negative connotation to all foci except Linguistic Appropriateness and Unidentifiable Comments.

#### 4.3.5.2 Discussion

The study revealed that the supervisors provided positive feedback on Content and Organization on the Frontpage, on Content in the sections of Literature Review and Appendices and Acknowledgement, and on Requirements in Bibliography. In addition, they provided negative feedback on Content and Grammar

on the frontpage, and on Content, Grammar, Requirements, Organization and Writing Attitudes in a few sections.

Given the very small number of positive WSF instances, it cannot be concluded that the supervisors would like to provide positive feedback on certain foci in certain sections. As the interview with the supervisors revealed, they were not sure in which sections and whether they should give positive WSF or not. Even among the four important sections they would give more feedback, that is, the Abstract, Content Table, Literature Review, and Conclusion (Section 4.3.1.1), the supervisors only provided a fraction of positive feedback in the section of Literature Review. This finding suggested some implications for the supervisor training on the importance of positive WSF.

Similarly, it cannot be concluded that the supervisors preferred interactions of the negative connotation and certain WSF foci in certain sections, providing the fact that there were a very small number of interactions of negative connotation with different feedback foci in each section.

The supervisors provided neutral WSF on every focus at a high frequency in each section, so it can only be concluded that the supervisors preferred the interaction of neutral connotation and every WSF focus in each section.

## **4.4 Students' Uptake of Written Supervisory Feedback (Results and Discussion)**

While the above sections have explored the supervisors' WSF practices in different draft stages and in different sections, this section examines how these WSF practices were responded by the students. The supervisors provided WSF on the students' errors, which offered the students an opportunity to revise them. When the students are given an opportunity to revise their errors, WSF is leading to student uptake.

### **4.4.1 Relationship between WSF Foci and Uptake**

The distribution of different types of uptake across different WSF foci is displayed in Table 4.25. As indicated in the table, the highest percentage of successful uptake was related to LC (88%), and the next was Or (82%). However, the foci of Co and Re received low percentages of successful uptake (72% and 80%, respectively). In other words, the WSF on LC and Or led to high percentages of successful uptake, while the WSF on Co and Re led to low percentages of successful uptake.

**Table 4.25** Relationship between WSF Focus and Uptake

WSF Focus	Uptake of WSF				Subtotal
	Us	Uu	U0	Ux	
Co	385(72%)	56(10%)	76(14%)	21(4%)	538
Gr	987(82%)	81(7%)	50(4%)	91(8%)	1209
Re	529(80%)	51(8%)	67(10%)	18(3%)	665
Or	112(85%)	7(5%)	10(8%)	2(2%)	131
LC	245(88%)	10(4%)	17(6%)	6(2%)	278
WA	0	0	0	4(100%)	4
UC	0	0	0	17(100%)	17
Total	2258(79.5%)	205(7.2%)	220(7.7%)	159(5.6%)	2842

Note. *The percentage of an uptake to a focus = the number of the uptake ÷ the subtotal of the focus. For example, the subtotal of Content (Co) is 538, and the successful uptake (Us) is 385, so the percentage is  $385 \div 538 = 72\%$ .*

Although the remaining types of uptake occurred much infrequently, a look at the table also discloses the relationship between them and the WSF foci. For example, both unsuccessful uptake and no uptake were mainly related to Co (10% and 14%, respectively) and Re (8% and 1%, respectively), while unverifiable uptake was mainly related to Gr (8%). Since there is no need to make any revision to WA and UC, they were completely related to unverifiable uptake.

In summary, the findings reveal that the WSF foci of Linguistic Appropriateness (LC) and Organization (Or) could lead to high percentages of successful uptake, while the foci of Content (Co) might lead to quite low percentage of successful uptake. Also, the unverifiable uptake was most likely related to WSF on Grammar.

The reason that the Content feedback received the least successful uptake can be explained that the students in this study put their focus more on language

accuracy rather than on Content. In the classroom writing from primary to tertiary, the grammar and the sentence structures were often stressed so that the students could pass the examinations. So, in the thesis draft revision, they still paid much attention to the grammatical problems.

Another reason might be that making revisions on content would be a more difficult and complex process than on language forms. The content feedback is mostly general and not rule-governed, while the form feedback on Grammar, Requirements, or Linguistic Appropriateness is often rule-governed. As advanced EFL learners, the EM-students have explicit knowledge on grammatical errors, and therefore they have a powerful self-correcting ability (Wu, 2014).

This finding confirmed Fathman and Whalley (1990) who reported both form-focused and content-focused written feedback were effective in students' writing improvement. In their study, both Grammar and Content feedback resulted in improvement in revision in 72 ESL intermediate college students' compositions, although grammar feedback had more effects in grammatical accuracy than the content feedback did in content improvement.

One reason that both form and content feedback contributed to students' improvement might be that the students were writing the same thesis in the present study or the composition in Fathman and Whalley's (1990) study. In addition, Fathman and Whalley (1990) proposed that rewriting in itself is an important way to

improve writing skills, and Grammar or Content feedback can be provided separately or at the same time without overburdening the students.

However, the finding was in disagreement with Liu (2013) who reported that the effectiveness of teachers' written feedback was related to Content and Organization, but not related to Grammar and vocabulary because the learner's grammar is likely to fossilize and stop improving at a certain time; consequently, the students may not improve in these aspects, regardless of the feedback quantity and quality.

The difference between the results in the present study and Liu's (2013) study can be explained by the research design. In this study, the effects of WSF focus were measured by comparing the quality of the previous and the revised version of the same thesis, while Liu (2013) measured the effects of written feedback focus by comparing the ratings for the original and the newly written essay in the pre- and post-tests with different writing assignments.

There has not been much research on the effects of different written feedback foci. According to this study, teachers should balance form-focused and content-focused feedback when commenting on students' work (Ferris, 2007). Similarly, Hyland and Hyland (2010) pointed out that it is unnecessary to distinguish form-focused and content-focused feedback when talking about the effectiveness of written feedback on students' writing improvement.

#### 4.4.2 Relationship between WSF Strategies and Uptake

Table 4.26 presents the number and percentage of different types of uptake that different WSF strategies received. As displayed in the table, the “Dc” strategy received 92.6% of successful uptake and “Ds” received 87.9% of successful uptake, while “Ig” received 71.9% successful uptake and “Is” only received 68.2% of successful uptake. In other words, direct strategies received much more successful uptake than indirect strategies.

**Table 4.26** Relationship between WSF Strategies and Uptake

WSF Strategy	Uptake of WSF				Subtotal
	Us	Uu	U0	Ux	
Dc	1048(92.6%)	19(1.7%)	43(3.8%)	21(1.9%)	1131
Ds	58(87.9%)	2(3%)	4(6.1%)	2(3%)	66
Ig	581(71.9%)	63(7.8%)	78(9.7%)	86(10.6%)	808
Is	571(68.2%)	121(14.5%)	95(11.4%)	50(5.9%)	837
Total	2258(79.5%)	205(7.2%)	220(7.7%)	159(5.6%)	2842

Note. The percentage of an uptake to a strategy = the number of the uptake ÷ the subtotal of the strategy. For example, the subtotal of Direct correction or reformulation (Dc) is 1131, and the successful uptake (Us) is 1048, so the percentage is  $1048 \div 1131 = 92.6\%$ .

The above table also shows that all the four strategies could lead to different types of uptake, although with a variation in number and percentage. It reveals that Dc and Ds only led to quite low percentages of unsuccessful uptake (1.7% and 3%, respectively), no uptake (3.8% and 6.1%, respectively), and unverifiable uptake (1.9% and 3%, respectively), but the strategies of “Ig” and “Is” might lead to higher percentages of unsuccessful uptake (7.8%, 14.5%, respectively), of no uptake (9.7% and 11.4%, respectively), and of unverifiable uptake (10.6% and 5.6%,

respectively) than direct strategies.

Therefore, it can be concluded that direct strategies could bring about more successful uptake than indirect strategies. Among the strategies, “Dc” could most likely bring successful uptake, and “Is” was the strategy that brought least successful uptake but the most unsuccessful uptake and no uptake.

This finding was incongruent with a few previous studies. Chandler (2003) found that direct correction is best for producing accurate revisions, and students prefer it because it is the fastest and easiest way for them as well as the fastest way for teachers over several drafts. Similarly, Beuningen, Jong, and Kuiken’s (2008) study showed that direct error correction seemed to be superior to indirect corrective feedback when considering long-term effectiveness. Other scholars (e.g., Sheen, 2007; Chen & Li, 2009) also reported the positive effects of direct correction on EFL learners’ writing. Ferris (2006) also indicated that direct correction is best for accurate revisions and preferred by students because it is the easiest way for students to correct the errors. However, it is of concern that teachers adjust feedback strategies to make feedback easier to use so that students can quickly understand and use it in their revision.

The explanation Chandler (2003) gave for her findings might also hold for the results in this study: while students who received direct feedback strategies could instantly internalize the correct forms, students who revised their texts following

indirect error correction strategies were unable to do so, since they did not know whether their own hypothesized correction was indeed accurate.

Another reason that direct strategies were better in yielding successful uptake than indirect strategies might be that the direct strategies were more related to the form errors than the indirect strategies in the present study. Also, the form errors are much easier to be corrected than content errors. As the interview with the students revealed, they could correct the grammatical errors without much difficulty if the errors were pointed out. In contrast, they could not revise the content or requirement errors because they did not have enough explicit knowledge on these aspects.

However, the findings disagreed with Ferris and Roberts (2001) who investigated 72 university ESL students' differing abilities to self-edit their texts, and found that there were no significant differences between the "error marked with codes" and "error marked with no-codes" groups. Similarly, Robert et al. (1986) found that there was no significant difference between the four strategies: direct correction, locating with explanations, only locating, and only numbers in the margins.

The main reason for the similar effects of direct and indirect strategies in Ferris and Robert's (2001) and Robert et al.'s (1986) studies might be that the effects of teachers' written feedback were tested by the grammatical aspects. As ESL university students, the participants were believed to be able to self-correct most of

the grammatical errors with or without teachers' intervention. However, the students in this study seldomly revised Organization or Content of the thesis drafts successfully if no feedback was provided. This might be supportive evidence for the difficulty of content or Organization error revisions.

#### 4.4.3 Relationship between WSF Connotations and Uptake

Table 4.27 displays the relationship between WSF connotations and uptake. As presented in the table, WSF in positive connotation would only lead to unverifiable uptake since there was no need to make a revision to a positive feedback instance.

**Table 4.27** Relationship between WSF Connotations and Uptake

Connotation	Uptake of WSF				Subtotal
	Us	Uu	U0	Ux	
Po	0	0	0	4(100%)	4
Ng	5(15.6%)	12(37.5%)	5(15.6%)	10(31.3%)	32
Ne	2253(80.3%)	193(6.9%)	215(7.7%)	145(5.2%)	2806
Total	2258(79.5%)	205(7.2%)	220(7.7%)	159(5.6%)	2842

Note. *The percentage of an uptake to a connotation = the number of the uptake ÷ the subtotal of the connotation. For example, the subtotal of negative connotation (Ng) is 32, and the successful uptake to it (Us) is 5, so the percentage is  $5 \div 32 = 15.6\%$ .*

However, the WSF in negative feedback could lead to much unsuccessful uptake (37.5%), no uptake (15.6%), and unverifiable uptake (31.3%), but it could only bring about 15.6% of successful uptake. Conversely, WSF in neutral connotation could lead to 80.3% of successful uptake, and a minor percentage of unsuccessful uptake (6.9%), no uptake (7.7%) and unverifiable uptake (5.2%).

The study revealed that the supervisors provided positive WSF only in two sections: the Frontpage and the Literature Review. The positive WSF mostly occurred on the frontage. This can be explained by the supervisors' negative attitude towards positive WSF. According to them, only great progress and achievements on the important aspects could receive praise. So, they took the students' minor progress in the text for granted, and focused on the weaknesses of the theses. Similarly, Nurie (2018) found that the supervisors gave little positive written feedback.

In contrast to the positive connotation, the negative connotation occurred in all the sections except Title, Appendices and Acknowledgement. In addition, the negative WSF mainly occurred in the text. This can be explained by the students' poor writing in every section. Since the Title has been decided in the proposal before the draft thesis writing, and the Appendices and the Acknowledgement were either decided in the proposal or were imitated from others, there would be few serious errors in them, so the supervisors gave no negative WSF in these two sections. However, the EM-students made plenty of errors on all aspects in the other sections, and some were really irritating, so the supervisors gave negative WSF to them in order to display their dissatisfaction and attract the students' attention, and hoped the students to correct these errors with priority.

The findings demonstrated that the neutral WSF occurred in every section and appeared in a dominant frequency. It can be understood that the supervisors

wanted to provide the students with suggestions or information so that the students' theses could reach the criterion set by their institutions.

#### **4.4.4 Relationship between the Interaction of WSF Focus and Strategy and Uptake**

Some studies have demonstrated that the effectiveness of written feedback was related to the interaction of feedback foci and strategies (e.g., Niu & Zhang, 2018). Table 4.28 shows the numbers and percentages of different types of uptake that the interactions of WSF foci and strategies brought about.

Regarding WSF on Content, the "Dc" strategy would bring about 89% of successful uptake, while WSF in any of the other three strategies could only lead to 63% to 67% of successful uptake. Concerning WSF on Grammar, "Dc" could lead to 95% of successful uptake, and WSF with any of the other three strategies could only lead to 63% to 73% of successful uptake. Conversely, concerning the Requirements, although the WSF with "Dc" or "Ds" could result in high percentage of successful uptake (86% and 90%, respectively), the WSF with "Ig" or "Is" could lead to 76% to 79% of successful uptake. As for the Organization, the WSF with "Ds" could lead to 96% of successful uptake, but the WSF with any of the other strategies could also lead to over 82% of successful uptake. For the Linguistic Appropriateness, all the WSF with "Dc", "Ds" or "Ig" could lead to over 90% of successful uptake, but the WSF with "Is" could only lead to 61% of successful uptake.

**Table 4.28** Relationship between Interaction of Focus and Strategy and Uptake

WSF	WSF Focus Strategy	Uptake of WSF				Subtotal
		Us	Uu	U0	Ux	
Co	Dc	156(89%)	5(3%)	11(6%)	4(2%)	176
	Ds	6(67%)	1(11%)	0	2(22%)	9
	Ig	48(66%)	9(12%)	12(16%)	4(5%)	73
	Is	175(63%)	41(15%)	53(19%)	11(4%)	280
Gr	Dc	584(95%)	6(1%)	13(2%)	13(2%)	616
	Ds	8(73%)	1(9%)	1(9%)	1(9%)	11
	Ig	286(70%)	40(10%)	29(7%)	53(13%)	408
	Is	109(63%)	34(20%)	7(4%)	24(14%)	174
Re	Dc	83(86%)	6(6%)	6(6%)	1(1%)	96
	Ds	35(90%)	0	4(10%)	0	39
	Ig	209(79%)	11(4%)	33(13%)	11(4%)	264
	Is	202(76%)	34(13%)	24(9%)	6(2%)	266
Or	Dc	24(96%)	0	0	1(4%)	25
	Ds	5(83%)	1(17%)	0	0	6
	Ig	20(87%)	2(9%)	1(4%)	0	23
	Is	63(82%)	4(5%)	9(12%)	1(1%)	77
LC	Dc	201(92%)	2(1%)	13(6%)	2(1%)	218
	Ds	1(100%)	0	0	0	1
	Ig	21(91%)	0	2(9%)	0	23
	Is	22(61%)	8(22%)	2(6%)	4(11%)	36
WA	Dc	0	0	0	0	0
	Ds	0	0	0	0	0
	Ig	0	0	0	0	0
	Is	0	0	0	4	4
UC	Dc	0	0	0	0	0
	Ds	0	0	0	0	0
	Ig	0	0	0	17(100%)	17
	Is	0	0	0	0	0
Total		2258(79.5%)	205(7.2%)	220(7.7%)	159(5.6%)	2842

Note. The percentage of an uptake of an interaction of focus and a strategy= the number of the uptake ÷ the subtotal of the strategy in this focus. For example, the subtotal of Dc in Co is 176, and the successful uptake (Us) is 156, so the percentage is  $156 \div 176 = 89\%$ .

Although the interaction of any focus with any strategy could lead to unsuccessful uptake, no uptake or unverifiable uptake, there was not any obvious

distinction between these different types of uptake. However, if the WSF on Content, Grammar and Linguistic Appropriateness was interacted with Is strategy, then the percentage of unsuccessful uptake (15%, 20%, and 22%, respectively) would turn to higher than those of their interaction with any other strategy.

To conclude, for all the foci except WA and UC, the WSF with Dc strategy would bring about high percentage of successful uptake. As for Content and Grammar, the WSF with “Dc” strategy would lead to much higher percentage of successful uptake than with any other strategy. However, for the Organization, the Requirements and the Linguistic Appropriateness, the WSF with any strategy would not make too much differences. However, the “Is” strategy would lead to a slightly higher percentage of unsuccessful uptake if it is used in WSF on Content, Grammar and Linguistic Appropriateness.

One reason for the better effects of the interaction of most WSF foci with direct strategies than with indirect strategies might be that the students did not fully concentrate on the thesis writing. According to Song (2013), less than one-third of the English major students regarded the bachelor’s theses as of great importance to measure the quality of the four-year study, and only half of the subjects believed that the bachelor’s thesis is a rather important way to reflect their overall level of major studies (p. 28). Besides, Yao (2009) found that there was not any positive correlation between the EM-students’ scores in TEM-8 (Test for English Majors, Band-8) and

their thesis results, because those with high TEM-8 scores were mostly spending their time in preparing for the post-graduate entrance examination during the thesis writing process. Therefore, the students were much dependent on the supervisors' direct feedback. As a result, the direct strategies led to more frequency of successful uptake.

Secondly, the students' inadequate knowledge might also be explained for the more positive effects of the interaction of WSF foci with direct strategies than with indirect strategies. As stated in the first chapter, in thesis writing, the EM-students are not only required to demonstrate knowledge related to the subject of research but also to use that knowledge to argue logically and coherently in English which is not their native language. Thus, language proficiency, unfamiliarity with the academic requirements, and formal style and critical thinking could influence the students on their acceptance and understanding of their supervisors' indirect strategies.

The reasons for the less successful uptake of the interaction of feedback foci and indirect strategies "Ig" or "Is" might be that the students' revision was less dependent on supervisors' WSF than on other factors such as students' motivation, content knowledge and commitment (Ashwell, 2000; Chen & Li, 2009; Wu, 2014).

This finding agrees with Wu (2014), one of the few studies on the interaction of different feedback foci and strategies so far. Wu (2014) conducted a

quantitative study on the teacher written feedback and the Chinese university students' revision, and found that, for the content and language feedback, explicit strategies were more effective than implicit strategies in students' revision. However, for structure feedback, there was no significant difference between strategies with different explicitness. Although only the indirect strategies were investigated in her study, Wu (2014) claimed from the interview with the students that direct correction was most helpful for those with low language proficiency, because the direct strategies are not only time-efficient and convenient for revision, but also provide the students with support, and expand their knowledge with the "authoritative model". Her explanation might also hold for the positive effects of direct strategies in the present study.

#### **4.4.5 Relationship between the Interaction of WSF Focus and Connotation and Uptake**

Table 4.29 presents the numbers and percentages of different types of uptake that resulted in the interaction of WSF foci and connotations. From the table, it can be seen that the positive connotation was only interacted with Content and Requirements, and their interaction of the two foci with the positive connotation led to no successful uptake. On the contrary, the interaction of any focus with negative connotation could lead to either successful, unsuccessful, or no uptake or unverifiable uptake. A look at the negative connotation reveals that it led to

successful uptake (33%, 50% and 33%, respectively) when it was interacted with Content, Requirements or Organization, and to unsuccessful uptake (67% and 53%, respectively) only when interacted with Content or Grammar. Similarly, it resulted in no uptake (20% and 67%, respectively) when interacted with WSF on Grammar or Organization, and resulted in unverifiable uptake (27% and 50%, respectively) only when interacted with Grammar or Requirements.

**Table 4.29** Relationship between Interaction of Focus and Connotation with Uptake

Focus	Connotation	Uptake of WSF				Subtotal
		Us	Uu	U0	Ux	
Co	Po	0	0	0	2(100%)	2
	Ng	2(33%)	4(67%)	0	0	6
	Ne	383(72%)	52(10%)	76(14%)	19(4%)	530
Gr	Po	0	0	0	0	0
	Ng	0	8(53%)	3(20%)	4(27%)	15
	Ne	987(83%)	73(6%)	47(4%)	87(7%)	1194
Re	Po	0	0	0	2(100%)	2
	Ng	2(50%)	0	0	2(50%)	4
	Ne	527(80%)	51(8%)	67(10%)	14(2%)	659
Or	Po	0	0	0	0	0
	Ng	1(33%)	0	2(67%)	0	3
	Ne	111(87%)	7(5%)	8(6%)	2(2%)	128
LC	Po	0	0	0	0	0
	Ng	0	0	0	0	0
	Ne	245(88%)	10(4%)	17(6%)	6(2%)	278
WA	Po	0	0	0	0	0
	Ng	0	0	0	4(100%)	4
	Ne	0	0	0	0	0
UC	Po	0	0	0	0	0
	Ng	0	0	0	0	0
	Ne	0	0	0	17(100%)	17
<b>Total</b>		<b>2258(79.5%)</b>	<b>205(7.2%)</b>	<b>220(7.7%)</b>	<b>159(5.6%)</b>	<b>2842</b>

Note. The percentage= the number ÷ the subtotal.

As for the neutral connotation, it could lead to successful uptake if interacted with Content, Grammar, Organization, Requirements or Linguistic Appropriateness. However, the interaction of neutral connotation with Content could only lead to only 72% of successful uptake, while the interaction with any other focus could lead to relatively high percentages (80% to 88%) of successful uptake.

To conclude, the supervisors used little positive and negative connotation in WSF foci of Content, Grammar, Requirements and Organization. The interaction of WSF foci with positive connotation led to unverifiable uptake, but the interaction of any WSF focus with the neutral connotation would lead to much successful uptake, while the interaction of any WSF focus with the negative connotation would lead to a lot of unsuccessful uptake, no uptake or unidentifiable uptake.

The main reason for the negative effects of the interaction of negative connotation with feedback focus might be related to the students' revision strategy. For those negative WSF, the students usually dared not to ask the supervisor how to revise the errors nor to clarify their own thinking, therefore, they were not sure about the error nature nor how to correct them. As a result, the students would not make accurate revisions, or turn to delete and rewrite the parts where the errors occurred in order to avoid the negative feedback from the supervisors again.

Other factors related to less successful uptake of the interaction of negative connotation and WSF focus might be the difficulty of the revision of the

errors in the feedback focus. The results show that 67% of the negative WSF on content and 53% of negative WSF on grammar resulted in unsuccessful uptake, which might be evidence that the errors on content were not easy to be corrected.

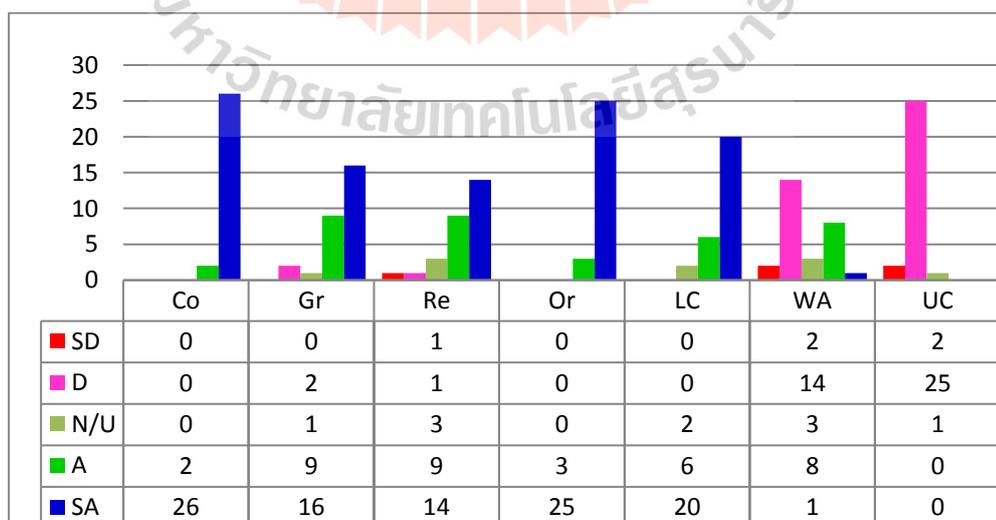
## 4.5 Students' Perceptions of Written Supervisory Feedback (Results and Discussion)

In the following sections, the results from the questionnaire and also the findings from the interview with the students are reported.

### 4.5.1 Students' Perceptions of WSF Focus

#### 4.5.1.1 Students' Perceptions from the Questionnaire

The first category investigated through the questionnaire was students' views on a range of WSF focus (Q5-Q11). Figure 4.2 provides a summary of the total number of responses for each type of WSF focus.

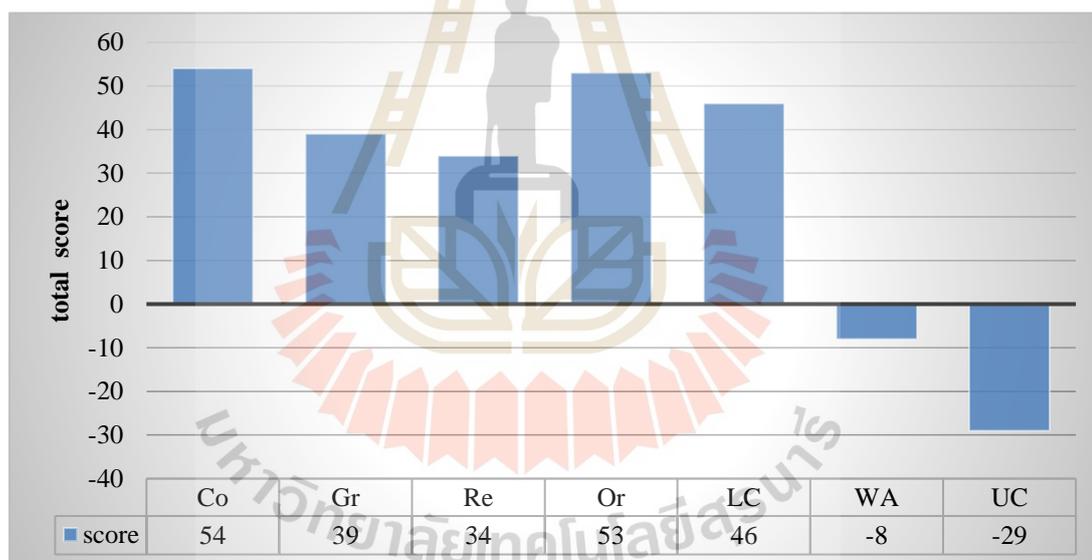


**Figure 4.2** Students' Perceptions of WSF Focus

The results show that the respondents held a strong preference for the supervisors' WSF on all their error categories. All the participants believed ("strongly agree" or "agree") that the supervisors should give WSF on Content (28 participants, or 100%) and Organization (28 participants, or 100%). Most respondents also considered ("strongly agree" or "agree") Grammar, Requirements and Linguistic Appropriateness (25, 23 and 26 participants, or 89%, 82% and 92%, respectively) as the categories that their supervisors' WSF should focus on.

As Figure 4.2 shows, only two categories – Writing Attitudes (WA) and Unidentifiable Comments (UC) – were opposed ("strongly disagree" or "disagree") as the supervisors' WSF foci by many students (57% and 96%, respectively). While WA received a small number of "strongly agree" or "agree" (33%) responses, none of the respondents expressed their preference for receiving UC. Two other categories of WSF foci– Grammar and Requirements – received mixed responses. In the case of Grammar, 2 participants (7%) "disagree" (no respondents "strongly disagree") that it should be the supervisors' WSF focus. While in the case of Requirements, 2 respondents (7%) "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed" that it becomes the supervisors' WSF focus. For the categories of Content, Organization and Linguistic Appropriateness, they received no "strongly disagree" or "disagree" responses. For the Unidentifiable Comments, 27 students (96%) did not want this category of WSF from their supervisors.

By assigning each of the perceptions a numerical value, it is possible to compare the students' perceptions of the different types of WSF foci included in the questionnaire in a much clearer way. The "strongly agree" figures were multiplied by a value of 2; the "agree" figures by a value of 1; the "disagree" figures by a value of -1; and the "strongly disagree" figures by a value of -2. The figures in the "neither agree or disagree/ undecided" category have been omitted since their numerical value is unknown or not quantifiable. The results of the scored students' perceptions of WSF foci are shown in Figure 4.3.



**Figure 4.3** Scored Students' Perceptions of WSF Focus

While the values are not meaningful in themselves, they do reinforce the finding about what the students generally preferred for certain WSF foci. Figure 4.3 clearly shows the students' preferences for WSF on Content (Co), Grammar (Gr), Requirements (Re), Organization (Or) and Linguistic

Appropriateness (LC), but the Writing Attitudes (WA) and Unidentifiable Comments (UC) were the categories which students do not want to receive WSF on.

To sum up, according to the findings from the questionnaire, the following can be inferred:

Firstly, all of the students preferred Content (Co) and Organization (Or) to be addressed by their supervisors on their bachelor's thesis. Secondly, the majority of the students desired to receive the supervisors' WSF on Grammar, Requirements, and Linguistic Appropriateness. Thirdly, most of the students did not want their supervisors to give WSF on Writing Attitudes (WA), nor Unidentifiable Comments (UC).

#### 4.5.1.2 Students' Perceptions from the Interview

According to the interview, the 9 participants had a mixed result on their most important WSF aspects. Table 4.30 presents their preferences for the important WSF aspects.

**Table 4.30** Students' Perception of WSF Focus in the Interview

WSF Focus	Co	Gr	Re	Or	LC	WA	UC
No. of Students viewing as most important	7 (78%)	7 (78%)	6 (67%)	9 (100%)	5 (56%)	0	0

As shown in Table 4.30, Organization was believed to be the most important aspect of the supervisors' WSF (N=9, 100%), then comes Content (N=7, 78%) and Grammar (N=7, 78%). No participants took WA or UC as the most

important WAF focus. Considering the small size of participants, the number or the frequency of the students reporting the most important WSF aspects might not be much meaningful, but their responses regarding why they decided on the most important WSF aspects is of great value.

To better understand why the students have such perceptions, the data collected from the semi-structured interview were analyzed with NVivo 12. The key themes for the reasons of students' preferences for or students' disfavor in WSF focus were identified, as shown below in Table 4.31.

**Table 4.31** Themes Identified from the Interview with Students on WSF Focus

WSF Focus	Themes for preferences	References	Themes for disfavours	References
Content (Co)	Academic advancement	11		
Grammar (Gr)	Academic advancement	7	Academic advancement	1
			Individual needs	2
Organization (Or)	Academic advancement	16		
	Individual needs	4		
Requirements (Re)	Academic advancement	4	Individual needs	3
	Individual needs	2		
	Affective experience	2		
Linguistic appropriateness (LC)	Individual needs	5		

**Table 4.31** Themes Identified from the Interview with Students on WSF Focus (Cont.)

WSF Focus	Themes for preferences	References	Themes for disfavours	References
Writing attitude (WA)			Academic advancement	1
			Affective experience	3
Unidentifiable comments (UC)			individual needs	1
			affective experience	1

As shown in Table 4.31, the students preferred supervisors' WSF on Content (Co), Organization (Or) and Linguistic Appropriateness (LC) to a greater degree, and no students disliked supervisors' WSF on these three categories. Among the three categories, students gave much explanations on their preferences for WSF on Or (20 references), and the key themes for the preferences are "academic advancement" (16 references) and "individual needs" (4 references). This reveals that the students preferred supervisors to give WSF on Or because they believed this type of WSF could facilitate their academic advancement and meet their individual needs. Similarly, they preferred WSF on Co (11 references) for "academic advancement" and preferred WSF on LC (5 references) for "individual needs".

WSF on Gr and WSF on Re received both preferences and disfavours. While some students believed WSF on Gr can facilitate their academic advancement, some thought it can prevent their academic advancement and fail to meet their individual needs. Similarly, some students preferred WSF on Re for

“academic advancement” and “individual needs” while some considered it fail to meet their “individual needs”.

As for the WSF on WA and UC, both received only disfavor. However, the students disliked WSF on WA for its influence on “academic advancement” and “affective experience” while they disliked WSF on UC because of its influence on “individual needs”.

To be more specific, there are a few different “concepts” in the key themes for the students’ preferences for or disfavours in supervisors’ WSF foci, and these “concepts” could help the researcher to understand the reasons for students’ perceptions in a better way. The “concepts” for students’ perceptions for WSF focus are presented in Table 4.32.

**Table 4.32** Concepts for Students’ Perceptions for WSF Focus

WSF Focus	Themes for preferences	Concepts	Themes for disfavours	Concepts
Content (Co)	Academic advancement	Thesis quality; Academic training; Expediting writing; Knowledge acquisition; Thesis assessment; Future career		
Grammar (Gr)	Academic advancement	Language learning; Supervisor support	Academic advancement  Individual needs	Practice opportunity; Thesis Independence

**Table 4.32** Concepts for Students' Perceptions for WSF Focus (Cont.)

WSF Focus	Themes for preferences	Concepts	Themes for disfavours	Concepts
Organization (Or)	Academic advancement		Expediting writing; Thesis quality; Knowledge acquisition; Academic training;	
	Individual needs		Supervisory support; Practicality;	
Requirements (Re)	Academic advancement		Knowledge acquisition	Individual needs
	Individual needs		Practice opportunity	Practice opportunity;
	Affective experience		Writing attitude	
Linguistic Appropriateness (LC)	Individual needs		Practicality; Learning opportunity;	
Writing attitude (WA)				Academic advancement
				Student responsibility
				Affective experience
				Negative emotion
Unidentifiable Comments (UC)				Individual needs
				Feedback clarity
				Affective experience
				Negative emotion

For example, S27 explained the reasons for her preferences for

WSF on Content and Organization:

*Writing a bachelor's thesis is not only a language practice, but a demonstration of research results, so it is necessary to have a clear idea in a good structure because the structure is the carrier of ideas. But it is difficult for me to know what should be included in a certain part or to tell the structure from primary to secondary, or from details to general, and I often deviated the content from the topic, so I expect my supervisor to give WSF and instruction on content and structure very much. (S27)*

For S27, the supervisor's WSF can help her with "**knowledge acquisition**" because "it is difficult for me to know what should be included in a certain part" and the supervisors' WSF could tell her some genre-part knowledge. In addition, the supervisor's WSF can also help her with "**academic training**" because it is difficult for her to "to tell the structure from primary to secondary, or from details to general". With the supervisor's WSF, she could get what should be focused and emphasized in writing an academic paper.

Organization was perceived as the most important focus. Some other examples of the students' responses regarding WSF on Organization from the interviews and their corresponding "concepts" and "key themes" are outlined in Figure 4.4.

**After the supervisor' approval on the structure, I can continue with the writing and with more related literature searching. (S4) [concept: expediting writing; key theme: academic advancement]**

**[supervisors'] feedback on structure is beneficial for us who want to be postgraduates in future academic writing. (S23) [concept: future career; key theme: academic advancement]**

**The supervisors' WSF on structure can be beneficial for the literature searching and the content arrangement for the thesis. (S26) [concept: academic training; key theme: academic advancement]**

**A thesis must be long and professional. Due to the long length of a thesis, I need feedback to help write in the right directions, so that I can set up a good logic order for the long and professional writing. (S19) [concept: supervisory support; key theme: individual needs]**

**If the supervisor gives me feedback on the structure and the structure is settled down, I will not fear for the thesis writing, because the content and other aspects are easier to me. (S18) [concept: supervisory support; key theme: individual needs]**

**[supervisors' structure feedback] helps us to save time, because it can avoid the situation in which we have to rewrite the theses when we submitted the theses to the supervisors but are told that the structures are not acceptable. (S23) [concept: practicality; key theme: individual needs]**

**Figure 4.4** Examples of Students' Responses Regarding WSF on Organization

*Note. The phrases in the square brackets are the concepts and key themes identified from the students' responses*

The concepts and key themes from the interview also show the reasons why the majority of the students desired to receive the supervisors' WSF on

Grammar (Gr), Requirements (Re), and Linguistic Appropriateness (LC). Concerning Grammar (Gr), the students expect the supervisors to give WSF on it because they believe the WSF on Grammar can help with their “academic advancement”, specifically it can (1) receive “supervisory support” and (2) facilitate “language learning”. For example, S27, who preferred to receive WSF on Grammar, stated:

*Although my major was English Studies, writing in English is a big challenge for me, so I would like supervisor to feedback on grammar. In fact, I was not confident in English grammar and I often made grammatical mistakes, but a bachelor's thesis needs to be very formal with few grammatical errors to showcase the author's language proficiency. [concept: supervisory support; key theme: academic advancement]*

For S27, because English was a foreign language to her, she was not confident in the English language in her thesis, therefore, she expected her supervisor to give her the support by giving WSF on Grammar, so she could gain improvement on language and prove her language proficiency reaching the degree requirements.

However, two students (S4 and S18) disagreed on supervisors' giving WSF on Grammar because it did not fit their “individual needs” but hindered their “academic advancement”. For the “individual needs”, WSF on Grammar would deprive students of their “practice opportunity” and “independence”. From the perspective of the two students, Grammar was not a significant issue for the English

major students, and they could seek help from elsewhere, such as classmates with high English proficiency or grammar software (e.g., Grammarly, 1-check), and when the supervisors do not give WSF on Grammar, they can spend more time on giving WSF on other important aspects such as Organization and Content. For the “academic advancement”, the students believed “too much grammar feedback will distract us from thesis writing, so we are always fearing making grammatical errors in the writing process” (S4).

Similarly, more than half of the participants (N=5, 56%) desired supervisors’ WSF on Linguistic Appropriateness because it could fit their “individual needs”. Specifically, WSF on Linguistic Appropriateness is of “practicality”, gives students “learning opportunity” and gains “supervisory support” for their language learning and improvement. S32, who preferred WSF on LC, stated:

*I also hope that my supervisor can give me feedback on the linguistic appropriateness because sometimes I can hardly distinguish the meanings and usages between some synonyms, even by looking them up in a dictionary [concept: supervisory support; key theme: academic advancement]. More importantly, it [looking up in a dictionary] is also very time consuming. But if the supervisor corrects me [on the linguistic appropriateness], I can understand [the differences between these words] very quickly. It can save our time to look them up in a dictionary. (S32)*  
**[concept: practicality; key theme: academic advancement]**

As for the Requirements, six students (67%) believed they need supervisors’ WSF on Requirements because supervisors WSF on Requirements

because of “individual needs”, “affective experience” and “academic advancement”.

For example, S16 who favored supervisors’ WSF on Requirements replied:

*In fact, there are many format requirements, involving many aspects. Many format errors cannot be found out by ourselves; otherwise, we would not make errors. And we are often confused to see that others’ papers are doing differently [in format] [concept: knowledge acquisition; key theme: academic advancement]. If the supervisors can point out [the format errors] to us and explain why, we will not make the same mistakes in the future, especially will not be confused. I think my supervisor is right, he always told us that the quality of (the content of) a thesis is a matter of ability, but the quality of the requirements is a matter of attitude, and his careful WSF on Requirements helped us to set up a good academic writing attitude. (S16) [concept: writing attitude; key theme: affective experience]*

However, three students did not want WSF on Requirements because the School has provided students with a thesis template and a clear requirement guideline. They thought that the students could put the theses in accurate format by just following the template or reading the guideline carefully.

Regarding WSF on Writing Attitudes (WA), none of the participants regarded it to be an important WSF aspect because of its impact on “academic advancement” and “affective experience”. Specifically, they believed that supervisors’ WSF on Writing Attitudes was not good for “student responsibility” and brought them “negative emotions”. One of the students (S22), who “strongly disagreed” that the supervisors should give WSF on WA, explained:

*The responsibility of the students is to complete a bachelor’s thesis and the responsibility of a supervisor is to help the students to improve thesis*

writing. Moreover, if few students do not meet the supervisor's requirements, the supervisor can ask and learn more about the reasons, instead of writing a few comments on Writing Attitudes [for criticism]. (S22) [**concept: student responsibility; key theme: academic advancement**]

In addition, supervisors' WSF on Writing Attitudes was believed to bring students "negative emotions", as illustrated by one student (S19):

*If the supervisor says that there is a problem with my writing attitudes, I will definitely feel very scared and depressed, and feel that I have been completely denied. As a student, who doesn't want to be acknowledged by the supervisor?*

For S19, the supervisor's WSF on Writing Attitudes would give her a feeling of being "scared and depressed" and "completely denied", which is not a helpful affective experience in thesis writing. Therefore, she would not like that the supervisor gives students WSF on Writing Attitudes.

Similarly, no participants took Unidentifiable Comments (UC) as an important aspect to be given feedback, and the reason is that WSF on UC does not fit their "individual needs" and bring them harmful "Affective experience". A student (S22) explained:

*I am most afraid that the supervisor marks my thesis with something unidentifiable. I will be confused and do not know whether I need to revise it and how to revise it [**concept; feedback clarity; key theme: individual needs**]; I am also worried about being criticized by the supervisor on my next draft if I do not make any change [based on the unidentifiable comments]. (S22) [**concept: feeling unease; key theme: affective experience**]*

Thus, similar to the results in the questionnaire, the participants in the interview believed that the supervisors' WSF on Content, Grammar, Requirements, Organization, and Linguistic Appropriateness was very beneficial in many ways, despite some disagreements on WSF on Grammar, Requirements and Linguistic Appropriateness. However, the participants regarded WSF on Writing Attitudes and Unidentifiable Comments as disfavored because both would bring them bad "affective experience". Moreover, the former would not improve their "academic advancement" and the latter did not fit their "individual needs".

#### **4.5.1.3 Discussion on Students' Perceptions of WSF Focus**

The results in this study showed that the students preferred the supervisors' WSF on all their error categories with a stronger preference for WSF on Content and Organization, but they did not want WSF on Writing Attitudes or Unidentifiable Comments.

This echoes the results in many previous studies. Diab (2005) found that most students chose comments on the writing style and on the ideas expressed in the paper as the most important teachers' marks they look at. Leki (1991) discovered that only organization and content feedback cannot satisfy ESL students, because they also prefer surface-level feedback such as grammar and spelling. Montgomery and Baker (2007) reported that students preferred content feedback, but they also value feedback on grammar and mechanics. Bastola and Hu

(2020) claimed that the EFL master students desired feedback on content and discipline-specific components.

The reasons for the students' preference for Content and Organization WSF might be explained by their strong willingness for "academic advancement", or specifically, by their inadequate knowledge in thesis writing since this was their first time to have written a research paper. As the interview with the students revealed, "we did not know where to start at first, and eager to get the supervisors' feedback on the structure and content after we were grouped under the supervisor to complete the first draft" (S26). They all agreed the Content and Organization feedback provided them with "academic training" from the supervisors. In addition, the students did not mention any disadvantage of Content or Organization feedback in the interview, while they did for the feedback on other aspects.

The students' perception of Organization and Content feedback was in line with the supervisors' beliefs' in the importance of content and structure for bachelor's theses. The supervisors believed that the internal logical connection of a long thesis is very important for the readers; otherwise, the readers would not know what the thesis is talking about. In addition, the main purpose of a thesis is to provide new knowledge to the world, so the content of the thesis is essential.

Besides the WSF on Content and Organization, the students also

valued the WSF on other aspects. As the interview pointed out, the students needed the supervisors to give them feedback on other foci such as Grammar or Linguistic Appropriateness because the students find it difficult to identify some errors especially “non-native (unnatural) phrasing of otherwise grammatical text” and lexical choices. Chinese students are often influenced by their mother language; therefore, they valued their supervisors’ WSF on these aspects, otherwise they could not notice that they had made errors.

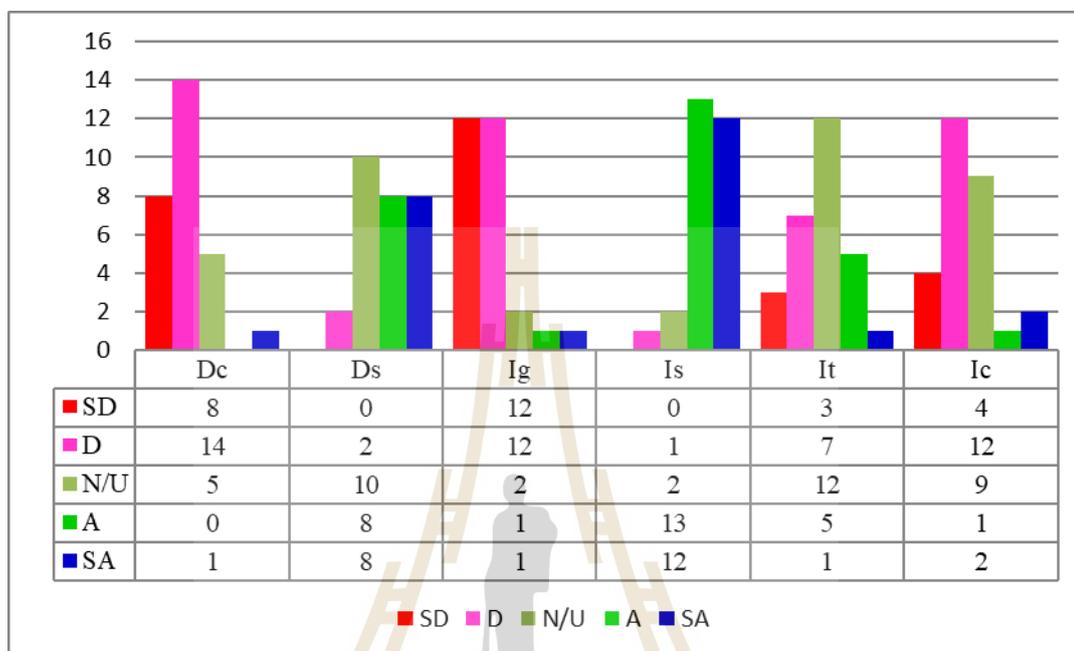
However, the findings do not match the results in some previous studies (Cohen, 1987; Radecki & Swales, 1988; Ferris, 1995) which showed that students prefer teachers to focus on surface errors. This might be because the students were writing short essays in their studies while the students in this present study were writing a long thesis. For writing short essays, the main purpose was to practice language skills, topic sentence writing and paragraph development, so they welcomed superficial feedback, while for writing bachelor’s theses, the main purpose was to demonstrate a comprehensive competence in English language, academic norms, organization and statement development, so the students preferred the supervisors’ feedback on every focus.

#### **4.5.2 Students’ Perceptions of WSF Strategy**

##### **4.5.2.1 Students’ Perceptions from the Questionnaire**

The second category in the questionnaire investigated students’

perceptions of the supervisors' WSF strategy (Q12-Q17). Figure 4.5 provides a summary of the total number of responses for each type of feedback.



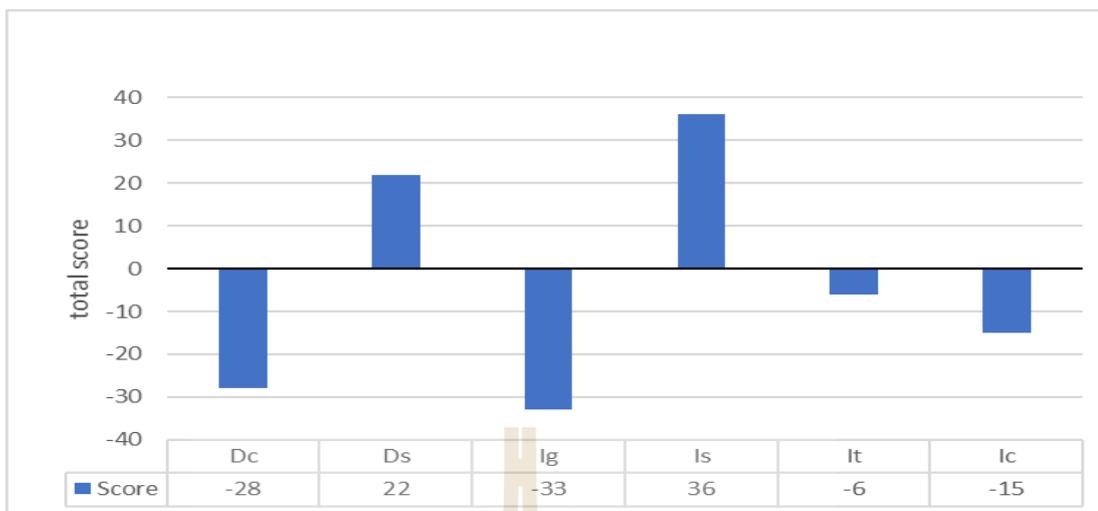
**Figure 4.5** Students' Perceptions of WSF Strategy

By far, the most common feedback strategy, according to Figure 4.5, is "Is", or the graphic marking with explanations (25 students, or 89% "strongly agree" or "agree"). The majority of the respondents also reported that they "strongly agree" or "agree" when their supervisors provide WSF with "Ds" (16 students, or 58%). The other four strategies – "Dc", "Ig", "It" and "Ic" – were preferred ("strongly agree" or "agree") only by a small portion of the respondents (1, 2, 6, or 3 students, or 4%, 8%, 22% and 11%, respectively).

On the contrary, the majority of respondents (22 students, or 79%) believed that they do not like supervisors to use "Dc" strategy or correct their errors

directly. A particularly high proportion (24 students, or 86%) felt that they would not like their supervisors to give WSF with “Ig” strategy. As illustrated in Figure 4.5, about a half of the respondents do not like (“strongly disagree” or “disagree”) the supervisors to give them WSF with the strategies of “It” (10 students, or 36%) or the “Ic” (16 students, or 57%).

As in the case of the previous section (4.5.1.1) of the students’ perception of WSF focus, each perception category of the WSF strategy can be assigned a numerical value, which enables a clearer comparison of the perceived preferences for the different types of strategies included in the questionnaire. The “strongly disagree” figures were multiplied by a value of -2; the “disagree” figures by a value of -1; the “agree” figures by a value of 1; the “strongly agree” figures by a value of 2; and the figures in the “neither agree nor disagree/ undecided” have been omitted. The results of the scored students’ perceptions of WSF strategy are shown in Figure 4.6.



**Figure 4.6** Scored Students' Perceptions of WSF Strategy

Again, while the values themselves are not meaningful, they do clearly show that the type of feedback strategies the students preferred to receive most is “Is”, and no other feedback strategy is comparable. Another feedback strategy the students like to receive is “Ds”, comparatively less preferred than “Is”. However, the other four strategies; namely, “Dc”, “Ig”, “It” and “Ic”, are not favored by the students. “Ig” and “Dc” even stand out as being regarded as two types of undesirable feedback strategies. “It” and “Ic”, with which the Chinese students are not familiar because their supervisors never used them, are generally not preferred by the students, although about one third of the respondents “undecided” whether they like these strategies or not (29% and 32%, respectively).

To conclude, from Figure 4.6, the feedback strategies that the students preferred to receive are “Is” and “Ds”, and the other strategies are not preferred by the students. In other words, the students preferred both direct and

indirect strategies with explanations, but they did not like the strategies without explanations or comments.

#### 4.5.2.2 Students' Perceptions from the Interview

Table 4.33 presents the results of the participants' preferable WSF strategies in the interview. It shows that the Strategy "Is" was thought as the most helpful to the students (N=8, or 89%), followed by the strategy "Ig" (N=4, or 44%) and "Ds" (N=4, or 44%). "Dc" was the least popular strategy in the interview.

**Table 4.33** Students' Perception of WSF Strategies

WSF Strategy	Dc	Ds	Ig	Is
No. of students viewing as most important	2 (22%)	4 (44%)	4 (44%)	8 (89%)

Data collected from the semi-structured interview were analyzed, and the concepts and key themes were identified to understand the reasons for the students' perceptions of the WSF strategies, as shown in Table 4.34.

**Table 4.34** Themes Identified from the Interview with Students on WSF Strategy

WSF Strategy	Students' preference			Students' disfavor		
	Themes	Concepts	Refs.	Themes	Concepts	Refs.
Dc	Academic advancement	Knowledge acquisition	2	Individual needs	Independence	3
	Individual needs	Practicality	1		Creativity	3
		Supervisory support	1		Learning opportunity	1
Ds	Academic advancement	Knowledge acquisition	1	Individual needs	practicality	1
				Social influence	Supervisory relations	1

**Table 4.34** Themes Identified from the Interview with Students on WSF Strategy (Cont.)

WSF Strategy	Students' preference			Students' disfavor		
	Themes	Concepts	Refs.	Themes	Concepts	Refs.
Ig	Individual needs	Feedback quantity	2	Individual needs	Feedback clarity	1
	Social influence	Supervisory support	2			
Is	Individual needs	Independence	4			
		Creativity	1			
		Feedback clarity	2			
		Practice opportunity	1			
	Social influence	Traditional teaching	1			
		Supervisory relations	2			
	Academic advancement	Knowledge acquisition	7			
Academic training		2				
<b>Total</b>			<b>29</b>			<b>10</b>

Note. Refs.=Number of references

As displayed in Table 4.34, the interviewed participants provided reasons for both their preference for and disfavor in different WSF strategies. According to the interview, the strategies “Dc”, “Ds” and “Ig” received both preference and disfavor, but “Is” did not receive any disfavor. However, the strategies “It” and “Ic” were not mentioned. In other words, probably no students received supervisors’ WSF with the strategy of “It” or “Ic”, and they were not familiar with them, so they neither expressed their preference nor disfavor in the interview.

Concerning the strategy “Dc”, the key themes for students’ preference for it are because of “academic advancement” and “individual needs”.

S32, who said she would like supervisors’ WSF with “Dc”, explained:

*I hope that my supervisor can correct [the errors] directly for me when I write in Chinese English\*, when I don't know how to effectively summarize the essentials of the thesis in the abstract, and when I use a wrong synonym for a certain meaning, because I cannot notice the error [in the Chinese English] or correct the error [in the abstract or the wrong synonym] by myself. [concept: supervisory support; key theme: individual needs]*

(\*Note. Chinese English means incorrect or non-standard English featured with Chinese grammar or expressions.)

For S32, if the errors were too difficult to be corrected by students themselves (such as wrong use of a synonym or poor writing in the abstract), she expected that the supervisors give direct correction or reformulation to the errors to help the students to gain “supervisor support”.

However, there were eight references not expecting “Dc” strategy because of “individual needs”. Specifically, “Dc” strategy may deprive the students’ “independence”, “creativity” and “learning opportunity”. S26, who did not like the supervisors to give WSF with “Dc”, said:

*I do not like my supervisor to correct for me directly, because what the supervisor provides for my errors may not be the text I want or the intention I want to express (S26). [concept: creativity; key theme: individual needs]*

Regarding the strategy “Ds”, only one participant favored it

because it is beneficial for “academic advancement”. That is, the students can understand why they made an error here and why it needs to be revised, so they can notice and be aware of the same kind of errors in the thesis writing later. However, other students expressed their disfavor in this strategy because of “individual needs” and “social influence”. S19 expressed her disfavor in “Ds”, saying:

*I don't like the supervisor corrects my mistakes and gives me explanations why this should be corrected because it will take me much time to read [both the correction and the comments] and compare [what has been corrected]. [to be time-consuming] Actually, we can compare and identify what is the wrong by ourselves [with only the correction or a hint] since we are senior students in the English major program. (S19)*  
**[concept: practicality; key theme: individual needs]**

S4, who thought “Ds” would waste the supervisors’ time, stated:

*I think the supervisors are very busy. If they also make explanations while they correct the errors, they have to spend a lot of time to do so because they have several students' thesis drafts to read. What is more, I think talk face-to-face would save much time if the supervisors think it is necessary to explain [on the corrections]. (S4)*  
**[concept: supervisory relations; key theme: social influence]**

For these participants (S4, S26), “Ds” is unnecessary because this strategy is time-consuming both for students and supervisors since students can infer what the errors are from the supervisors’ direct corrections.

With regard to the strategy “Ig”, the participants expressed both their preference and their dislikes. For the students who liked it, the reasons why they preferred the strategy “Ig” was because of “individual needs” and “social

influence”. S26, who preferred her supervisor’s “Ig” strategy, claimed:

*Our supervisor likes making marks very much, such as underlines or question marks, in the places of errors. I think this is quite good because the supervisor can point out as many errors as possible in this way, and I can know most of my errors. (S26) [concept: feedback quantity; key theme: individual needs]*

Conversely, other students expressed their disagreement on “Ig” because it did not meet their “individual needs”, or specifically, it did not meet their needs for supervisors’ feedback in clarity. S23, who believed that only with graphic markings, such as underling, the students would wrongly interpret the supervisors’ intention, justified:

*Sometimes, we are unable to correctly understand the supervisor’s meaning if he/ she only points out the errors without any explanation. I have this experience. My supervisor drew a line under a sentence and I revised the tense. But the truth is, I did not correct the errors [the wrong order of place names] but changed the accurate tense into errors. (S23) [concept: feedback clarity; key theme: individual needs]*

Regarding the “Is” strategy, most students explicitly argued this is a good strategy that they would like their supervisors to apply when giving WSF on their thesis drafts. The reasons for their preference include “individual needs”, “social influence” and “academic advancement”. For example, a student (S22) who preferred “Is” stated:

*Many a time that we make errors is because we don’t realize our errors. So, I just hope that if the supervisor identifies my errors, he can point out and tell it is a grammatical error, a structural one or something else. Then I can understand the wrongs and revise them by myself because we*

*are senior undergraduates and can find out methods to solve the problems and correct errors. (S22) [concept: self-revision; key theme: individual needs]*

In addition, another student (S23), explained that “Is” is a traditional feedback strategy by saying:

*It is true that the student’s mistakes should be pointed out with a brief explanation, and my supervisors always did in this way. I think that this is in line with Chinese teachers’ feedback habits because we have been given feedback in this way since we were writing Chinese articles from primary schools. (S23) [concept: traditional teaching; key theme: social influence]*

For S23, the strategy “Is” has been long used and both teachers and students have gotten used to it, so she has gotten familiar to it and she preferred it. Her preference is resulted from “social influence”.

In conclusion, the data from the interview revealed that the participants perceive “Is” as their most preferable strategy. However, it also revealed that the other three strategies, “Dc”, “Ds” and “Ig”, although having some disadvantages, are expected by the participants.

#### **4.5.2.3 Discussion on Students’ Perception of WSF Strategy**

The findings of both the questionnaire and the interviews suggest that most of the students preferred the indirect strategy “Is”, while they disfavored the direct strategy “Dc”. However, the strategies of “Ds” and “Ig” were perceived differently in the questionnaire and the interview. Generally, the students in this present study preferred indirect strategies to direct strategies.

This confirms Leki's (1991) study of 100 ESL university students in which most students' (N=67) favored the teachers' error location with some clues on how to correct the errors. The students in the present study explained the indirect strategies can save the supervisors' time, help them think independently, keep their original ideas without being interfered by the supervisors, and get more feedback than direct strategies. These reasons could be themed as "individual needs" as proposed in Section 4.3.2.2. So, this finding gave evidence that the EM-students were rather independent in thesis writing.

In contrast, the finding in this study did not agree with most previous studies on students' perception of feedback strategies (Radecki & Swales, 1988; Ferris, 1995; Hedgcok & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lee, 2004; Diab, 2005) in which the students expected their teachers' direct strategies. Given the fact that the students in the present study were undergraduate English majors in their fourth year, it is assumable that the students were more proficient in understanding supervisors' WSF (mostly written in Chinese) and in self-revision than the participants in the above-mentioned studies who were mostly non-English major college students or secondary students.

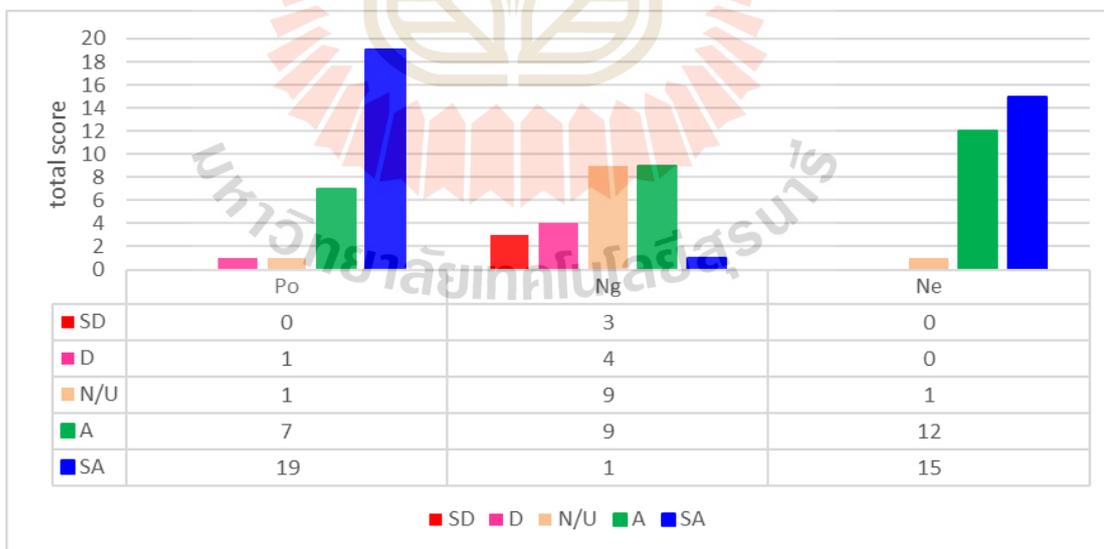
However, since an interdependent relationship exists between teachers' behaviors and students' views (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994, 1996), Diab (2005) proposed that teachers seem to be behaving according to students'

preferences or, perhaps just as likely, that students' preferences for teacher feedback reflect the supervisors' instructional practices. In the present study, since the supervisors provided WSF with indirect strategies more than direct strategies, the students' preferences for the indirect strategies were also possibly influenced by the supervisors' practices.

### 4.5.3 Students' Perceptions of WSF Connotation

#### 4.5.3.1 Students' Perceptions from the Questionnaire

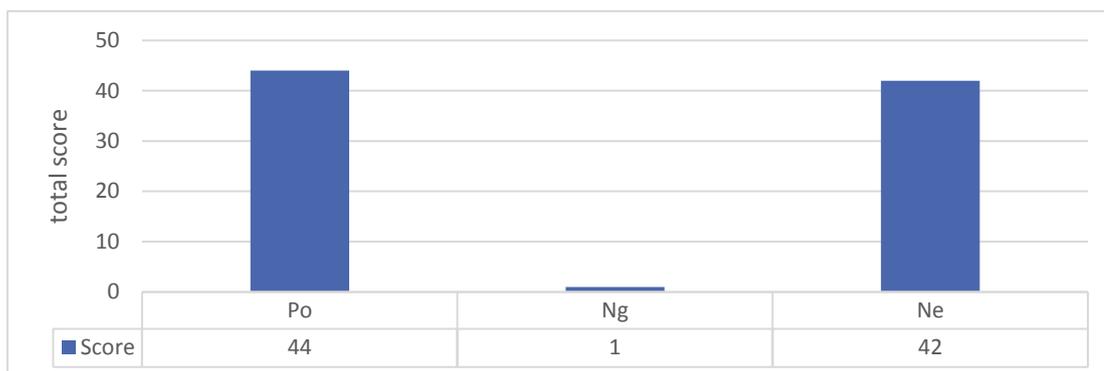
In the third category in the questionnaire (Q18-Q20), the participants were asked to state their perceptions of three different feedback connotations. Figure 4.7 provides a summary of the total numbers of responses for each connotation.



**Figure 4.7** Students' Perceptions of WSF Connotation

Clearly, a considerable majority of students (N=26) felt that they would “strongly agree” or “agree” to receive positive WSF (93%); a relatively large proportion (N=27) also reported that they would their supervisor’ WSF to be in neutral connotation (96%); and a small portion of students (N=7) would like their supervisors’ WSF to be negative (36%). On the other hand, in the three connotations, no participants “strongly disagree” or “disagree” that the WSF should be neutral; only 4% of the participants (N=1) reported that they “strongly disagree” or “disagree” the WSF should be positive; and 25% of the participants (N=7) claimed that they “strongly disagree” or “disagree” the WSF to be negative.

Similar to the previous two sections (4.5.1.1 and 4.5.2.1), each perception category of the WSF connotation is assigned a numerical value: the “strongly disagree” (SD) figures were multiplied by a value of -2; the “disagree” figures (D) by a value of -1; the “agree” figures (A) by a value of 1; the “strongly agree” figures (SA) by a value of 2; and the figures in the “neither agree nor disagree/ undecided” (N/U) by a value of 0. The results of the scored students’ perceptions of WSF connotations are shown in Figure 4.8.



**Figure 4.8** Scored Students' Perceptions of WSF Connotation

Figure 4.8 clearly shows that the students preferred the feedback connotations “Po” and “Ne”, with similar scores (44 and 42, respectively), while very few students preferred “Ng” (scored only 1). That is, the students would like their supervisors WSF to be in positive or neutral connotations, but not in a negative way.

In summary, most of the students expected the supervisors to use “positive” or “neutral” connotations but not to use “negative” one when giving WSF on all the foci. While most students hoped the supervisors' WSF on Grammar, Requirements, Organization, and Linguistic Appropriateness to be “neutral” rather than “positive”, they would like their supervisors' WSF on Writing Attitudes to be “positive” rather than “neutral”.

#### 4.5.3.2 Students' Perception from the Interview

According to the interview, all the 9 participants thought “neutral” connotation and five participants thought “positive” connotation were the desirable

connotations that the supervisors should adopt when they give WSF on the students' bachelor's thesis drafts.

Again, the data from the interview could offer some explanations for the students' perceptions of WSF connotations. The themes from the interview were identified, as presented in Table 4.35:

**Table 4.35** Themes Identified from the Interview on WSF Connotation

WSF Connotation	Students' preference			Students' disfavor			
	Themes	Concepts	Refs.	Themes	Concepts	Refs.	
Positive (Po)	Affective experience	Self esteem	1				
		Writing attitudes	2				
		Writing motivation	1				
		Positive emotions	4				
		Social interaction needs	2				
		Individual needs	Independence	1			
		Social influence	Supervisory relations	1			
Negative (Ng)	Academic advancement	Thesis assessment	1	Affective experience	Self esteem	1	
		Supervisory responsibility	1		Writing motivation	1	
	Affective experience	Self esteem	1		Negative emotions	4	
		Writing attitudes	1				
	Social influence	Traditional teaching	1				

**Table 4.35** Themes Identified from the Interview on WSF Connotation (Cont.)

WSF Connotation	Students' preference			Students' disfavor		
	Themes	Concepts	Refs.	Themes	Concepts	Refs.
Neutral (Ne)	Academic advancement	Knowledge	2			
		acquisition				
		Thesis quality	1			
		Thesis assessment	1			
		Student	1			
		responsibility				
	Affective experience	Positive emotions	1			
	Social influence	Supervisory	1			
		relations				
		Traditional	1			
	teaching					
	Total		25			6

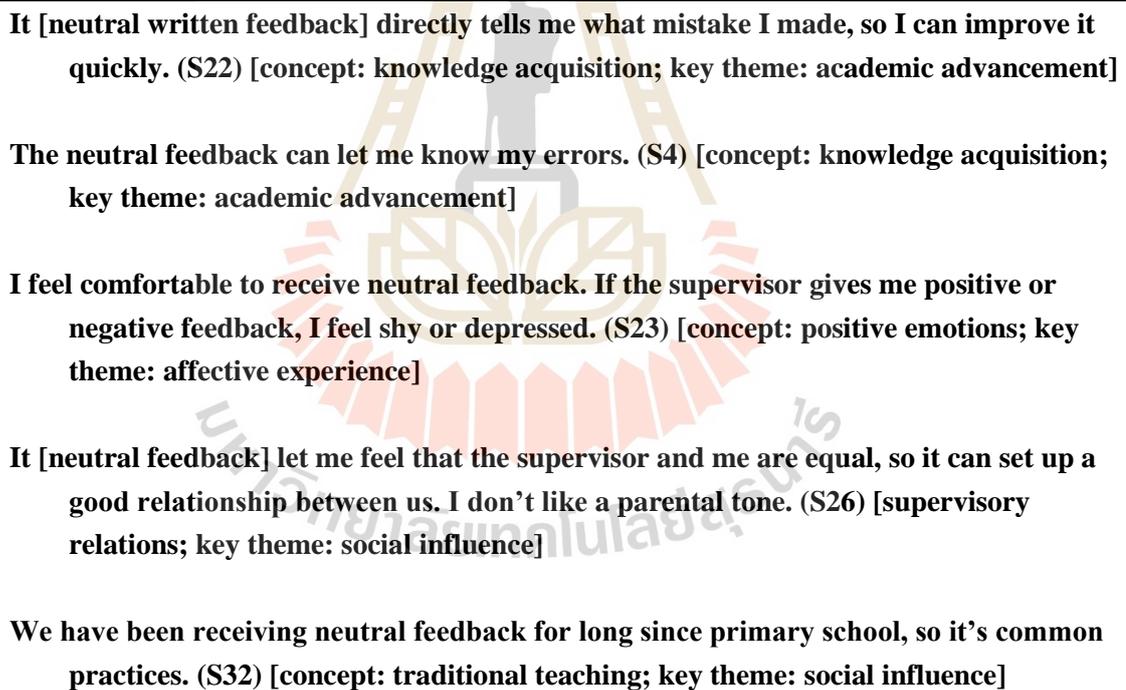
Note. Refs.=Number of references

As shown in Table 4.35, the researcher found that the students have positive perceptions towards “positive” and “neutral” connotations, while they had negative perceptions towards “negative” connotation. The students perceived the “positive” WSF positively because it could provide them with positive “affective experience”, meet their “individual needs” and it was affected by “social influence”. For example, S16, who strongly agreed that the supervisors should give positive WSF, argued:

*The supervisors' positive WSF can shorten the distance between the supervisors and students. If my supervisor gives me positive feedback, I would feel he/ she is very kind and be encouraged to ask him/ her questions. [concept: supervisory relations; key theme: social influence] I would read more and revise [my thesis] more carefully because I know my supervisor is appreciating me. (S16) [concept: writing motivation; key theme: affective experience]*

For S16, positive WSF would shorten the psychological distance between her and her supervisor, so it could increase her communication with her supervisor. In addition, positive WSF could motivate her to read more and revise more carefully.

Regarding the “neutral” WSF, most participants had positive perceptions. Some excerpts of students’ responses from the interview are presented in Figure 4.9:



**Figure 4.9** Excerpts of Students’ Responses regarding Neutral Connotation

As demonstrated in Figure 4.9, the participants believed “neutral” WSF is beneficial in the following ways: “academic advancement”, “individual needs” and “social influence”. None of the participants disagreed that supervisors

should not give WSF in a neutral connotation.

Concerning the “negative” connotation, it received both positive and negative perceptions. Some participants believed negative connotation is necessary because of “academic advancement”, “affective experience” and “social influence”. A student (S26) who believed negative connotation in supervisors’ WSF is necessary claimed:

*I think supervisors’ negative feedback means their seriousness, that is, they take thesis writing as important and they are strict with the students. Like a Chinese saying says “Although the medicine is bitter, it is conducive to the treatment of the disease. Although faithful advice is not like listening, it is good for action”. Therefore, supervisors’ feedback in negative tone is helpful for those students who have not treat thesis writing seriously at the beginning. (S26) [concept: supervisor responsibility; key theme: academic advancement]*

However, there were also negative perceptions (6 references) of the negative connotation because it brings the students negative “affective experience”. Specifically, negative connotation in WSF will affect the students’ “self-esteem” and “writing motivation”, and bring them negative emotions. For example, a student (S32) who disliked supervisors’ negative connotation in WSF explained:

*Because our thesis drafts will be handed in to the School of Foreign Languages, I would feel face-losing or embarrassing if my drafts are read by other teachers or junior students after my graduation [if it were written many negative comments]. Every student has self-esteem. [concept: self-esteem; key theme: affective experience] To be honest, I admit that the thesis I write have a lot of problems, but if the*

*supervisor always gives me negative feedback, I would not like to write or revise it anymore because I would think whatever I try, the supervisor is always denying my efforts. (S32) [concept: writing motivation; key theme: affective experience]*

For S32, the supervisor's continuous and great amount of negative WSF would cause her to suffer face-losing and demotivate her to write or revise the drafts because the supervisor's negative WSF showed that the supervisor had not seen her improvement and progress in the thesis writing.

Based on the responses from the interview, it can be inferred that the students view "positive" and "neutral" feedback as important in helping them revise the thesis while "negative" feedback as both necessary and harmful.

#### **4.5.3.3 Discussion on Students' Perceptions of WSF Connotation**

The study revealed that most of the students preferred their supervisors to provide WSF in positive and neutral, but not in negative connotation. This finding confirmed Bean (2011), Nurie (2018), and Spandel and Stiggins (1990). Spandel and Stiggins (1990) pointed out "What does help, however, is to point out what the writer is doing well. Positive comments build confidence and make the writer want to try again" (p.87).

The students explained their preference for positive connotation by boosting confidence, increasing motivation and communication, and facilitating autonomous learning. Their justification reconfirmed the previous studies which claimed positive feedback can enhance the supervisor-supervisee relationship and

the supervisor-supervisee relationship is an important determinant of quality of supervision (Ali, Watson, & Dhingra, 2016; Murphy, Bain, & Conrad, 2007; Tahir et al., 2012). Similarly, Brookhart (2008) proposed that the teachers' feedback should be positive, which means the teachers should describe how the strengths in a student's work match the criteria for good work and how those strengths show what the student is learning.

The students justified their preference for neutral connotation by claiming it provides necessary information on the errors, makes them feel safe and creates a good relationship with the supervisors. In this study, the supervisors provided WSF which showed where the students fell below the criteria in an objective way. Then, the students figured out what problems they had and how to revise them without feeling any threats because the supervisors were superior in power to them.

The students explained their most disfavor in the negative connotation by saying that the negative connotation would cause them to feel frustrated, demotivate them to improve, and hinder them from communicating with the supervisors. This finding goes in line with some previous research (e.g., Lee, 2004; Price, Handley, Millar & O'Donovan, 2010) which has indicated that the way in which comments are worded by supervisors can have a potential effect on students both negatively and positively. Similarly, Layder (1997) posited that the

student's ability or willingness to uptake the feedback might depend on the emotional impact of feedback. This result might suggest that students' motivation was a major factor of their success in writing, and the supervisors need to envisage students' psychometric understanding and determine how their students will react to written feedback when providing negative WSF on the students' thesis drafts.

#### **4.6 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has presented the findings about the supervisors' practices and students' uptake based on the text analysis of 32 supervisors' WSF on students' BA thesis drafts. It revealed that the supervisors paid much attention to Grammar, Requirements and Content, both direct and indirect strategies were used, and the supervisors' WSF practices were almost in neutral connotation. It has shown that successful uptake increased from the first draft to the later drafts, that direct strategies brought more successful uptake than indirect strategies, and that the negative connotation led to much less successful uptake than neutral connotations did.

Furthermore, the students' perceptions of the supervisors' WSF were reported. It was discovered that the students thought all foci were helpful except Writing Attitudes and Unidentifiable Comments. The strategies of "Direct correction with description or explanation" ("Ds") and "comments indicating an error with or

without a graphical marking” (“Is”) were more favorable than other strategies, and the students preferred the supervisors to provide their WSF in either “positive” or “neutral” connotations, but not in “negative” connotation. The findings of each WSF characteristics, students’ uptake and students’ perceptions were also discussed in this chapter.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

In order to develop the English major undergraduate students' (the EM-students) basic research ability and to test their comprehensive language competence, the “*Syllabus for English Major Program of Higher Education (2001)*” requires the EM-students to write bachelor's theses as their partial requirement for the degree. The EM-students write their bachelor's theses under the supervision of their supervisors. This research investigated the practices of the supervisors' written supervisor feedback (WSF) practices and the students' uptake of these WSF. At the same time, the students' perceptions of the supervisors' WSF practices were also investigated to triangulate the results.

In this chapter, an overview of this research is first given to review the research design. The three research questions are addressed with presentations of key findings that answer these questions. Consequently, the pedagogical implications and the main contributions of this study are presented. Furthermore, the limitations of the study are explained in order to give enlightenment for future studies.

## 5.1 Overview of the Study

The main objective of this research was to identify the characteristics of the EFL supervisors' practice of written supervisory feedback (WSF) on the EM-students' bachelor's thesis drafts, and the effects of different types of WSF brought to the students' successful uptake. The secondary aim of this study was to examine students' perceptions regarding WSF so as to offer insights to understanding the supervisors' WSF practices.

The study was carried out in the School of Foreign Languages at a University in central China. In this research, 32 students' thesis draft portfolios were selected out with systematic sampling and investigated. Each portfolio contained the students' first, second, third and final drafts.

Firstly, the 32 supervisors' WSF practices on the students' thesis drafts were analyzed in terms of feedback focus, strategy and connotation. The feedback focus was grouped into Content (Co), Grammar (Gr), Requirements (Re), Organization (Or), Linguistic Appropriateness (LC), Writing Attitudes (WA), and Unidentifiable Comments (UC). The feedback strategy was categorized into direct and indirect strategies. The direct strategy was further divided into direct correction or reformulation (Dc) and direct correction or reformulation with descriptions or explanations (Ds), and the indirect strategy was further divided into graphical marking (Ig), graphical marking with descriptions or explanations (Is), error

numbers counted in a line or a paragraph (It), and error codes on the margin (Ic). The feedback connotation was divided into three types: positive, negative and neutral. The supervisors' WSF practices were coded with the above categories and the numbers and frequencies were counted to understand the WSF characteristics in different draft stages and in different sections.

Secondly, the students' response to each instance of their supervisors' WSF practices was analyzed in terms of successful uptake (Us), unsuccessful uptake (Uu), no uptake (U0), and unidentifiable uptake (Ux). Then, the frequencies of the successful uptake of the different categories of the WSF foci, WSF strategies, WSF connotations, the interactions of the WSF focus and WSF strategy, and the interaction of the WSF focus and connotation were analyzed to interpret the effects of the supervisors' WSF.

The students' perceptions regarding their supervisors' WSF and the supervisors' perceptions for their WSF provision were also investigated. Students' perceptions of the supervisors' WSF were investigated through both questionnaires and in-depth interviews. A five-point Likert-scale questionnaire was used to indicate students' preferences for the different WSF focus, strategy, connotation and their interactions. In-depth interviews with 9 students were given to complement students' perceptions of the supervisors' WSF, and in-depth interviews with 9 supervisors were conducted to understand their practices.

## 5.2 Major Findings of the Study

To achieve its objectives, the study has addressed three research questions. The first question examined the supervisors' WSF characteristics related to the feedback focus, strategy, and connotation in different draft stages and in different sections. The second question tackled the effects of different types of WSF focus, strategy, and connotation in terms of successful uptake, unsuccessful uptake, no uptake and unidentifiable uptake. The third question dealt with the students' perceptions of their supervisors' WSF practices.

The first question revealed that on the whole, the supervisors' WSF attention was on the Content, Grammar, and Requirements; they used more indirect strategies than direct ones; and they provided the WSF in neutral connotation for the most part. However, from the first to the third stage, the findings revealed that: (1) the supervisors' content WSF decreased while their Grammar WSF increased, but the WSF practices on other foci did not change greatly; (2) the "Dc" strategy increased while the "Is" strategy decreased, but other strategies did not change very much; (3) the supervisors provided little positive or negative WSF in each of the three draft stages; (4) the supervisors increased their direct strategies with WSF on Content, Grammar and Linguistic Appropriateness, while the strategies with WSF on Organization and Requirements did not change much, and (5) the supervisors provided positive WSF on Content, Organization and Requirements mainly on the

second draft stage, while they provided negative WSF on all feedback foci at the second draft stage.

In addition, the study also demonstrated that: (1) the supervisors mainly provided Content WSF in the sections of the frontpage and in the Appendices and Acknowledgements, Requirements WSF in the sections of the Title, the Content Table and the Bibliography, and Grammar WSF in the thesis body from the Abstract to the Conclusion; (2) the supervisors used more direct strategies than indirect strategies in the Abstract, but used more indirect strategies in the other ten sections; (3) the supervisors mainly provided positive WSF on the frontpage and in the Literature Review, while provided negative WSF on the frontpage and in the Bibliography; (4) the supervisors mainly used direct strategies with Content WSF in the short sections such as the Content Table, the Abstract, and the Appendices and Acknowledgements, with Grammar WSF in most sections, and with Linguistic Appropriateness WSF in all the sections. However, they mainly used indirect strategies with Requirements WSF and Organization WSF with indirect strategies in all the sections, and (5) the supervisors mainly used positive connotation with Content WSF on the frontpage and with Requirements WSF in the Literature Review, but used negative connotation with Content WSF and Requirements WSF in the Introduction, and with Grammar WSF in the Content Table, and Results and Discussion, and with Writing Attitudes in the Literature Review.

The second question found that: (1) while most WSF foci could lead to much successful uptake (over 80%), the content WSF led to the least successful uptake (72%); (2) direct strategies led to much more successful uptake than the indirect strategies; (3) neutral connotation led to much more successful uptake than negative connotation; (4) interacting with any WSF focus, the direct strategies led to more successful uptake than the indirect strategies, and the indirect strategies were only very effective in successful uptake (over 90%) with the WSF on Linguistic Appropriateness, and (5) the neutral connotation with any WSF focus could lead to more successful uptake than the negative connotation, and the negative connotation with Content and Grammar WSF led to a high frequency of unsuccessful uptake.

Finally, the third question discovered that: (1) the EM-students preferred WSF on all their error categories except for the Writing Attitudes or Unidentifiable Comments; (2) the students preferred the indirect strategies to direct strategies, and preferred the strategies with descriptions or explanations; (3) the students expected the WSF in both the neutral and positive connotations but not in negative connotation; (4) the students preferred the “Ds” and “Is” strategies on any WSF focus, and (5) the students expected the WSF on Content and on Writing Attitudes to be positive more than neutral, while the other WSF foci to be neutral more than positive.

### 5.3 Pedagogical Implications

Although it is impossible to generalize the findings based on the supervisors' WSF samples gathered in a university and the questionnaire and interview survey with a few supervisors and students, several important implications can be drawn, which may be applicable to similar EFL contexts.

Firstly, from the results of this study, some guidelines could be offered to the supervisors for WSF provision.

- (1) Supervisors should put much emphasis on Content and Organization;
- (2) Supervisors should use more direct strategies when providing Content WSF while use more indirect strategies when providing Grammar WSF;
- (3) Supervisors should be more generous on providing positive WSF, especially on Content and Writing Attitudes;
- (4) Supervisors should provide more student-centered activities such as peer feedback and self-correction based on the rubrics;
- (5) Supervisors should learn and develop the ability to evaluate the supervisory process, including identifying expectations and responsibilities of both the supervisor and supervisee, encouraging and responding to supervisees.

According to the research results, the supervisors' WSF focus was mainly on Grammar, which accounted for nearly half of the total feedback instances in the text. However, both the interview with the students and the supervisors showed that the

Organization and Content are the most important aspects for bachelor's theses. It is suggested that Chinese supervisors should provide more WSF on Organization and Content although the students also welcome the WSF on superficial errors such as Grammar and Linguistic Appropriateness. Since the supervisors' WSF not only provides information of errors to the students, but also draw the students' attention to the important aspects, their emphasis on Organization and Content WSF can help the students pay much attention to the higher order thinking skills rather than to the correct form in the thesis writing process, especially at an initial stage, as well as in their academic writing in the future.

Similarly, supervisors should use more direct strategies when providing content WSF while using more indirect strategies when providing grammar WSF. For most students, they were capable of self-correcting the grammatical errors if pointed out; however, the students might be incapable of correcting the content errors, which was untreatable errors according to Ferris (2002). In this study, one reason for the low frequency of successful uptake of the content WSF was that the students' low acceptance of indirect strategies with it because they did not know how to improve the content even with the supervisors' indirect WSF. In this case, the supervisors need to treat the students' content errors with direct guidance or corrections. In addition, Ellis (2009) proposed that the teachers need to be able to implement a variety of written feedback strategies such as metalinguistic feedback strategies and

to adapt the specific strategies they use to the particular student they are correcting. For example, when they found that some students are unable to self-correct, the supervisors need to move to a more direct form of correction. This requires that the supervisors be responsive to the feedback they get from the students on their own WSF.

What is more, while they put most of their WSF in a neutral connotation, the supervisors should also provide more positive WSF, especially positive WSF on Content and Writing Attitudes or their efforts to encourage the students, while remaining careful in giving negative WSF both on the frontpage and in the text so as to increase the frequency of successful uptake. This study showed that the students believed the positive WSF would motivate them and increase their interest in thesis writing. In addition, most of the students expected their supervisors to give them positive WSF while in reality the supervisors gave little positive WSF. According to Straub (2000), the supervisors' written feedback which increases the students' confidence, self-esteem, and interest in writing is more likely to help students develop their writing performance than a rigid policy that requires an error-focused approach to written feedback. Moreover, Lee (2008) also reported that it is necessary to enhance the low-achieving students' motivation through encouraging comments because they are the most vulnerable. Therefore, the supervisors' WSF should provide more positive WSF on the students' thesis drafts. On the contrary, the study

showed that the negative WSF could bring about much unsuccessful uptake or no uptake, and prevent the students from communicating with the supervisors. Most students strongly disliked their supervisors' negative WSF on writing attitudes, which would bring frustration and depression. Hence, the supervisors need to be very cautious in providing their WSF in a negative way.

In addition, the students were very reliant on the supervisors' WSF, especially on the direct feedback, therefore, supervisors should provide some student-centered activities. Supervisors could assign peer feedback activities to the students, or could provide them a rubric for self-correction. These activities could help to increase their independence in academic research and writing.

Furthermore, the supervisors should improve their supervisory competency, such as the ability to develop and manage the supervisory relationship, to reflect on the supervision practice, and to identify the students' personal factors that affect the thesis supervision. Since studies suggested that written feedback had great potential for miscommunication and misunderstanding, it is recommended that the supervisors should not impose their own assumptions on students and should build up a connection with the students by having dialogues and interactions with the students. For example, the supervisors should not assume that the students understand all their WSF instances. They should talk with the students if there are any unidentifiable comments in the supervisors' WSF since the unidentifiable

comments would most often cause the students' anxiety, and the anxiety will prevent the students from making full use of the WSF.

Secondly, this study suggests to provide the supervisors with training opportunities concerning WSF. Ferris (2010) revealed that writing instructors with training would reorient themselves to work effectively with students. The research results have shown that most supervisors were very rigorous in giving positive feedback and some supervisors were even not aware that the WSF could be in positive connotation. In addition, the study also revealed that the supervisors never used the metalinguistic strategies in their WSF provision, which indicates that the supervisors need to experiment with a wide range of feedback techniques. What is more, the interview with the supervisors showed that their WSF practices were mainly based on their own academic writing or test-paper marking experience, and their WSF practices from early to later drafts were unconsciously shifted. This indicates that the supervisors need both practical and theoretical guidance. Therefore, it is suggested that the supervisors be provided with more opportunities for training in WSF provision. Either the School or the University needs to invite some experts on written feedback to conduct some workshops, or to organize some school-based professional development seminars designed for the supervisors, where the supervisors can be trained how to effectively and efficiently provide WSF, can reflect on their own current feedback practices, challenge their assumptions about

WSF, and evaluate the effectiveness of their current practices.

Thirdly, this study suggests developing the students' self-correction strategies. The supervisors are responsible for helping the students recognize their errors, develop self-correction skills, and make the best use of the WSF for future academic writing (Wang, 2019). In other words, the students need the opportunities to observe and learn from self-correction (one's own problem-solving process in writing) to improve their texts. Otherwise, the students would only play a reliant and passive role after they have submitted their thesis drafts. However, the study showed that most supervisors have rarely implemented self-correction strategies because of their perception of the students' low proficiency. Research has shown that L2 students are capable of editing their own errors when they are given guidance and motivation for doing so. For example, Yang (2010) and Cahyono and Amrina (2016) revealed that the students were able to improve their writing concerning grammar. What is more, Yang (2010) reported that the reflection-in actions would empower the students to scrutinize their own texts in detail for more accuracy. Therefore, teachers need to consider and develop effective self-correction measures that would help students become independent writers. As Ferris and Helt (2000) claimed, teachers' written feedback should be supplemented by intentional instruction that helps students learn to understand the issues and to avoid making the same errors in the future. Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) have suggested a number of editing strategies that would be useful

to the students for improving their writing accuracy. These strategies include:

1. *Breaking up the task into chunks.*
2. *Reading the text aloud helps students notice when a word is missing or unnecessary, when a word does not sound right, and when sentences are long, choppy, or repetitive.*
3. *Focused editing on specific error patterns.*
4. *Using electronic tools effectively (Word processor or online text editing).*
5. *Asking a trusted classmate to read and critically comment on the text. (p. 32)*

Besides these above-mentioned editing strategies, the supervisors could also provide some rubrics for different thesis sections to the students so that the students could self-check and self-correct their errors, especially on the aspects of organization and content. For example, the Abstract is difficult for most students, often being confused with the Introduction or even the Conclusion of theses. However, in the researcher's classroom, most students could evaluate and write abstracts to a satisfactory extent with a move-step rubric. These self-correction strategies can help the students play an active role in thesis writing by engaging them in self-evaluation and reflection.

#### **5.4 Limitations of the Study**

Though the current study provides a comprehensive analysis of the supervisors'

WSF, the students' uptake and their perceptions, a single study does not provide a complete picture of the WSF reality in this university. This study has several limitations that must be noted.

Firstly, the sample for text analysis of this study included 32 students' portfolios in one academic year from the same normal university. This suggests that the size of the sample thesis drafts is not large enough to represent all the supervisors' WSF practices and all the students' uptake of their supervisors' practices. Therefore, it should be cautious to generalize the results of this study. To represent the educational context of this university, data collection should cover more supervisors and students of varied academic backgrounds in more academic years. This research can be replicated with a larger sample of supervisors and students in future studies.

Secondly, the topics of the bachelor's theses varied from one student to another, so, some students' research topics may fall out of their supervisors' fields of research interests. A thesis draft with a research topic out of their research interests may have influenced the supervisors' WSF practices. Since only one student's thesis portfolio under each supervisor's supervision was selected out for analysis, it was most likely that some students' thesis drafts with topics out of their supervisors' research interests were analyzed in this study, which may have biased the overall findings. This makes it difficult for the researcher to fully understand the supervisors' WSF practices.

The third limitation concerns the new classification frameworks of WSF proposed in this study. As mentioned earlier, to build a classification framework for WSF focus which aims at both form and content, the research has adapted the general classification categories in the literature into seven specific ones, and some new categories were added in an attempt to eliminate the overlapping. Despite the effort, some problems still remain unsolved, as illustrated in the discussion that the WSF focus practices cannot be only judged by comparing the instances of different WSF categories. In addition, when coding the WSF categories, the researcher and the independent coder drawn on their personal judgment rather than relied on objective dividing principles. This suggests that the new classification framework of WSF has its own weaknesses.

Lastly, the study did not take the supervisors' qualifications, personal styles, and the students' academic proficiencies into consideration. The supervisors' WSF practices might be affected by a few factors. Their educational background, their knowledge of and skills in effective supervision practices, their own academic reading and writing capacities, and their communicative styles would exert some influence on their WSF practices. In addition, the students' uptake would be influenced by their academic and language proficiency.

## 5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations of the current study discussed earlier lend themselves to several directions for future investigations. First, in terms of research subjects, it is recommended to carry out studies with more students from a variety of universities and from different academic years. If the subjects are replaced by more students from different universities and different academic years, the results can be more reliable and quantified, and it is possible that some new WSF categories may come into existence. Then, the results of future studies can be generalized to more universities in the Chinese EFL context.

Moreover, because the students' topics will affect the supervisors WSF practices, future studies can take the supervisors' research interests and students' thesis topics into consideration, so the supervisors' WSF can be better investigated. In addition, since the students write theses with topics in different areas, such as English teaching, English literature, or English and Chinese translation, it is recommended to compare the WSF on the thesis drafts in different areas to have a better understanding of the supervisors WSF characteristics.

Finally, future research may also be undertaken to study the classification categories of WSF in-depth and work out relevant dividing principles so as to make an improvement with the present frameworks.

## 5.6 Conclusion

Topics on written feedback raised many relevant issues in the area of SLA and L2 writing pedagogy. The importance of written supervisory feedback (WSF) for L2 writers has been addressed by many researchers regarding its effectiveness and efficacy in L2 academic writing. This study focused on seven WSF foci, four WSF strategies and three WSF connotations, and four types of students' uptake of the supervisors' WSF practices on bachelor's thesis writing at a university in central China. It fills the research gaps of WSF on bachelor's multiple-draft theses.

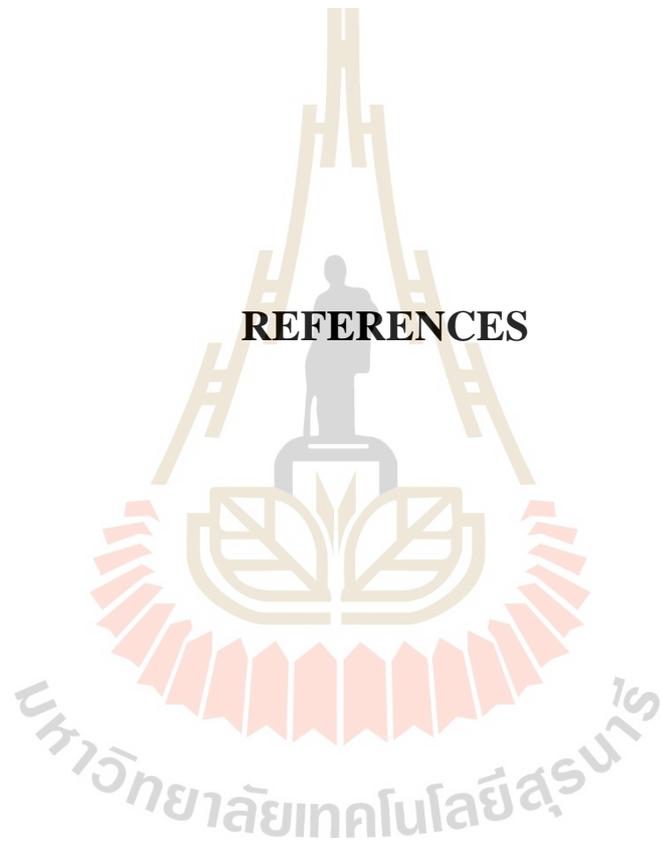
This study showed some important characteristics of the supervisors' WSF practices in different draft stages and different sections. The supervisors' WSF was more on Grammar than on other aspects and the Grammar WSF increased from the initial to the later stages, they used more indirect strategies than direct ones, and they used limited positive or negative feedback. The supervisors provided much Organization and Content WSF on the frontpage, and their direct strategies on Organization and Content WSF were mostly in the short sections such as Content Table and Abstract. The study also showed that the students' successful uptake of WSF foci was affected by its interactions with WSF strategies and connotations. These findings of this study provide several practical implications for the supervisors to improve their WSF effectiveness.

The data in this study also revealed that the students preferred the Organization

and Content WSF, and indirect strategies for grammatical errors. Moreover, positive feedback was believed to be essential for learners to take care of their supervisors' WSF. This suggests the great potential impacts of the positive WSF in aiding the teacher's effort to provide WSF. Therefore, the supervisors' WSF need not only to indicate the errors, but also to tell what they had done well.

The research is important because it increases EFL supervisors' and students' understanding of how WSF can be implemented more effectively in bachelor's thesis writing. The findings of this study provide practical implications for the supervisors to improve their WSF effectiveness. Additionally, the researcher has provided the limitations of the present study and some suggestions for future research. It is hoped that future research can gain further insights into better categorizations of WSF and better WSF provision techniques to improve the bachelor's thesis outcomes and to empower successful thesis writers.

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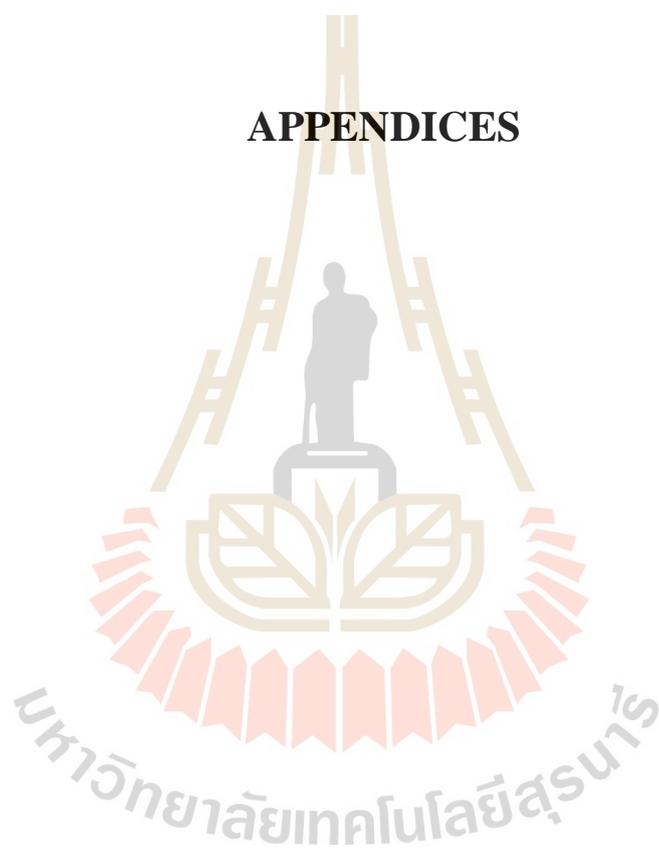
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# APPENDICES



## Appendix A

### Questionnaire for English Major Students' Views on Written Supervisory Feedback on BA Thesis Drafts

Dear students,

The purpose of this research is to understand your views on different kinds of written supervisory feedback in order to improve the processes and outcomes of supervision of BA thesis in the School of Foreign Languages of HNFNU.

There are no right or wrong answers in the questionnaire, and I assure you complete anonymity of your response and I would be very grateful for your time collaboration.

#### Part I

1. Your gender is \_\_\_\_\_. \*
  - A. male
  - B. female
2. Your Major is \_\_\_\_\_ \*
  - A. English (Pedagogic)
  - B. English (Non-Pedagogic)
  - C. Translation
3. Your English proficiency is \_\_\_\_\_. \*
  - A. I passed TEM-4 and TEM-8
  - B. I passed TEM-4 only
  - C. I neither passed TEM-4 nor TEM-8
  - D. I don't want to tell
4. Your BA thesis is about \_\_\_\_\_. \*
  - A. English Teaching and Learning
  - B. English Literature
  - C. English and Chinese Translation
  - D. English Linguistics
  - E. English and Chinese Culture
  - F. Others

## Part II

*Read the following statements about written feedback carefully and circle the response that best describes your opinion.*

**SA= Strongly Agree    A= Agree**

**N/U= Neither Agree nor Disagree/ Undecided**

<b>D= Disagree</b>	<b>SD= Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>N/U</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>SD</b>
5. I expect my supervisor to give me written feedback on content.						
6. I expect my supervisor give me written feedback on grammar.						
7. I do not expect my supervisor give me written feedback on requirements.						
8. I expect my supervisor give me written feedback on the appropriateness of words or sentences.						
9. I expect my supervisor give me written feedback on organization.						
10. I do not expect supervisors give me written feedback on my writing attitudes.						
11. I like supervisors' written feedback to be unidentifiable.						
12. Supervisor's direct correction or reformation of the error in my thesis drafts will make me very happy.						
13. I expect my supervisor to correct the errors and write comments to tell what kind of errors they are in my thesis drafts.						
14. I expect my supervisor to write comments to imply there are errors or problems, requiring me to think and correct the problems by myself.						
15. It's a good idea that supervisors use underlining, circling or question marks to point out there is a problem, but without telling what the problems is.						
16. It's a good idea that supervisors use error codes to indicate the error types. For example, writing a "VT" to imply there is a verb tense error.						
17. It's a good idea that supervisors write numbers on the margin to show the numbers of errors in the corresponding line or paragraph, without telling what and the exact place of the errors are.						
18. My feelings may be hurt by supervisors' negative tone to point out my errors and weakness.						
19. I feel comfortable when supervisors use a positive, appreciative tone to tell my strengths.						
20. I will not feel threatened when supervisors use neutral, objective tone to point out my errors and weaknesses.						

## **Appendix B**

### **Students' Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

1. Did you like your bachelor's thesis writing? Why?
2. In your opinion, which aspects do you consider most important for supervisors to look at? Why?
3. Do you think supervisors should focus mainly on students' errors? Why?
4. How do you want your supervisors to indicate the errors in your thesis drafts? Why?
5. In your opinion, what tones do you think supervisors should adopt in their written feedback, positive, neutral and negative? Why?
6. What are the main reasons that you do not revise your thesis even the supervisor provides a written feedback on your thesis drafts?
7. What are your suggestions on the supervisors' written feedback on the bachelor's thesis drafts in the School of Foreign Languages?

### **Appendix C**

### **Supervisors' Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

1. Did you like the supervision of bachelor's thesis students? Why?
2. In your opinion, which aspects do you consider most important for supervisors to look at? Why?
3. Do you think supervisors should focus mainly on students' errors? Why?
4. How do you indicate the errors in your students' thesis drafts? Why?
5. In your opinion, what tones do you think supervisors adopt in their written feedback, positive, neutral and negative? Why?
6. How did you write your written comments to improve students' successful uptake?

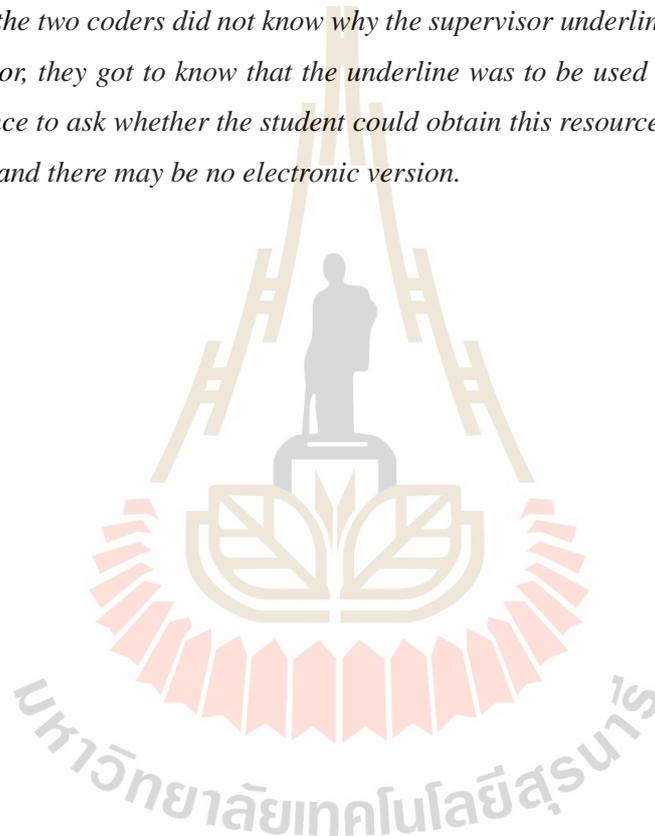
## Appendix D

### WSF Focus Coding Categories and Brief Examples

Category of WSF Focus	Tagging Code	Descriptions	Examples
Content	Co	Effectiveness, accuracy, completeness or appropriateness of ideas or argumentation	<i>“Add a summary at the end of this chapter.”</i>
Requirements	Re	academic conventions (including referencing, mechanics, passive voice and objective tone); university requirements	( <u>Zhang Daijun</u> , 1994:164) <i>“Only family name is needed in citation.”</i>
Organization	Or	Order of information/ ideas; Links between information/ ideas; Paragraph/chapter/thesis development; Arrangement of sentence structures	<i>“Put this paragraph at the end of this section.”</i> <i>“Here a transitional paragraph is needed.”</i>
Grammar	Gr	Spelling; Tense; Voice; Word class; Word addition and deletion; Article; Punctuation; Chinese English	When Celie <u>did</u> <u>cannot</u> meet his requirement, he will beat Celie.
Linguistic Appropriateness	LC	Appropriateness (using suitable, right and proper words) Accuracy (precision or exactness of word choice, especially resulting from careful effort) Formality (using formal words and avoid colloquial expressions)	... Celie how to <u>realize</u> her liberation from... <i>“achieve”</i> the <u>object</u> in Jane Eyre... <i>“Other words? such as heroine?”</i>
Writing Attitudes	WA	Carefulness, seriousness in writing; Academic behavior (plagiarism);	<i>“Please take thesis writing seriously.”</i>

Category of WSF Focus	Tagging Code	Descriptions	Examples
		Academic ethics	<i>“Please submit your drafts on time.”</i>
Unidentifiable Comments	UC	Notes unrelated to written feedback (e.g., for oral conferencing or for supervisor’s own use); Unidentifiable symbols or phrases	...Rowley: MA Newbury House, <u>1983.</u> *

Note. *At first, the two coders did not know why the supervisor underline this. By consulting the supervisor, they got to know that the underline was to be used by the supervisor in the conference to ask whether the student could obtain this resource within her ability since it is old and there may be no electronic version.*



## Appendix E

### WSF Strategy Coding Categories and Brief Examples

Category of feedback strategy		Tagging Code	Descriptions	Examples
Direct WSF	Direct corrections or reformulation	Dc	crossing out unnecessary words; inserting missing words; providing correct form or content	In English Reading class, teachers... “es”
	Direct corrections of reformulations with comments or explanations	Ds	using statements, directives, examples, references (perhaps with symbols indicating the place) to tell that something is problematic, to explain why it is problematic, or instruct how to improve it after giving direct corrections or reformulations	“Many tense errors in this page. Correct them one by one.”
Indirect WSF	Comments implicitly indicating errors or problems	Is	Commenting on students’ texts, without telling or pointing out where the errors exist or how to improve it.	“your opinion?”
	graphical marking	Ig	Underling; Circling; Using a question mark; Ticking or crossing, etc.	Celie’s father <u>is</u> a contradictory man
	Indirect counting	It	Error count is provided	“2”, “+++”
	Indirect coding	Ic	Error codes are used	“WW”, “VT”

## Appendix F

### WSF Connotation Coding Categories and Brief Examples

Category of WSF Connotation	Tagging code	Descriptions	Examples
<b>Positive comment</b>	<b>Po</b>	Praise; encouragement; acknowledgement of something positive	“√√” <i>“You made good progress in this draft than in the previous one.”</i>
<b>Negative comment</b>	<b>Ng</b>	comment with criticism, sarcasm, or a total disapproval	<i>“You have made too much simple mistakes”;</i> <i>“Rewrite.”</i>
<b>Neutral comment</b>	<b>Ne</b>	no biased, no judgmental feedback comment indicating, locating the errors, giving suggestions or providing strategies for improvement	<i>“Please add the thesis outline at the end of this chapter.”</i>

## Appendix G

### Uptake Coding Categories and Brief Examples

Category of uptake	Tagging code	Descriptions	Examples
Successful uptake	Us	A change solving a problem or improving upon a problem area discussed in the feedback	[D1] ( <u>Zhang Daijun</u> , 1994:164) <i>“Only family name is needed in citation.”</i> [D2] (Zhang, 1994: 164)
Unsuccessful uptake	Uu	A change does not target the problem addressed in the feedback; A change partially targets the problem; A change brings new problems or errors.	[D1] Chapter 3 The Present Situation of English Reading Teaching [D2] Chapter 3 The Significances of Developing Students’ Thinking Ability*
No Uptake	U0	No change is made to the feedback comment	[D1] The first question’s answer just need to summarize briefly. [D2] The first question’s answer just need to summarize briefly.
Unverifiable uptake	Ux	No need to revise; Unable to trace the uptake	<i>“This part is fine.”</i>

Note. The supervisor should intend to ask the student to change the title in “The present situation of developing students’ thinking ability in English reading Teaching” according to the content in the thesis drafts.

## Appendix H

### Examples of WSF Coding and Uptake Coding in BA Thesis Drafts

Section	WSF coding (S3D1)	Uptake coding (S3D2)
Frontpage & Title	<p>修改建议: ① 调整格式. ② Intro 章节需具体内容. ③ 3.1 段落论证逻辑顺序. 浅→深→主题 ④ 3.2 标题修改. ⑤ Chapter Three 外加标题与章节</p> <p style="text-align: center;">湖南第一师范学院</p> <p style="text-align: center;">毕业论文(设计)</p> <p><i>WSF1 Re, Ds, Ne</i> <i>WSF2 Co, Ds, Ne</i> <i>WSF3 Or, Ds, Ne</i> <i>WSF4 Co, Ds, Ne</i> <i>WSF5 Co, Ds, Ne</i></p> <p>浅析《简·爱》中女性人物对女主角的影响</p> <p>题目 (中文)</p> <hr/> <p>Influence of the Five Woman ✓ Characters on the Heroine in Jane</p> <p>(英文)</p> <hr/> <p>Eyre <i>字体 In italics</i> <i>WSF1 Re, Ds, Ne</i></p>	<p>修改建议: ① 进一步修改格式. ② 2.2 章节的标题. ③ 进一步修改语言. 论证进一步深化.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">湖南第一师范学院</p> <p style="text-align: center;">No. 2. 毕业论文(设计)</p> <p>浅析《简·爱》中女性人物对女主角的影响</p> <p>题目 (中文)</p> <hr/> <p>Influence of the Five Woman <i>Capture of WSF1</i> Characters on the Heroine in Jane <i>Us</i></p> <p>(英文)</p> <hr/> <p>Eyre</p>

Section	WSF coding (S3D1)	Uptake coding (S3D2)
Abstract	<p>B.A.Thesis <u>The Analysis of Features of American Slang from Sub-Cultural Perspective</u></p> <p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p> <i>Jane Eyre</i> was the masterpiece of Charlotte Bronte. In this novel, the heroine Jane Eyre was transformed from a submissive and self-abased girl to a self-respecting and independent woman. In this process, there were five woman characters impacted Jane from different aspects. There were Jane Eyre's mother, Mrs.Reed, Bertha Mason, Maria Temple and Helen Burns. Each of them played an important role in Jane's growth. They forged Jane Eyre's extraordinary life and her social characteristics beyond the society of that time. So Jane dared to break through the secular barriers to seek her own inner feelings. It can be said that what they did promoted the formation of Jane Eyre's unique character. They made Jane Eyre a brilliant female image.         </p> <p><b>Key words:</b> <i>Jane Eyre</i>; woman character; impact</p>	<p>B.A.Thesis <u>Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></u></p> <p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p> <i>Jane Eyre</i> was the masterpiece of Charlotte Bronte. In this novel, the heroine Jane Eyre was transformed from a submissive and self-abased girl to a self-respecting and independent woman. In this process, there were five woman characters impacted Jane from different aspects. There were Jane Eyre's mother, Mrs.Reed, Bertha Mason, Maria Temple and Helen Burns. Each of them played an important role in Jane's growth. They forged Jane Eyre's extraordinary life and her social characteristics which exceeded the society of that time. So Jane dared to break through the secular barriers to seek her own inner feelings. It can be said that what they did promoted the formation of Jane Eyre's unique character. They made Jane Eyre a brilliant female image.         </p> <p><b>Key words:</b> <i>Jane Eyre</i>; woman character; impact</p>

Section	WSF coding (S3D1)	Uptake coding (S3D2)
Chapter 3	<p>B.A.Thesis The Analysis of Features of American Slang from Sub-Cultural Perspective</p> <p><b>Chapter Three Bertha Mason's Influence: Pursuit of Free and Equal Love</b></p> <p>In contrast to the protagonist Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason who was imprisoned and locked in the dark attic seemed to be an invisible character. But just like an overwhelming ghost, her influence had existed from Chapter 11 to the end of the novel. Both of them were oppressed by men. From Bertha's tragedy, Jane formed her own awareness of love. In the following part of the paper, we shall focus our study on Bertha Mason's image and her impact on Jane.</p> <p><b>3.1 Bertha Mason's Image-a-Madwoman</b> <i>WSF1 Re, Dc, Ne</i></p> <p>In 1978, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar published their well-known masterpiece, <i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i>. It has been named one of classic works in the early period of feminist literary criticism. They focused on the character: Bertha. She was a madwoman and had been locked in the attic by her husband in <i>Jane Eyre</i>. Their book examined Victorian literature from a feminist perspective. They pointed out that Bertha acts for Jane, and acts like Jane. Bertha, who was the figurative representation of a silencer and the expression of Jane's potential dark side, was utilized to function as an alternate image of Jane (Gilbert, 1978:354). Bertha represented the new woman who didn't give in to the dogmas. Since its publication, the image of the mad woman has brought about a hot discussion. Since then, the character of the madwoman has been a heated topic in feminist literary criticism. <i>WSF2 Gr, Ig, Ne</i></p> <p>Bertha Mason, who was regarded as a rebellious woman, subverted the patriarchal authority by showing contempt for males and even trying to kill them. Madness was concluded by Rochester. He explained that her madness was inherited by her family, because her mother was also a madwoman. This <i>WSF3 Gr, Ig, Ne</i></p> <p><i>WSF4 Gr, Ig, Ne</i></p>	<p>B.A.Thesis Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Recourse in <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p><b>Chapter Three Bertha Mason's Influence: Pursuit of Free and Equal Love</b></p> <p>In contrast to the protagonist Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason who was imprisoned and locked in the dark attic seemed to be an invisible character. But just like an overwhelming ghost, her influence had existed from Chapter 11 to the end of the novel. Both of them were oppressed by men. From Bertha's tragedy, Jane formed her own awareness of love. In the following part of the paper, we shall focus our study on Bertha Mason's image and her influence on Jane.</p> <p><i>Uptake of WSF1 Uu</i></p> <p><b>3.1 Bertha Mason's Image-A Madwoman</b></p> <p>In 1978, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar published their well-known masterpiece, <i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i>. It has been named one of classic works in the early period of feminist literary criticism. They focused on the character: Bertha. She was a madwoman and had been locked in the attic by her husband in <i>Jane Eyre</i>. Their book examined Victorian literature from a feminist perspective. They pointed out that Bertha, who was the figurative representation of a silencer and the expression of Jane's potential dark side, was utilized to function as an alternate image of Jane (Gilbert, 1978:354). Bertha represented the new woman who didn't give into the dogmas. Since its publication, the image of the mad woman has brought about a hot discussion. Since then, the character of the madwoman has been a heated topic in feminist literary criticism. <i>Uptake of WSF2 Us</i></p> <p><i>Uptake of WSF3 Us</i></p> <p><i>Uptake of WSF4 Uu</i></p> <p>According to her husband, Edward Rochester, Bertha's madness was a mysterious and secret family mental disease. Bertha came from "a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations!" said Rochester. Bertha's mother who was also "a madwoman and a drunkard!" Therefore, she</p>

Section	WSF coding (S3D1)	Uptake coding (S3D2)
Chapter 3	<p>B.A.Thesis The Analysis of Features of American Slang from Sub-Cultural Perspective</p> <p>transmitted disease only passed to women. In <i>Jane Eyre</i>, only women could go mad. Just like what Virginia Woolf said, Bertha was the victim of the patriarchal society. She could not speak as a normal person. What a mad could do was just to laugh like a ghost. Nobody would like to believe in even listen to a madwoman, because madness was thought to be a kind of disease and one insane condition of people. Her madness and her laugh liked signals of asking for help (Showalter, 1977:115). At the same time it gave warnings to other women. Therefore the real function of madness in <i>Jane Eyre</i> was its symbolic meaning. It symbolized the powerlessness of women and impotence of the society in the Victorian times (韩敏中, 1988:46). And the most important point was that the madness in <i>Jane Eyre</i> was not real madness in medical science, which meant that madness was not a real mental illness from the perspective of feminism. <i>Pay attention to the logical order. it is more appropriate if the conclusion is put at the end.</i></p> <p><i>pick this paragraph ahead</i> According to her husband, Edward Rochester, Bertha's madness was a mysterious and secret family mental disease. Bertha came from "a mad family. idiots and maniacs through three generations!" said Rochester. Bertha's mother who was also "a madwoman and a drunkard!" Therefore, she was "the true daughter of an infamous mother" (Bronte, 2003:291). Her madness was a legacy of family and physical disorder.</p> <p><b>WSF5 Or, Ds, Ne</b> <b>WSF6 Re, Ig, Ne</b> <b>3.2 Jane Eyre's Awareness of Love</b> <i>Choice? Refusal of unequal Love?</i> <b>WSF7 Lc, Dc, Ne</b></p> <p>At Thornfield she became a governess teaching a girl. At the beginning, Jane did not pay attention to Mr. Rochester, her master. As time went by, she was gradually attracted by his good qualities and was accustomed with him. She didn't hide her feelings because of her low status. She boldly expressed love to Rochester. She dared to love a man who was belonging to the upper class.</p> <p><b>WSF8 Gr, Ig, Ne</b></p> <p>They were going to be married when Jane broke the engagement on the wedding day. Mr. Rochester was a married man, though his wife was mad. Their marriage would be illegal and immoral. Jane was an independent</p>	<p>B.A.Thesis Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p>was "the true daughter of an infamous mother" (Bronte, 2003:291). Her madness was a legacy of family and physical disorder.</p> <p><b>Uptake of WSF5 Us</b> Bertha Mason, who was regarded as a rebellious woman, subverted the patriarchal authority by showing contempt for males and even trying to kill them. Madness was concluded by Rochester. He explained that her madness was inherited by her family, because her mother was also a madwoman. This transmitted disease only passed to women. In <i>Jane Eyre</i>, only women could go mad. Just like what Virginia Woolf said, Bertha was the victim of the patriarchal society. She could not speak as a normal person. What a mad could do was just to laugh like a ghost. Nobody would like to believe in even listen to a madwoman, because madness was thought to be a kind of disease and one insane condition of people. Her madness and her laugh liked signals of asking for help (Showalter, 1977:115). At the same time it gave warnings to other women. Therefore the real function of madness in <i>Jane Eyre</i> was its symbolic meaning. It symbolized the powerlessness of women and impotence of the society in the Victorian times (韩敏中, 1988:46). And the most important point was that the madness in <i>Jane Eyre</i> was not real madness in medical science, which meant that madness was not a real mental illness from the perspective of feminism.</p> <p><b>Uptake of WSF6 Un</b> <b>3.2 Jane Eyre's Refusal of Unequal and Immoral Love</b> <b>Uptake of WSF7 Us</b></p> <p>At Thornfield she became a governess teaching a girl. At the beginning, Jane did not pay attention to Mr. Rochester, her master. As time went by, she was gradually attracted by his good qualities and was accustomed with him. In spite of her low status, she didn't hide her feelings. She boldly expressed love to Rochester. She dared to love a man who was belonging to the upper class.</p> <p><b>Uptake to WSF8 Un</b></p> <p>They were going to be married when Jane broke the engagement on the wedding day. Mr. Rochester was a married man, though his wife was mad. Their marriage would be illegal and immoral. Jane was an independent</p> <p>9</p>

Section	WSF coding (S3D1)	Uptake coding (S3D2)
Chapter 3	<p>B.A.Thesis The Analysis of Features of American Slang from Sub-Cultural Perspective</p> <p>woman, who wanted to have a whole love (隋晓蕾, 2007: 39). She could not marry a man who had had a wife. Shocked by the news, Jane decided to escape from Thornfield. To her, to be a lover was unbearable, so she decided to rebel against her marriage. In Jane's heart, she needed a marriage in which the couple was equal in the soul and they were independent from each other (朱春梅, 2013:14) . But all these could not come true. So Jane left Mr. Rochester with the heavy heart. In Thornfield, Jane was passionate and suffered. Till then, the object Jane resisted had become a conventional marriage system. To Jane, the appearance of the madwoman—Mr. Rochester's wife was not merely a blot from the blue, but also stimulated her independent spirit (赵静, 2012: 24). To defend her dignity and uphold the solemnity legality and purity of marriage, Jane, too proud and independent to be just a mistress to Rochester, left lover resolutely and determinedly.</p> <p>+ Sum up. WSF 13 Co, Ds, Ne</p> <p>WSF9 Lc, Ig, Ne WSF10, Or, Ds, Ne WSF10, Lc, Ig, Ne WSF12 Lc, Ig, Ne WSF 13 Co, Ds, Ne</p>	<p>B.A.Thesis Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in Jane Eyre</p> <p>woman, who wanted to have a complete love (隋晓蕾, 2007: 39). She could not marry a man who had had a wife. Shocked by the reality, Jane decided to escape from Thornfield. To her, to be a lover was unbearable, so she decided to rebel against her marriage. In Jane's heart, she needed a marriage in which the couple was equal in the soul and they were independent from each other (朱春梅, 2013:14) . But all these could not come true. So Jane left Mr. Rochester with the heavy heart. In Thornfield, Jane was passionate and suffered. The appearance of the madwoman—Mr. Rochester's wife was not merely a blot from the blue, but also stimulated her independent spirit (赵静, 2012: 24). To defend her dignity and uphold the solemnity legality and purity of marriage, Jane, too proud and independent to be just a mistress to Rochester, left lover resolutely and determinedly.</p> <p>Bertha Mason was the sacrifice of patriarchy. Each of her action was the natural reveal of an oppressed women's mentality. Bertha was the woman who stood behind Jane Eyre. She was Jane's another soul who dared to say something that Jane dared not say. Her role was to stimulate Jane's independent spirit. She persisted in her pursuit of independence and equal love.</p> <p>Uptake to WSF 11 Un Uptake to WSF 12 U0 Uptake to WSF 13 Us</p> <p>Uptake to WSF9 Us Uptake to WSF10 Us</p>

Section	WSF Coding (S3D2)	Uptake Coding (S3D3)
Frontpage & title	<p>修改建议: ① 进一步修改格式. ② 2.2. 增加自己的观点. ③ 进一步修改语言. 结论进一步细化.</p> <p>湖南第一师范学院</p> <p>No. 2. 毕业论文(设计)</p> <p><b>Suggestions:</b>  <i>(1) Continue to adjust your thesis format; WSF1 Re, Ds, Ne</i>  <i>(2) Add your own opinions in 2.2; WSF2 Co, Ds, Ne</i>  <i>(3) Further improve your language. The conclusion can be further expanded. WSF3 Gr, Is, Ne</i>  <i>WSF4 Co, Ds, Ne</i></p> <p>浅析《简·爱》中女性人物对女主人公的影响</p> <p>题目 (中文) _____        Influence of the Five Woman        Characters on the Heroine in Jane Eyre        (英文) _____</p>	<p>建议: ① 认真阅读参考文献, 仔细检查语言和格式错误. ② 精修摘要及结论.</p> <p>湖南第一师范学院</p> <p>No. 3. 毕业论文(设计)</p> <p>浅析《简·爱》中女性人物对女主人公的影响</p> <p>题目 (中文) _____        On the Influence of the Five Woman        Characters on the Heroine in Jane Eyre        (英文) _____</p>

Section	WSF Coding (S3D2)	Uptake Coding (S3D3)
Abstract	<p>B.A.Thesis Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p><i>Jane Eyre</i> was the masterpiece of Charlotte Bronte. In this novel, the heroine Jane Eyre was transformed from a submissive and self-abased girl to a self-respecting and independent woman. In this process, there were five woman characters impacted Jane from different aspects. There were Jane Eyre's mother, Mrs.Reed, Bertha Mason, Maria Temple and Helen Burns. Each of them played an important role in Jane's growth. They forged Jane Eyre's extraordinary life and her social characteristics which exceeded the society of that time. So Jane dared to break through the secular barriers to seek her own inner feelings. It can be said that what they did promoted the formation of Jane Eyre's unique character. They made Jane Eyre a brilliant female image.</p> <p><b>Key words:</b> <i>Jane Eyre</i>; woman character; impact</p>	<p>B.A.Thesis Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p><i>Jane Eyre</i> was the masterpiece of Charlotte Bronte. In this novel, the heroine Jane Eyre was transformed from a submissive and self-abased girl to a self-respecting and independent woman. In this process, there were five woman characters impacted Jane from different aspects. There were Jane Eyre's mother, Mrs.Reed, Bertha Mason, Maria Temple and Helen Burns. Jane Eyre's mother and Maria Temple promoted the formation of Jane Eyre's new female awareness. Bertha Mason influenced Jane Eyre's love awareness. Mrs. Reed aroused Jane Eyre's rebellious awareness. Helen Burns influenced Jane Eyre's religious awareness. Each of them played an important role in Jane's growth. They forged Jane Eyre's extraordinary life and her social characteristics which exceeded the society of that time. So Jane dared to break through the secular barriers to seek her own inner feelings. It can be said that what they did promoted the formation of Jane Eyre's unique character. They made Jane Eyre a brilliant female image.</p> <p><b>Key words:</b> <i>Jane Eyre</i>; woman character; influence</p>

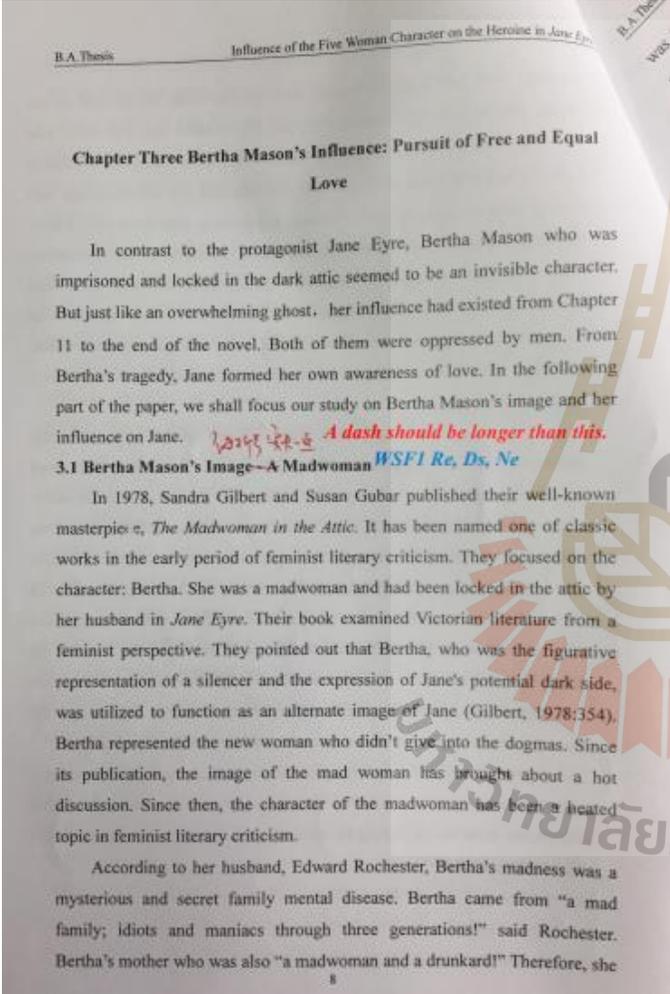
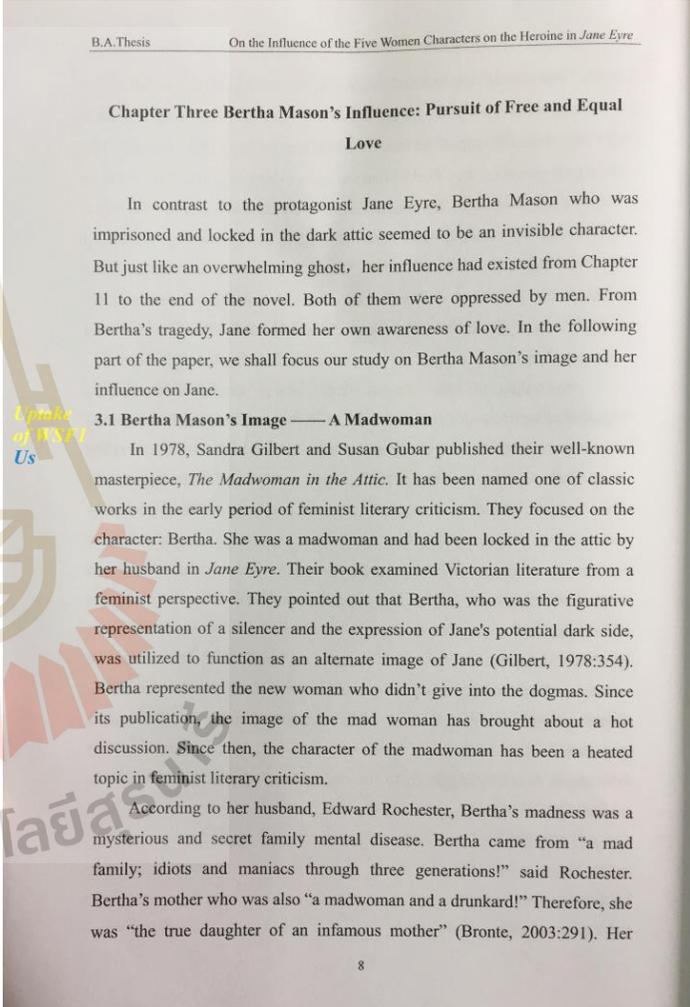
Section	WSF Coding (S3D2)	Uptake Coding (S3D3)
Chapter 3	<p>B.A.Thesis Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p>Chapter Three Bertha Mason's Influence: Pursuit of Free and Equal Love</p> <p>In contrast to the protagonist Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason who was imprisoned and locked in the dark attic seemed to be an invisible character. But just like an overwhelming ghost, her influence had existed from Chapter 11 to the end of the novel. Both of them were oppressed by men. From Bertha's tragedy, Jane formed her own awareness of love. In the following part of the paper, we shall focus our study on Bertha Mason's image and her influence on Jane.</p> <p><b>3.1 Bertha Mason's Image—A Madwoman</b> <i>WSF1 Re, Dc, Ne</i></p> <p>In 1978, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar published their well-known masterpiece, <i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i>. It has been named one of classic works in the early period of feminist literary criticism. They focused on the character: Bertha. She was a madwoman and had been locked in the attic by her husband in <i>Jane Eyre</i>. Their book examined Victorian literature from a feminist perspective. They pointed out that Bertha, who was the figurative representation of a silencer and the expression of Jane's potential dark side, was utilized to function as an alternate image of Jane (Gilbert, 1978:354). Bertha represented the new woman who didn't give into the dogmas. Since its publication, the image of the mad woman has brought about a hot discussion. Since then, the character of the madwoman has been a heated topic in feminist literary criticism.</p> <p>According to her husband, Edward Rochester, Bertha's madness was a mysterious and secret family mental disease. Bertha came from "a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations!" said Rochester. Bertha's mother who was also "a madwoman and a drunkard!" Therefore, she</p>	<p>B.A.Thesis Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p>Chapter Three Bertha Mason's Influence: Pursuit of Free and Equal Love</p> <p>In contrast to the protagonist Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason who was imprisoned and locked in the dark attic seemed to be an invisible character. But just like an overwhelming ghost, her influence had existed from Chapter 11 to the end of the novel. Both of them were oppressed by men. From Bertha's tragedy, Jane formed her own awareness of love. In the following part of the paper, we shall focus our study on Bertha Mason's image and her influence on Jane. <i>WSF1 Re, Dc, Ne</i></p> <p><b>3.1 Bertha Mason's Image—A Madwoman</b> <i>Uptake of WSF1 Un</i></p> <p>In 1978, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar published their well-known masterpiece, <i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i>. It has been named one of classic works in the early period of feminist literary criticism. They focused on the character: Bertha. She was a madwoman and had been locked in the attic by her husband in <i>Jane Eyre</i>. Their book examined Victorian literature from a feminist perspective. They pointed out that Bertha, who was the figurative representation of a silencer and the expression of Jane's potential dark side, was utilized to function as an alternate image of Jane (Gilbert, 1978:354). Bertha represented the new woman who didn't give into the dogmas. Since its publication, the image of the mad woman has brought about a hot discussion. Since then, the character of the madwoman has been a heated topic in feminist literary criticism.</p> <p>According to her husband, Edward Rochester, Bertha's madness was a mysterious and secret family mental disease. Bertha came from "a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations!" said Rochester. Bertha's mother who was also "a madwoman and a drunkard!" Therefore, she</p>

Section	WSF Coding (S3D2)	Uptake Coding (S3D3)
Chapter 3	<p>B.A.Thesis Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p>was “the true daughter of an infamous mother” (Bronte, 2003:291). Her madness was a legacy of family and physical disorder.</p> <p>Bertha Mason, who was regarded as a rebellious woman, subverted the patriarchal authority by showing contempt for males and even trying to kill them. Madness was concluded by Rochester. He explained that her madness was inherited by her family, because her mother was also a madwoman. This transmitted disease only passed to women. In <i>Jane Eyre</i>, only women could go mad. Just like what Virginia Woolf said, Bertha was the victim of the patriarchal society. She could not speak as a normal person. What a mad could do was just to laugh like a ghost. Nobody would like to believe in even listen to a madwoman, because madness was thought to be a kind of disease and one insane condition of people. Her madness and her laugh liked signals of asking for help (Showalter, 1977:115). At the same time it gave warnings to other women. Therefore the real function of madness in <i>Jane Eyre</i> was its symbolic meaning. It symbolized the powerlessness of women and impotence of the society in the Victorian times (韩敏中, 1988:46). And the most important point was that the madness in <i>Jane Eyre</i> was not real madness in medical science, which meant that madness was not a real mental illness from the perspective of feminism.</p> <p><b>3.2 Jane Eyre's Refusal of Unequal and Immoral Love</b> WSF2 Re, Ig, Ne</p> <p>At Thornfield she became a governess teaching a girl. At the beginning, Jane did not pay attention to Mr. Rochester, her master. As time went by, she was gradually attracted by his good qualities and was accustomed with him. In spite of her low status, she didn't hide her feelings. She boldly expressed love to Rochester. She dared to love a man who was belonging to the upper class.</p> <p>They were going to be married when Jane broke the engagement on the wedding day. Mr. Rochester was a married man, though his wife was mad. Their marriage would be illegal and immoral. Jane was an independent</p> <p>9</p>	<p>B.A.Thesis Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p>was “the true daughter of an infamous mother” (Bronte, 2003:291). Her madness was a legacy of family and physical disorder.</p> <p>Bertha Mason, who was regarded as a rebellious woman, subverted the patriarchal authority by showing contempt for males and even trying to kill them. Madness was concluded by Rochester. He explained that her madness was inherited by her family, because her mother was also a madwoman. This transmitted disease only passed to women. In <i>Jane Eyre</i>, only women could go mad. Just like what Virginia Woolf said, Bertha was the victim of the patriarchal society. She could not speak as a normal person. What a mad could do was just to laugh like a ghost. Nobody would like to believe in even listen to a madwoman, because madness was thought to be a kind of disease and one insane condition of people. Her madness and her laugh liked signals of asking for help (Showalter, 1977:115). At the same time it gave warnings to other women. Therefore the real function of madness in <i>Jane Eyre</i> was its symbolic meaning. It symbolized the powerlessness of women and impotence of the society in the Victorian times (韩敏中, 1988:46). And the most important point was that the madness in <i>Jane Eyre</i> was not real madness in medical science, which meant that madness was not a real mental illness from the perspective of feminism.</p> <p><b>3.2 Jane Eyre's Refusal of Unequal and Immoral Love</b> Uptake of WSF2 Us</p> <p>At Thornfield she became a governess teaching a girl. At the beginning, Jane did not pay attention to Mr. Rochester, her master. As time went by, she was gradually attracted by his good qualities and was accustomed with him. In spite of her low status, she didn't hide her feelings. She boldly expressed love to Rochester. She dared to love a man who was belonging to the upper class.</p> <p>They were going to be married when Jane broke the engagement on the wedding day. Mr. Rochester was a married man, though his wife was mad. Their marriage would be illegal and immoral. Jane was an independent</p> <p>9</p>

Section	WSF Coding (S3D2)	Uptake Coding (S3D3)
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Source	WSF Coding (S3D3)	Uptake Coding (S3D4)
Front page & title	<p>建议：① 认真阅读原文，仔细检查语言和格式错误。 ② 精心的摘要与结论。</p>  <p>湖南第一师范学院</p> <p>No. 3. 毕业论文(设计)</p> <p><b>Suggestions:</b>  <b>(1) Read the whole thesis carefully, and correct the errors in grammar &amp; format;</b>  <i>WSF1 Gr, Is, Ne; WSF2, Re, Is, Ne</i>  <b>(2) Refine the sections of abstract and conclusion.</b>  <i>WSF3 Co, Is, Ne</i></p> <p>浅析《简·爱》中女性人物对女主角的影响</p> <p>题目 (中文) 人公的影响</p> <p><i>WSF1 Re, Dc, Ne</i> <i>On the</i> Influence of the Five Woman <i>WSF2 Gr, Dc, Ne</i>  Characters on the Heroine in Jane Eyre</p> <p>(英文) Eyre</p>	 <p>湖南第一师范学院</p> <p>毕业论文(设计)</p> <p>浅析《简·爱》中女性人物对女主角的影响</p> <p>题目 (中文) 人公的影响</p> <p><i>Uptake of WSF1</i>  <i>Us</i></p> <p>On the Influence of the Five Women Characters on the Heroine in Jane Eyre</p> <p><i>Uptake of WSF2</i>  <i>Us</i></p> <p>(英文) Eyre</p>

Source	WSF Coding (S3D3)	Uptake Coding (S3D4)
Abstract	<p>B.A.Thesis Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Abstract</b></p> <p><i>WSF1 Re, Ig, Ne</i></p> <p>Jane Eyre was the masterpiece of Charlotte Bronte. In this novel, the heroine Jane Eyre was transformed from a submissive and self-abased girl to a self-respecting and independent woman. In this process, there were five women characters impacted Jane from different aspects. There were Jane Eyre's mother, Mrs. Reed, Bertha Mason, Maria Temple and Helen Burns. Jane Eyre's mother and Maria Temple promoted the formation of Jane Eyre's new female awareness. Bertha Mason influenced Jane Eyre's love awareness. Mrs. Reed aroused Jane Eyre's rebellious awareness. Helen Burns influenced Jane Eyre's religious awareness. Each of them played an important role in Jane's growth. They forged Jane Eyre's extraordinary life and her social characteristics which exceeded the society of that time. So Jane dared to break through the secular barriers to seek her own inner feelings. It can be said that what they did promoted the formation of Jane Eyre's unique character. They made Jane Eyre a brilliant female image.</p> <p><i>WSF2 Gr, Dc, Ne</i>      <i>WSF4 Gr, Dc, Ne</i>      <i>WSF5 Lc, Dc, Ne</i>      <i>WSF6 Gr, Dc, Ne</i>      <i>WSF&amp; Gr, Dc, Ne</i></p> <p><i>WSF4 Lc, Dc, Ne</i> fostered?      developed/built?</p> <p><b>Key words:</b> <i>Jane Eyre</i>; woman character; influence</p>	<p>B.A.Thesis On the Influence of the Five Women Characters on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Abstract</b></p> <p><i>Uptake of WSF1 Us</i></p> <p><i>Jane Eyre</i> was the masterpiece of Charlotte Bronte. In this novel, the heroine Jane Eyre was transformed from a submissive and self-abased girl to a self-respecting and independent woman. In this process, there were five women characters impacting Jane from different aspects. They were Jane Eyre's mother, Mrs. Reed, Bertha Mason, Maria Temple and Helen Burns. Jane Eyre's mother and Maria Temple promoted the formation of Jane Eyre's new female awareness. Bertha Mason fostered Jane Eyre's love awareness. Mrs. Reed aroused Jane Eyre's rebellious awareness. Helen Burns developed Jane Eyre's religious awareness. Each of them played an important role in Jane's growth. They forged Jane Eyre's extraordinary life and her social characteristics which exceeded the bondage of that time. So Jane dared to break through the secular barriers to seek her own inner feelings. It can be said that what they did promoted the formation of Jane Eyre's unique character. They made Jane Eyre a brilliant female image.</p> <p><i>Uptake of WSF2 Us</i>      <i>Uptake of WSF3 Us</i>      <i>Uptake of WSF4 Us</i>      <i>Uptake of WSF5 Us</i>      <i>Uptake of WSF6 Us</i>      <i>Uptake of WSF7 Un</i></p> <p><b>Key words:</b> <i>Jane Eyre</i>; woman character; influence</p>

Source	WSF Coding (S3D3)	Uptake Coding (S3D4)
Chapter 3	 <p>B.A. Thesis      Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p><b>Chapter Three Bertha Mason's Influence: Pursuit of Free and Equal Love</b></p> <p>In contrast to the protagonist Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason who was imprisoned and locked in the dark attic seemed to be an invisible character. But just like an overwhelming ghost, her influence had existed from Chapter 11 to the end of the novel. Both of them were oppressed by men. From Bertha's tragedy, Jane formed her own awareness of love. In the following part of the paper, we shall focus our study on Bertha Mason's image and her influence on Jane.</p> <p><b>3.1 Bertha Mason's Image--A Madwoman</b> <i>WSFI Re, Ds, Ne</i></p> <p>In 1978, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar published their well-known masterpiece, <i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i>. It has been named one of classic works in the early period of feminist literary criticism. They focused on the character: Bertha. She was a madwoman and had been locked in the attic by her husband in <i>Jane Eyre</i>. Their book examined Victorian literature from a feminist perspective. They pointed out that Bertha, who was the figurative representation of a silencer and the expression of Jane's potential dark side, was utilized to function as an alternate image of Jane (Gilbert, 1978:354). Bertha represented the new woman who didn't give into the dogmas. Since its publication, the image of the mad woman has brought about a hot discussion. Since then, the character of the madwoman has been a heated topic in feminist literary criticism.</p> <p>According to her husband, Edward Rochester, Bertha's madness was a mysterious and secret family mental disease. Bertha came from "a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations!" said Rochester. Bertha's mother who was also "a madwoman and a drunkard!" Therefore, she</p>	 <p>B.A. Thesis      On the Influence of the Five Women Characters on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></p> <p><b>Chapter Three Bertha Mason's Influence: Pursuit of Free and Equal Love</b></p> <p>In contrast to the protagonist Jane Eyre, Bertha Mason who was imprisoned and locked in the dark attic seemed to be an invisible character. But just like an overwhelming ghost, her influence had existed from Chapter 11 to the end of the novel. Both of them were oppressed by men. From Bertha's tragedy, Jane formed her own awareness of love. In the following part of the paper, we shall focus our study on Bertha Mason's image and her influence on Jane.</p> <p><b>3.1 Bertha Mason's Image — A Madwoman</b></p> <p>In 1978, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar published their well-known masterpiece, <i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i>. It has been named one of classic works in the early period of feminist literary criticism. They focused on the character: Bertha. She was a madwoman and had been locked in the attic by her husband in <i>Jane Eyre</i>. Their book examined Victorian literature from a feminist perspective. They pointed out that Bertha, who was the figurative representation of a silencer and the expression of Jane's potential dark side, was utilized to function as an alternate image of Jane (Gilbert, 1978:354). Bertha represented the new woman who didn't give into the dogmas. Since its publication, the image of the mad woman has brought about a hot discussion. Since then, the character of the madwoman has been a heated topic in feminist literary criticism.</p> <p>According to her husband, Edward Rochester, Bertha's madness was a mysterious and secret family mental disease. Bertha came from "a mad family; idiots and maniacs through three generations!" said Rochester. Bertha's mother who was also "a madwoman and a drunkard!" Therefore, she was "the true daughter of an infamous mother" (Bronte, 2003:291). Her</p>

Source	WSF Coding (S3D3)	Uptake Coding (S3D4)
Chapter 3	<p>B.A.Thesis <u>Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></u></p> <p>was “the true daughter of an infamous mother” (Bronte, 2003:291). Her madness was a legacy of family and physical disorder.</p> <p>Bertha Mason, who was regarded as a rebellious woman, subverted the patriarchal authority by showing contempt for males and even trying to kill them. Madness was concluded by Rochester. He explained that her madness was inherited by her family, because her mother was also a madwoman. This transmitted disease only passed to women. In <i>Jane Eyre</i>, only women could go mad. Just like what Virginia Woolf said, Bertha was the victim of the patriarchal society. She could not speak as a normal person. What a mad could do was just to laugh like a ghost. Nobody would like to believe in even listen to a madwoman, because madness was thought to be a kind of disease and one insane condition of people. Her madness and her laugh liked signals of asking for help (Showalter, 1977:115). At the same time it gave warnings to other women. Therefore the real function of madness in <i>Jane Eyre</i> was its symbolic meaning. It symbolized the powerlessness of women and impotence of the society in the Victorian times (韩敏中, 1988:46). And the most important point was that the madness in <i>Jane Eyre</i> was not real madness in medical science, which meant that madness was not a real mental illness from the perspective of feminism.</p> <p><b>3.2 Jane Eyre’s Refusal of Unequal and Immoral Love</b></p> <p>At Thornfield she became a governess teaching a girl. At the beginning, Jane did not pay attention to Mr. Rochester, her master. As time went by, she was gradually attracted by his good qualities and was accustomed with him. In spite of her low status, she didn’t hide her feelings. She boldly expressed love to Rochester. She dared to love a man who was belonging to the upper class.</p> <p>They were going to be married when Jane broke the engagement on the wedding day. Mr. Rochester was a married man, though his wife was mad. Their marriage would be illegal and immoral. Jane was an independent</p> <p>9</p>	<p>B.A.Thesis <u>On the Influence of the Five Women Characters on the Heroine in <i>Jane Eyre</i></u></p> <p>madness was a legacy of family and physical disorder.</p> <p>Bertha Mason, who was regarded as a rebellious woman, subverted the patriarchal authority by showing contempt for males and even trying to kill them. Madness was concluded by Rochester. He explained that her madness was inherited by her family, because her mother was also a madwoman. This transmitted disease only passed to women. In <i>Jane Eyre</i>, only women could go mad. Just like what Virginia Woolf said, Bertha was the victim of the patriarchal society. She could not speak as a normal person. What a mad could do was just to laugh like a ghost. Nobody would like to believe in even listen to a madwoman, because madness was thought to be a kind of disease and one insane condition of people. Her madness and her laugh liked signals of asking for help (Showalter, 1977:115). At the same time it gave warnings to other women. Therefore the real function of madness in <i>Jane Eyre</i> was its symbolic meaning. It symbolized the powerlessness of women and impotence of the society in the Victorian times (韩敏中, 1988:46). And the most important point was that the madness in <i>Jane Eyre</i> was not real madness in medical science, which meant that madness was not a real mental illness from the perspective of feminism.</p> <p><b>3.2 Jane Eyre’s Refusal of Unequal and Immoral Love</b></p> <p>At Thornfield she became a governess teaching a girl. At the beginning, Jane did not pay attention to Mr. Rochester, her master. As time went by, she was gradually attracted by his good qualities and was accustomed with him. In spite of her low status, she didn’t hide her feelings. She boldly expressed love to Rochester. She dared to love a man who was belonging to the upper class.</p> <p>They were going to be married when Jane broke the engagement on the wedding day. Mr. Rochester was a married man, though his wife was mad. Their marriage would be illegal and immoral. Jane was an independent woman, who wanted to have a complete love (隋晓蕾, 2007: 39). She could</p> <p>9</p>

Source	WSF Coding (S3D3)	Uptake Coding (S3D4)
Chapter 3	<p>B.A.Thesis <i>Influence of the Five Woman Character on the Heroine in Jane Eyre</i></p> <p>woman, who wanted to have a complete love (隋晓蕾, 2007: 39). She could not marry a man who had had a wife. Shocked by the reality, Jane decided to escape from Thornfield. To her, to be a lover was unbearable, so she decided to rebel against her marriage. In Jane's heart, she needed a marriage in which the couple was equal in the soul and they were independent from each other (朱春梅, 2013:14) . But all these could not come true. So Jane left Mr. Rochester with the heavy heart. In Thornfield, Jane was passionate and suffered. The appearance of the madwoman—Mr. Rochester's wife was not merely a blot from the blue, but also stimulated her independent spirit (赵静, 2012: 24). To defend her dignity and uphold the solemnity legality and purity of marriage, Jane, too proud and independent to be just a mistress to Rochester, left lover resolutely and determinedly.</p> <p>Bertha Mason was the sacrifice of patriarchy. Each of her action was the natural reveal of an oppressed women's mentality. Bertha was the woman who stood behind Jane Eyre. She was Jane's another soul who dared to say something that Jane dared not say. Her role was to stimulate Jane's independent spirit. She persisted in her pursuit of independence and equal love.</p>	<p>B.A.Thesis <i>On the Influence of the Five Women Characters on the Heroine in Jane Eyre</i></p> <p>not marry a man who had had a wife. Shocked by the reality, Jane decided to escape from Thornfield. To her, to be a lover was unbearable, so she decided to rebel against her marriage. In Jane's heart, she needed a marriage in which the couple was equal in the soul and they were independent from each other (朱春梅, 2013:14) . But all these could not come true. So Jane left Mr. Rochester with the heavy heart. In Thornfield, Jane was passionate and suffered. The appearance of the madwoman—Mr. Rochester's wife was not merely a blot from the blue, but also stimulated her independent spirit (赵静, 2012: 24). To defend her dignity and uphold the solemnity legality and purity of marriage, Jane, too proud and independent to be just a mistress to Rochester, left lover resolutely and determinedly.</p> <p>Bertha Mason was the sacrifice of patriarchy. Each of her action was the natural reveal of an oppressed women's mentality. Bertha was the woman who stood behind Jane Eyre. She was Jane's another soul who dared to say something that Jane dared not say. Her role was to stimulate Jane's independent spirit. She persisted in her pursuit of independence and equal love.</p>

Note. The supervisor did provided WSF on some sections such as the Table of Content, so these sections are not given in this appendix

## Appendix I

### Results of the Polit Study

#### 1. WSF Characteristics in Different Draft Stages

**Table I.1** Number and Frequency of WSF Focus in Different Draft Stages

Stage	No. of WSF Focus														
	Subtotal	Co	%	Re	%	Gr	%	Or	%	LC	%	WA	%	CU	%
D1	277 (33%)	77	27.8	80	28.9	76	27.4	16	5.8	18	6.5	5	1.8	5	1.8
D2	355 (43%)	45	12.7	32	9.0	234	65.9	12	3.4	18	5.1	8	2.3	6	1.7
D3	201 (24%)	7	3.5	34	16.9	135	67.2	22	10.9	3	1.5	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	833	129	15.5	146	17.5	445	53.4	50	6.0	39	4.7	13	1.6	11	1.3

Note. *D1=the first draft; D2=the second draft; D3=the third draft; Co=Content, Gr=Grammar; Re=Requirements; Or=Organization; LC=Linguistic Appropriateness; WA=Writing Attitudes; UC=Unidentifiable Comment.*

**Table I.2** Number and Frequency of WSF Strategy in Different Draft stages

Stage	No. of WSF Strategy												
	Subtotal	Dc	%	Ds	%	Is	%	Ig	%	It	%	Ic	%
D1	277	50	18.1	74	26.7	18	6.5	135	48.7	0	0	0	0
D2	355	59	16.6	66	18.6	28	7.9	202	56.9	0	0	0	0
D3	201	86	42.8	22	10.9	11	5.5	82	40.8	0	0	0	0
Total	833	195	23.4	162	19.4	57	6.8	419	50.3	0	0	0	0

Note. *Dc=direct correction/ reformulation; Ds=direct correction/ reformulation with description or explanation; Ig=graphical marking; Is=comments indicating an error with or without graphical marking. It= numerals indicating the quantity of errors in a line or a paragraph; Ic= metalinguistic codes indicating the error nature or error reason.*

**Table I.3** Number and Frequency of WSF Connotation in Different Draft Stages

Stage	No. of WSF Connotation						
	subtotal	Po	%	Ne	%	Ng	%
D1	277	0	0.0	270	97.5	7	2.5
D2	355	4	1.1	344	96.9	7	2.0
D3	201	1	0.5	199	99.0	1	0.5
Total	833	5	0.6	813	97.6	15	1.8

Note. *Po*=positive connotation; *Ne*=neutral connotation; *Ng*=negative connotation.

## 2. WSF Characteristics in Different Draft Sections

**Table I.4** Number and Frequency of WSF Focus in Different Sections

Section	No of WSF Focus															
	Subtotal	Co	%	Re	%	Gr	%	Or	%	Lc	%	Wa	%	Cu	%	
AA	6	0	0	0	0	5	83.3	0	0	1	16.7	0	0	0	0	
TL	8	0	0	5	62.5	3	37.5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
BB	26	5	19.2	11	42.3	0	0	0	0	0	0	10	38.5	0	0	
AB	35	3	8.6	6	17.1	23	65.7	1	2.9	2	5.7	0	0	0	0	
CT	55	14	25.5	20	36.4	17	30.9	0	0	1	1.8	0	0	3	5.5	
CO	57	10	17.5	3	5.3	33	57.9	5	8.8	6	10.5	0	0	0	0	
FR	71	33	46.5	16	22.5	14	19.7	5	7	0	0	3	4.2	0	0	
IN	92	9	9.8	13	14.1	59	64.1	5	5.4	6	6.5	0	0	0	0	
MT	144	21	14.6	9	6.3	85	59	19	13.2	9	6.3	0	0	1	0.7	
LR	157	20	12.7	38	24.2	80	51	9	5.7	5	3.2	0	0	5	3.2	
RD	182	14	7.7	25	13.7	126	69.2	6	3.3	9	4.9	0	0	2	1.1	
Total	833	129	15.5	146	17.5	445	53.4	50	6	39	4.7	13	1.6	11	1.3	

Note. *FT*=frontpage; *TL*=title; *CT*=content table; *AB*=abstract; *IN*=introduction; *LR*=literature review; *MT*=methods; *RD*=results and discussion; *CO*=conclusion; *BB*=bibliography; *AA*=Appendices and Acknowledgements.

**Table I.5** Number and Frequency of WSF Strategy in Different sections

Section	No. of WSF Strategy												
	Subtotal	Dc	%	Ds	%	Is	%	Ig	%	It	%	Ic	%
AA	6	3	50		0	0	0	3	50	0	0	0	0
TL	8	4	50	1	12.5	0	0	3	37.5	0	0	0	0
BB	26	4	15.4	1	3.8	0	0	21	80.8	0	0	0	0
AB	35	17	48.6	4	11.4	1	2.9	13	37.1	0	0	0	0
CT	55	20	36.4	5	9.1	1	1.8	29	52.7	0	0	0	0
CO	57	15	26.3	5	8.8	2	3.5	35	61.4	0	0	0	0
FR	71	0	0	44	62	27	38	0	0	0	0	0	0
IN	92	39	42.4	10	10.9	3	3.3	40	43.5	0	0	0	0
MT	144	33	22.9	12	8.3	9	6.3	90	62.5	0	0	0	0
LR	157	33	21	59	37.6	9	5.7	56	35.7	0	0	0	0
RD	182	27	14.8	21	11.5	5	2.7	129	70.9	0	0	0	0
Total	833	195	23.4	162	19.4	57	6.8	419	50.3	0	0	0	0

**Table I.6** Number and Frequency of WSF Connotation in Different Sections

Section	No. of WSF Connotation							
	Subtotal	Po	%	Ne	%	Ng	%	
AA	6	0	0	6	100	0	0	
TL	8	0	0	8	100	0	0	
BB	26	0	0	26	100	0	0	
AB	35	0	0	32	91.4	3	8.6	
CT	55	0	0	55	100	0	0	
CO	57	0	0	57	100	0	0	
FT	71	1	1.4	63	88.7	7	9.9	
IN	92	0	0	92	100	0	0	
MT	144	1	0.7	142	98.6	1	0.7	
LR	157	2	1.3	153	97.5	2	1.3	
TD	182	1	0.5	179	98.4	2	1.1	
Total	833	5	0.6	813	97.6	15	1.8	

### 3. Number and Frequency of Students' Uptake

**Table I.7** Number and Frequency of Uptake in Different Draft Stages

Stage	No. of uptake								
	Subtotal	Us	%	Uu	%	U0	%	Ux	%
D2	244	162	66.4	17	7.0	44	18.0	21	8.6
D3	330	246	74.5	10	3.0	32	9.7	42	12.7
D4	188	173	92.0	0	0.0	14	7.4	1	0.5
Total	762	581	76.2	27	3.5	90	11.8	64	8.4

**Table I.8** Number and Frequency of Uptake in Different Sections

Section	No. of Uptake								
	Subtotal	Us	%	Uu	%	U0	%	Ux	%
AA	6	6	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
TL	8	6	75	0	0	2	25	0	0
BB	26	11	42	0	0	4	15	11	42
AB	35	29	83	0	0	2	6	4	11
CT	55	42	76	1	2	5	9	7	13
CO	57	48	84	0	0	2	4	7	12
IN	92	68	74	6	7	15	16	3	3
MT	144	115	80	0	0	12	8	17	12
LR	157	105	67	7	5	33	21	12	8
RD	182	148	81	12	7	17	9	5	3
Total	762*	578	76	26	3	92	12	66	9

Note. 1. Us= successful uptake; Uu=unsuccessful uptake; U0=no uptake; Ux=unverifiable uptake.

2. Since the comments on the frontpage were mostly general comments, their uptake was difficult to trace; therefore, the "Fr" section was removed when investigating supervisors' uptake of their WSF, so the total number of WSF comments (762) was not the same as in the above Table I.1 to I.6 (, i.e., 833).

#### 4. Relationship between supervisors' WSF and Students' Uptake

**Table I.9** Relationship between Uptake and WSF Focus

WSF focus	No. of uptake								
	Subtotal	Us	%	Uu	%	U0	%	Ux	%
Co	96	65	67.7	5	5.2	8	8.3	18	18.8
Re	130	87	66.9	13	10.0	26	20.0	4	3.1
Gr	431	358	83.1	9	2.1	44	10.2	20	4.6
Or	45	38	84.4	1	2.2	5	11.1	1	2.2
LC	39	33	84.6	0	0.0	2	5.1	4	10.3
WA	10	1	10.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	9	90.0
UC	11	0	0.0	0	0.0	7	63.6	4	36.4
Total	762	582	76.4	28	3.7	92	12.1	60	7.9

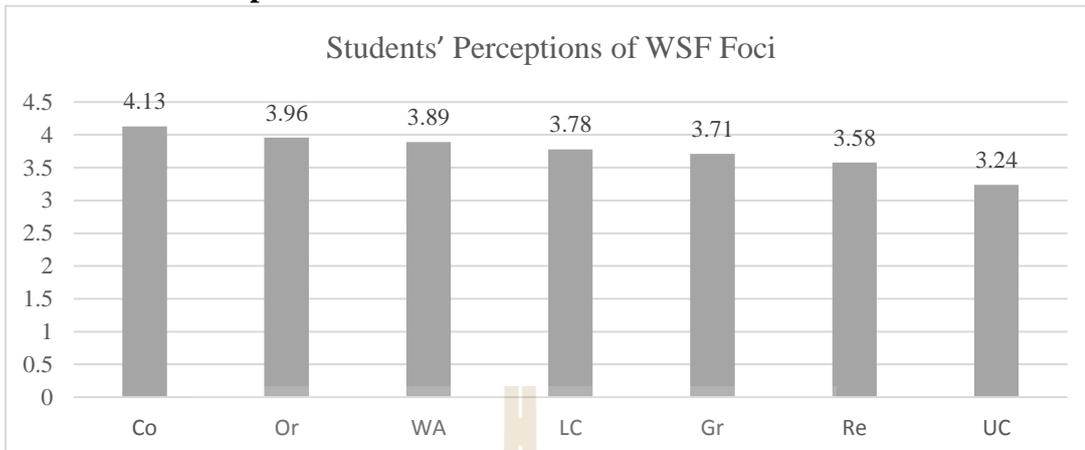
**Table I.10** Relationship between Uptake and WSF Strategy

Strategy	No. of uptake								
	Subtotal	Us	%	Uu	%	U0	%	Ux	%
Dc	195	175	89.7	2	1.0	14	7.2	4	2.1
Ds	118	82	69.5	13	11.0	16	13.6	7	5.9
Is	30	16	53.3	2	6.7	4	13.3	8	26.7
Ig	419	305	72.8	13	3.1	57	13.6	44	10.5
Total	762	578	75.9	30	3.9	91	11.9	63	8.3

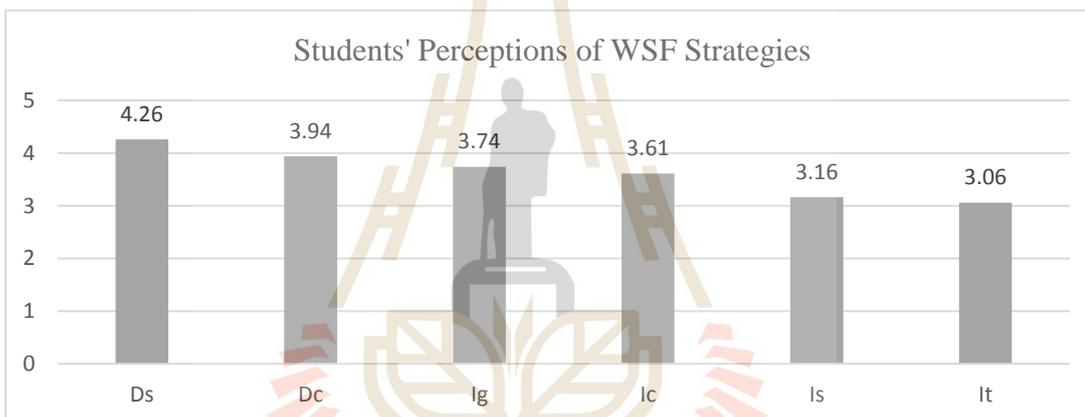
**Table I.11** Relationship between Uptake and WSF Connotations

Connotation	No. of uptake								
	Subtotal	Us	%	Uu	%	U0	%	Ux	%
Po	4	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	25.0	3	75.0
Ne	750	571	76.1	27	3.6	92	12.3	60	8.0
Ng	8	6	75.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	1	12.5
Total	762	577	75.7	27	3.5	94	12.3	64	8.4

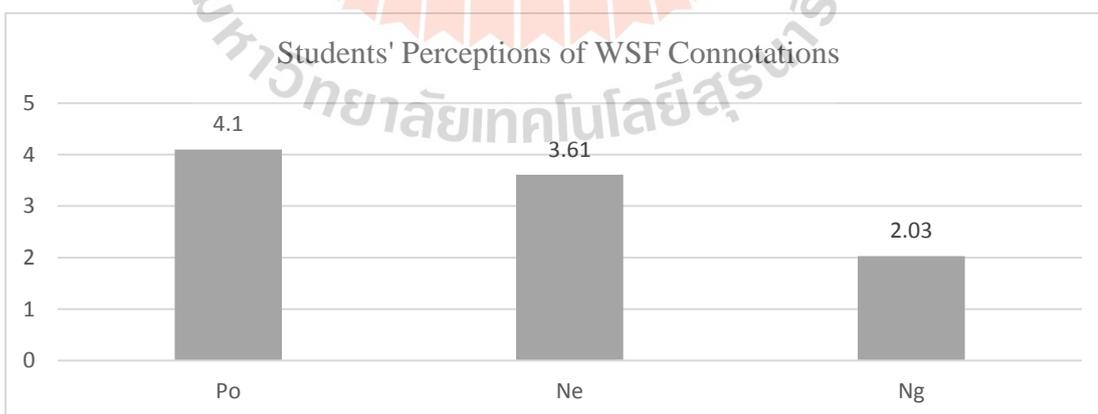
### 5. Students' Perceptions of WSF



**Figure I. 1** Bar Chart of Students' Perceptions of WSF Foci



**Figure I. 2** Bar Chart of Students' Perceptions of WSF Strategies



**Figure I. 3** Bar Chart of Students' Perceptions of WSF Connotations

## Appendix J

### Excerpt from A Student Interview

(R=Researcher; S4= Student 4)

R: In your opinion, which aspects do you consider most important for supervisors to look at when you submitted your thesis draft? Why?

S4: Do you mean the first thesis draft?

R: Any draft is Ok, the first, second, or the third.

S4: When the first thesis draft was completed, what I expected most might be that the supervisor could have a careful look at the structure.

R: At the structure?

S4: Right. Because before writing the first draft, the supervisor mainly provided us with some ideas, such as what topic is good to write, but most of the framework of the thesis was based on our own thoughts or our own feelings, so I hope the supervisor to give us feedback on structure. And only after the supervisor's approval on the structure [of the first draft], I could continue with the writing and with more related literature searching; otherwise I might have done much unnecessary work.

R: Yes.

S4: Another thing, although I was an English major student, it was quite a challenge for me to write a thesis in English. Therefore, I also hoped that the supervisor could give me some help on grammar, especially on the native-likeness of my English because I have often written in Chinglish.

R: Feedback on Grammar?

S4: Exactly, on expressions, not on grammar. Too much grammar feedback will distract us from thesis writing, so we will always be fearing making grammatical errors in the writing process. However, we cannot use English synonyms well, so our language in the theses is often not authentic. You see, it is even difficult for those undergraduates who have been stayed abroad to use synonyms correctly.

R: Well, the most important aspects you expected your supervisor to give you feedback are the structure and the English expressions. Are there other aspects?

S4: Content, too. I also hope that the supervisor will look at the content to see if the argument is appropriate and the supporting materials are sufficient. Their ideas [on content] can help us to continue writing.

R: Then when your supervisor [gave feedback on] your thesis, on what aspects did they point out the problem? Was it also in structure, language and content?

S4: Mostly on structure and language. In the first draft, most of the feedback was on structure, saying that the structure may be a bit unreasonable, and the language in some parts need to be modified. Actually, not only in the first draft, but also in the second and the third drafts, the supervisor has been emphasizing my structural problems. When it was time for the defense draft, I really didn't have time to improve [the structure], and the structure almost met the supervisor's requirements [so I didn't change the structure anymore].

R: Yes. Supervisors make requirement to their students according to students' aptitude. Since you were excellent, your supervisors were strict with you [asked you to revise the structure for a few times].

S4: Yes, I liked the feedback on structure, because I am now a graduate student and need to write papers. I will use the structure knowledge that my supervisor told me when I write papers, and I think it is quite rewarding.

R: Do you think supervisors should focus mainly on students' errors? And why?

S4: Yes, indeed. The supervisor should mainly point out the errors because we knew nothing. When we first came to write the bachelor's theses, we didn't understand anything, so we hope the supervisor would point out our mistakes and tell us what we should do it here and there.

R: If there are problems in your thesis drafts, such as structure, content, or grammatical problems, how do you want your supervisors to indicate the errors? Why?

S4: At that time, our group leader collected our thesis drafts and submitted them to the supervisor. The supervisor read all our theses and gave them back to us if he felt that there was no serious problem, because for minor problems, he has written comments on the cover page, and marked the error in the thesis texts. For few theses with serious problems, our supervisor would call the students to his office individually and told them what the problems were.

R: Do you mean that the supervisor mainly wrote comments on the cover page, but underlined or circled the problems in the thesis texts?

S4: Not just underlined or circled; for some problems he directly corrected, or wrote comments to tell us what went wrong.

R: What do you think of the different ways of giving feedback provided by your supervisor?

S4: I think my supervisor's method is good: mark the wrong place, explain why it is wrong when necessary, and let us correct by ourselves.

R: Can it be understood that you like your supervisor to underline or circle the errors for you and tell you why they are wrong?

S4: Yes, it can. If the format, grammar, and punctuations of our theses went wrong, he would circle it and indicate what is wrong. [The feedback] makes it easy to correct the errors quickly.

R: What if the supervisor made corrections directly, or wrote comments with direct corrections?

S4: It's okay to make direct corrections, but forget the corrections with comments. I think the supervisors are very busy. If they make explanations while they directly correct the errors, then they have to spend a lot of time to do so because they have many students' theses to read. What is more, if the supervisors think it is necessary to explain [on the corrections], they could ask student to their office to have face-to-face communication, or just make a phone call, I think that would save much time.

R: Good. In your opinion, what tones do you think supervisors should adopt in their written feedback, positive, neutral and negative? Why?

S4: Let me think... I think praises and neutral feedback are the best.

R: Why?

S4: I think that [supervisors' praise] makes me confident when writing the thesis. It would be very uncomfortable if all the supervisor's feedback is about errors. But supervisors can't only give praise, after all, the most important thing is to point out our problems.

R: To point out problems in our these objectively?

R: Yes, in a neutral way. Because neutral feedback can let me know my mistakes, and then I can improve the thesis. This is also the way my supervisor did-usually his first or second comments told us what we have done well, and the following comments told us what we needed to improve; or he praised the content first, and then pointed out the problems in our theses.

## Appendix K

### Results of Interview Transcript Coding

WSF	Perceptions	Original texts	Initial nodes	Concepts	Key themes
Co	Preference	to help us to focus on the topic	Being centered on topic	Thesis quality	Academic advancement
		Feedback on content can help us with our revisions.	Helping with revision		
		to be academically trained	Being work Academic trained	Academic training	
		to improve summary ability and ensure our arguments are supported by details	Improving writing ability		
		[It] can decide what to write in future, and we will not go backway	Knowing future writing	Expediting writing	
		Their ideas can help us to continue writing.	Continuing writing		
		I don't know what should be emphasized and ignored in abstract.	Knowing the emphasis	Knowledge acquisition	
		to know the flaws in content because supervisors have experience or professional knowledge [in this aspect]	Knowing the errors		
		to know the emphasis and main objectives of the thesis	Knowing the emphasis		
		[It] helps me know whether there is anything wrong on content whether I can move on to the next stage.	Knowing to judge content errors	Thesis assessment	
Feedback on content is beneficial for us who want to be postgraduates in future academic writing.	Beneficial for postgraduate life	Future career			
Disfavor					

WSF	Perceptions	Original texts	Initial nodes	Concepts	Key themes
Gr	Preference	to facilitate language and vocabulary learning	Facilitating language learning	Language learning	Academic advancement
		Feedback on grammar can help us improve language knowledge and language authenticity.	Improving language knowledge		
		Writing in English is a big challenge for me, so I would like the supervisor to feedback on expression and grammar.	Support for language learning	Supervisor support	
	Disfavor	[It] deprives the opportunity to revise by ourselves	Revision opportunity	Practice opportunity	Individual needs
		Students can revise it with the hint [so no need to give direct feedback].	Self- revision	Independence	
		Too much grammatical feedback would distract us from thesis writing.	Distraction from writing	Thesis quality	Academic advancement
Re	Preference	to give us an opportunity to utilize requirements	Requirements practice	Practice opportunity	Individual needs
		[It] helps us to set up a good academic writing attitude.	Writing attitude	Writing attitude	Affective experience
		help us to understand basics of thesis writing	Understanding basics	Knowledge acquisition	Academic advancement
		We didn't know [requirements] before and didn't know why it is wrong. And we are often confused to see that others' papers are doing differently [in format].	Knowing errors		
	Disfavor	We can follow it because we have the template and guidelines.	Following template	Practice opportunity	Individual needs
		We can read the guidelines and know how to use it.	Following guidelines		
		That would waste much	Time wasting	Practicality	

WSF	Perceptions	Original texts	Initial nodes	Concepts	Key themes
		time of the supervisors.			
WA	Preference				
	Disfavor	The responsibility of the students is to complete a bachelor's thesis and the responsibility a supervisor is to help the students...	Being our responsibility	Student responsibility	Academic advancement
		a feeling of being scolded	Feeling being scolded	Negative emotions	Affective experience
		[I will] feel very scared and depressed	Feeling scared and depressed		
I feel that I have been completely denied.	Feeling being denied				
UC	Preference				
	Disfavor	I will be confused and do not know whether I need to revise it and how to revise it.	Being confused	Feedback clarity	Individual needs
I am also worried about being criticized by the supervisor on my next draft if I do not make any change.		Feeling unease	Negative emotions	Affective experience	
Or	Preference	Getting the supervisor's approval on the structure, I can continue with the writing and the related literature searching.	Making future preparation	Expediting writing	Academic advancement
		to guarantee the quality of thesis	Guarantee thesis quality	Thesis quality	
		to define the focus and scope of our writing	Defining writing scope		
		[It] sets up a framework for us, so we will not fail in the thesis.	Not failing in thesis		
		That the supervisor gives feedback on structure on first draft also helps us to set up a concept of outlining in writing.	Being academic trained	Academic training	
		The supervisor's WSF on	Information		

WSF	Perceptions	Original texts	Initial nodes	Concepts	Key themes
		structure can be beneficial for the literature searching and the content arrangement for the thesis.	retrieval instruction		
		tell me what I should write	Structure instruction		
		I knew nothing at the beginning of thesis writing, so the supervisors' feedback on structure can help me know what I should write.	Informing future writing		
		[Feedback] focus on structure also benefit me in academic writing in post graduate study.	Beneficial for postgraduate life	Future career	
		to learn the part-genre knowledge	Learning genre knowledge	Knowledge acquisition	
		We have little time to meet, so we hope the supervisors give us feedback on the higher levels.	Comments on high order skills		
		The framework is the initial and most important part.	Comments on important aspects		
		It is professional and academic [structure].	Knowing the professional structure of a thesis		
		[We can] not know the quality of the structure of thesis	Inability of making judgements	Thesis assessment	
		Supervisor know the flaws in the structure because they read a lot.	Knowing the flaws		
		I wrote the thesis on my own structure, so I am not sure [that the quality is] good or bad.	Inability of making judgements		
		Feedback on structure is	Beneficial for	Future career	

WSF	Perceptions	Original texts	Initial nodes	Concepts	Key themes
		beneficial for us who want to be postgraduates in future academic writing.	postgraduate life		
		Although we have had the writing course, we have never written a thesis.	Not practiced thesis writing	Practice opportunity	Individual needs
		[It] helps us to save time, because it can avoid the situation in which we have to rewrite the theses when we have completed the theses but are told that the structures are not acceptable.	Time saving	Practicality	
		If the supervisor gives me feedback on the structure, ... I will not fear for thesis writing.	Overcoming writing fear	Supervisory support	
		Due to the long length of a thesis, I need feedback to help write in the right directions	Support for long writing	Supervisory support	
	Disfavor				
LC	Preference	[to] save our time to look them up a dictionary	Time saving	Practicality	Individual needs
		an opportunity of vocabulary learning in real context	Language learning opportunity	Learning opportunity	Individual needs
		overcome vocabulary difficulty beyond our ability I can hardly distinguish the meanings and usages between some synonyms.	Overcoming difficulty	Supervisory support	
		I usually think or write in Chinese, then translate it into English. So, the language could be unidiomatic or unnatural.	Support for language improvement		
		It is even difficult for those undergraduates who have been stayed abroad to use	Support for language improvement		

WSF	Perceptions	Original texts	Initial nodes	Concepts	Key themes	
		synonyms correctly.				
	Disfavor					
Dc	preference	to know/learn to revise	Knowing errors and revision	Knowledge acquisition	Academic advancement	
		to know how and why to use correct format with deep impression	Knowing correct formats			
		to save students' time	Time saving	Practicality		Individual needs
		to overcome difficulty beyond ability	Overcoming difficulty	Supervisory support		
	Disfavor	lack a process of dependent thinking	Independent thinking	Independence	Individual needs	
		not good for our independent thinking	Independent thinking			
		to make the students dependent	Independent thinking			
		become passive writers	Passive writers	Creativity		
		not the text I want or the intention I want to express	Lacking own ideas			
		control our writing	Writing control			
	not an opportunity to learn	Opportunity to learn	Learning opportunity			
Ds	Preference	to understand the error deeply and better	Knowing errors	Knowledge acquisition	Academic advancement	
	Disfavor	I think that would save much time.	Time saving	Practicality	Individual needs	
		They have to spend a lot of time to do so because they have several students' thesis drafts to read.	Burden to supervisors	Supervisory relations	Social influence	
Ig	Preference	because the supervisor can point out as many errors as possible in this way	Much information	Feedback quantity	Individual needs	
		If my thesis is full of comments in red, or if there are more supervisor's comments than my texts on some pages, I would feel uncomfortable.	Avoiding excessive feedback			
		save supervisors time	Save supervisor' time	Supervisory relations		Social influence

WSF	Perceptions	Original texts	Initial nodes	Concepts	Key themes	
		We have been familiar with supervisors' feedback gradually and can understand supervisors' intentions	Quick understanding			
	Disfavor	We are unable to correctly understand the supervisor's meaning [without explanations]	Not knowing error types	Feedback clarity	Individual needs	
Is	Preference	help in thinking	Independent thinking	Independence	Individual needs	
		Because we are senior undergraduates, we can find out methods to solve the problems and correct errors.	Self-revision			
		let us think [marking with reason]	Independent thinking			
		help in self-correction	Self-revision	Creativity		
		to keep authors' original intention	Keeping original intention			
		to better understand supervisors' intentions	Better understanding	Feedback clarity		
		We'll be lost if no directions are told.	Being confused			
		It is a process of self-improvement; you [supervisors] need not to tell us everything	Revision opportunity	Practice opportunity		
		to be in line with Chinese teachers' feedback habits	Chinese feedback habits	Traditional teaching		Social influence
		to help face-to-face conference	Communication promotion	Supervisory relations		
		let you contact the supervisor	Communication promotion			
		to refine our thinking, or to improve our language	Refining thinking or language	Academic training		Academic advancement
		to improve thesis writing ability quickly	Ability improvement			
		to better understand errors	Knowing errors	Knowledge acquisition		
I would like marking with	Knowing errors					

WSF	Perceptions	Original texts	Initial nodes	Concepts	Key themes
		explanations, so I can know the errors.			
		tell us a direction to improve, or to think	Telling the writing directions		
		I cannot notice the errors because we make mistakes mostly out of unawareness.	Knowing errors		
		We cannot identify what error it is if it is not pointed out.	Knowing errors		
		know where to revise and how to revise	Knowing errors and revision		
		Supervisors' feedback can help us to find out and revise the errors quickly.	Knowing errors and revision		
		to boost confidence	Boosting confidence		
	Disfavor	provide me with sense of achievements, motivation and will revise more seriously	Writing seriousness		
Positive	Preference	to help me to correct with depth	Writing seriousness	Self esteem	Affective experience
		to increase motivation	Increasing motivation	Writing attitudes	
		[supervisors' praising] makes me feel happy.	Feeling happy		
		feel being recognized for much reading	Feeling recognized	Writing motivation	
		feel being recognized and praised	Feeling recognized	Positive emotion	
		Positive feedback makes me feel very happy and a sense of approbation.	Feeling happy		
		Other students will admire my writing ability [when I was praised by the supervisor].	Gaining admiration		
		set an example for other students in the team and	Being team example		

WSF	Perceptions	Original texts	Initial nodes	Concepts	Key themes
		act as supervision assistant			
		to facilitate autonomous learning	Autonomous learning	Social interaction	
		to increase communication with supervisors	Communication promotion	needs	
				Independence	
		The quality of their theses was very poor, and there were too many errors in their theses [so supervisor should criticize the students].	Poor quality	Supervisory relations	Social influence
	Disfavor	Negative feedback means their [supervisors'] seriousness. ... is helpful for those students who have not treat thesis writing seriously at the beginning.	Supervisors' seriousness		
Negative	Preference	In addition, negative written feedback is not presented in front of others [so the student will not lose face].	Face keeping	Thesis assessment	Academic advancement
		Frankly, many students are not putting their hearts in thesis writing	Not working hard	Supervisor responsibility	
		I don't take [supervisors'] negative feedback as a criticism.	Psychological adjustment	Self esteem	Affective experience
		I would feel face-losing or embarrassing.	Face losing	Writing attitudes	
		I would not like to write or revise it anymore.	Demotivation	Traditional teaching	Social influence
	Disfavor	to lead to frustration	Frustration	Self esteem	Affective experience
		I feel dispirited because of supervisors' words for painful for reading my papers or scolded me for know nothing about	Disappointment	Writing motivation	

WSF	Perceptions	Original texts	Initial nodes	Concepts	Key themes
		writing			
		Negative comments mean your thesis has big problems and the supervisors are not satisfied with or even disappointed at you.	Dissatisfaction	Negative emotions	
		Negative feedback gives me a sense of parental or maternal criticism [which is nagging].	Feeling being criticized		
		It directly tells me what mistakes I made.	Quick information		
		Neutral feedback can let me know my errors.	Knowing errors		
Neutral	Preference	I would read more and revise it more carefully.	Increase revision	Knowledge acquisition	Academic advancement
		know the gap between our writing and the university requirements	Knowing the gap		
		Neutral [feedback] would give me a sense of responsibility.	Sense of responsibility	Thesis quality	
		feel safe	Feeling safe	Thesis assessment	
		I feel comfortable to receive neutral feedback.	Feeling comfortable	Student responsibility	
		It can help to set up a good relationship between us. I don't like parental tone.	Good relationship	Positive emotions	Affective experience
	We have been receiving neutral feedback for long since primary school, so it's a common practice.		Common practices		
				Supervisory relations	
			Traditional teaching		
		Disfavor			

## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

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